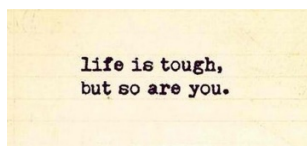


***“In Christ”: The Power of Our New Identity***  
(Studies in Ephesians)

**Today: In Christ, we are strong**

Passages: Ephesians 6:10-18  
John 12:27-33

There are a lot of self-help websites on the internet that pretty much tell you the same message:



The idea is that **you are strong**. You can make it. You can succeed. You can overcome the obstacles. **The power is already there, inside of you**. All you need to do is tap into it.

On one website called BeYourself, we're told the following:

“Life just seems so heavy sometimes. The weight of the world crashing down on your shoulders and on your heart. It's not easy, but you are stronger than you know. You can handle it all. Strength is more than muscle; *it's mental.*”

The page finishes with these words: *“You are capable. You are strong.”*

But... am I? In myself, in this mortal body, am I really strong? I don't think so.

Having said that, **here's what I do believe**: I believe that ***when I know who I am in Christ***, then His strength does make me strong. When I know the big picture of what my Saviour is doing in this world and who He is recreating me to be through His power at work in me, then (in alignment with His work) **I am strong**.

Of course, I'm talking about the strength that comes from heaven; the mighty power which Paul talks about in Ephesians 1—the power of the Father which

raised the Son from the dead and which now gives life to our mortal bodies! I'm talking about the power of the Spirit which, in connection with my spirit, flows into my soul and body and gives me a new strength of conviction; the power which helps me make decisions according to who I really am; according to who I am becoming in Christ. This, says Paul in Ephesians 3, is the power can ***"...do immeasurably more than all we ask or think..."***; the ***"power that is at work within us, bringing glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever, Amen!"***

**In Christ, I am strong!** That's the topic we want to look at today as we conclude our studies in Paul's Letter to the Ephesians.

### **Let's pray.**

As we have seen throughout this 10 week series of sermons on Ephesians, Paul's main goal of this letter is to remind the Ephesian Christians of two essential truths:

1. Who Christ is, (seated at the right hand of the Father in the heavenly realms) and...
2. Who they are *in Christ*, (seated with Christ in the heavenly realms...)

Once you know these things, it can make you strong; not in the sense that you can now do things you could never do before. Not necessarily. The strength Paul is talking about is the strength to become the person who God has always planned for you to become. But, to do that, the most important strength that you need is the strength to ***"stand firm"*** *in who you are* ...and to resist the devil and his lies.

You see, just as God is *your creator* and wants your life to be full and beautiful, the devil is *your destroyer*. That's why he is called *Abaddon* in the OT and *Apollyon* in the NT. He is out to smash every beautiful thing that God is doing in your life in Christ; all that He is re-creating you to be and to achieve. Satan exists to see that you never come to realise your full potential in Christ. As Calvin Miller has said, *"He is the lord of the termites, whose unseen decay makes Pharisees seem alive when they are only the hollow dead."*

And so, in Ephesians 6... in the last chapter of his amazing letter... Paul warns the Ephesian Christians to stand firm! How? By knowing the twin truths of **who Jesus is** and **who you are in Him**. This is the power of our new identity in Christ. That's why Paul speaks about putting on the full armour of God.

Now, I want you to notice **two things**:

**First**, the majority of the "armour" that Paul talks about is **defensive armour**- belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shield of faith, helmet of salvation. It's defensive because Christ has already done the offensive work. He completed the heavy lifting of our warfare against Satan 2000 years ago on the cross. He won the battle. That's why He is now seated "***in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given...***" It is finished. The war is over. Christ has already won.

Hence, to put on the armour of God simply means that you are simply defending *who you already are in Christ*! You are reconfirming the invisible reality of His ancient victory over the devil! Think about it:

- The devil will forever be lying to me about what I lack or what I need. (Inevitably, his schemes always revolve around money, sex or power!) He tempts; he cajoles; he wants us to feel empty and incomplete. But to know who I am in Christ is my victory. To know that "I am rich in Christ", or that "In Him, I have everything I need", or that "In Him, I am satisfied" – these truths give me the objectivity I need not to get sucked into the devil's schemes.
- People are gullible because we feel empty. Just this week on Radio National-- Binary option scams are one of the biggest financial scams in the world right now and Australians are targets. Scammers use flashy websites to trick victims into thinking they're trading on financial markets. But it's all a charade aimed at encouraging people to hand over their money. Australian victims have lost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Why? Because they want to believe there's a quick/simple answer to all their problems. We are called to stand firm...

- There are so many warnings in the Scriptures about the devil's lies. But they will be of little or no help to us **until we know who we are in Christ**. This is the only starting place for putting on the *defensive* armour of God.

The **second** thing to take note of is that *there are 2 pieces of offensive armour*—the sword and the shoes.

- (v.17) **“The sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God”** -- In Christ, we have a new power to challenge falsehood in the world and speak up for the weak and helpless victims of oppression and poverty. The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. It's a Word of Justice; a Word of hope for the hopeless. It's a Word that calls to account the Satanic abuses of power in our world.
  - Gaye- “Voices for Justice”
- (v 15) **“...your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the Gospel of peace.”** This idea comes from Isaiah 52:7– ***“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news.”*** The shoes we wear are the conviction that Christ is the only answer to the world's mess! That's why we go out and share the Good News of Jesus Christ—we spread the Gospel throughout the world because it is the Gospel of Peace!
  - Andrew and Julie Friend- (what does this look like for you?)

We finish our studies in Ephesians with verse 18, where Paul invites us to pray.

<sup>18</sup> ***And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.***

Why is prayer so important to Paul? Prayer is the only way for us **to see** the invisible realm of God's Kingdom. **Through prayer, we make a conscious note of the three things:**

1. **The Past**- His cross defeated the powers of evil. We are cleansed from sin and the enemy has no grounds for condemnation! Stand firm.
2. **The Present**- His resurrection takes us to sit in the heavenly realms with Christ, above every power and authority. We rule over these powers by God's Word! In prayer, we become determined to use the Word for the powerless and silenced.
3. **The Future**- In prayer, we see God's plan to eventually take the world completely out of the hands of the evil one. That's why we are called to go into the world with the good news. May Christ's Body fill the earth until Satan has no more authority.

Before I finish, I should address the confusion that you may have over verse 12.

***<sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.***

Some may ask, "How can evil exist *in the heavenly realms*?" Paul's cosmology takes into account that **nothing created by God is yet perfect**. Not even the heavenly realms have been perfectly restored and cleansed of all evil. In fact, that's why the devil can still do so much damage on earth—although he has been 'driven out' (John 14:31) by the cross of Christ, **it's a progressive process**. He is being driven out and he will be driven out of the heavenly realms...but only in proportion to the influx of those 'saved' in Christ, who fill the void. (Do you remember how the Promised land couldn't be cleansed all at once. It was progressively cleansed *as it was occupied*.) This is the idea in the New Testament! The Kingdom grows over the earth in proportion to the number of those who come to Christ; who are found in Christ and **who stand firm** in Christ.

Considering all that we've looked at today, let me offer two verses with which you might start the New Year: <sup>10</sup> ***Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.*** <sup>11</sup> ***Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.***

Let's pray.