**Stand Strong In Christ** – Ephesians 6:10-12

* Good morning, my name is Joel Smith and I have had the privilege of being a member of this church for almost 2 years. My wife and I have served as interns here and will sadly be moving away at the end of this month.
* The elders have generously offered me the opportunity to bring the Word to you this morning and I’m excited about speaking to you from God’s living Word.
* If you have a copy of God’s Word, you can turn to Ephesians 6:10-12. If you are using a copy that we have provided you can find the passage on page \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

***PRAY FOR TIME***

*INTRO:*

* War is a terrible thing. It brings destruction, lives are lost, and societies are changed forever.
* Just like many of you, my own family has felt the affects of war.
  + My grandfather was a paratrooper in the Vietnam War and was dropped behind enemy lines many times throughout his service to our country.
  + The horrific things he experienced and had to do to survive plagues his memory. We wish he didn’t have to experience what he did during the war, but we are extremely grateful for his service to our country.
* War was never intended to be something we experience in this life. God created the world to be a place where peace was a constant reality and war never occurred.
  + But obviously this is not true today.
  + The first man and woman created, rebelled against God, and a chasm was forged between mankind and God.
  + But not only that, a spiritual war began to be fought.
* The Bible tells us about Satan and his demons who are against God and against all people.
* These evil forces are seeking to enslave us, separate us from God, and ultimately lead us to death. This brings about a war that is fought for the souls of men each and every day.
* Although the language of “spiritual warfare” may sound quite strange to you, it is prevalent throughout the bible is a central theme to our passage today.
* During our time in Ephesians 6:10-12, Paul is going to address the spiritual war that is being fought each and every day, and is going to give us some “orders for battle.”
* *His main exhortation for us today is to…*

***MAIN POINT***: **Be strong in the Lord and wage war against the spiritual forces of evil**.

* Let’s look together at this morning’s passage, Ephesians 6:10-12. ***READ THE PASSAGE****!*
* Ephesians 6:1-20 as a whole occupies a significant place in the epistle. It serves as a conclusion to the practical material in chapters 4-6, but it also serves as a climax for the letter as a whole.
  + The spiritual war that is addressed in the passage today is worth great attention, and was central in Paul’s understanding of the Christian life.
* We can see this as Paul starts the passage with the word “Finally.”
  + In doing so he attempting to catch the readers attention.
  + Its as if Paul is telling us, “This is it…make sure you don’t miss what I am going to tell you.”
* So as we go through these verses, lets receive what the Lord would say to us with great humility and great eagerness to apply what he presses on our hearts and minds.

*TRANS*: *I believe God has two main encouragements for us this morning. The first encouragement I would like to offer is to…*

**POINT #1**: Be strong in the Lord and put on the armor of God. (10-11a)

* In these first two verses Paul is going to lay out two imperatives
  + “Be Strong in the Lord…” and “Put on the whole armor of God”
* In case you guys have forgotten your grammar, an “imperative verb” is a command.
  + It is something that we are told to do, not something we could do, or something we might want to do, but it is something that we must do. It is a command.
* So as we expound this first point, let’s break down these two commands:
* First, “Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might”
* This first imperative, “Be Strong” is best understood in the original Greek to be in the passive voice, meaning, “be made strong” or “be strengthened.”
* This indicates that believers do not empower themselves, but rather our strengthening comes from an external source.
  + The external source is *the Lord*, Jesus Christ.
* **So really, this is a command to be strong in the strength of another…It is a command to be strong in the strength of Jesus Christ**.
* The apostle Paul exemplified being strong, or being made strong, in Christ.
* For example, listen to Paul as he speaks about his ministry to the Colossian believers.
  + “For this I TOIL, struggling with all HIS ENERGY that HE powerfully works within ME.” - Colossians 1:29
    - Paul is the one toiling, or diligently working…but it is GOD who is providing Him with the strength and making His work effective.
  + “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. ON the contrary I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is within me.” – 1 Corinthians 15:10
    - It was the grace of God that saved Paul and made His ministry so effective, but Paul was not a lazy man. He was able to honestly say, I worked harder than any of them!
* We must strive to be strong, or strengthened, by the Lord, but at the same time, our strength is not found in our effort. Our strength is found in the Lord Jesus Christ.
* This exhortation to be strong or be strengthened is vastly important, especially when we realize we are in the midst of a spiritual battle.
  + Back in the days of the Romans when this passage would have been written, a soldier’s strength was vastly important.
  + If they were not *physically* strong, their enemies could physically overtake them. If soldiers were not *mentally* strong, they may not persevere in battle, losing focus over time.
* In the same sense if we are not spiritually strong in the Lord, we could be overtaken by our enemy, who we will see later in the passage is a strong and very real enemy.
* Just as the apostle Paul exemplified, we are to be strong in the strength of the Lord.
* Before we look at *HOW* we are to practically be strong in the Lord, let’s take a second and think about the Lord’s strength we are to be strengthened by.
  + Paul says we are to be strong or be strengthened in the “the strength of His might”
* If you remember in Ephesians 1:19, Paul prays that believers would know the strength of the Lord’s strength and might, and now we are commanded to be strengthened by the Lord’s strength and might.
* So what is the strength of our Lord, Jesus Christ?
  + For one, it is “immeasureable!”
    - Paul prays believers would know the “*immeasureable greatness of His power*”
    - The strength of our Lord Jesus cannot be measured! It cannot be quantified! And b/c of that, it cannot be contained! It is IMMEASUREABLE!
  + In Ephesians 1 we also see the strength of Jesus put on display when He was raised from the dead. The strength of our Lord Jesus Christ is unstoppable!
    - Death is the greatest power on this earth. It is one force that no human will ever be able to stop.
    - Not with Jesus! His power is so great that even death could not stop Him!
    - The strength of the Lord is unstoppable!
  + But not only that, the strength of our Lord is incomparable!
    - In Ephesians 1, Paul states that the strength and might of Jesus Christ is above “all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.”
    - Jesus’ strength and power and might are untouchable by ANY OTHER strength and power.
* This is the strength and might we are commanded to be strengthened by: an immeasureable, unstoppable, and untouchable strength.
* So now let’s address the question of, “HOW we can practically be strong or be strengthened by the Lord Jesus and his great might? How do we practically find our strength in the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ?
* As we have already seen modeled by the apostle Paul in Ephesians, we must **pray for strength**.
  + In Ephesians 3:16, Paul prays that, “*according to the riches of his (Jesus) glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit*.”
  + We can call out to our God in faith who has saved us, loves us, and longs for us to be strong in him, and he will be faithful to strengthen us.
  + So we can be strong in Christ by PRAYING for Christ’s strength.
* Secondly, we must **Forsake passivity and pursue the strength of Jesus.**
  + As we saw earlier in Colossians, we must strive to be strong in Christ’s strength, not lazily waiting around for strength to just magically come to us.
  + SEEK the strength of Jesus, PURSUE the strength of Jesus, and plead with the Lord for it.
  + We pursue the strength of Jesus through:
    - Reading the Word (meditate, memorize, daily feasting)
    - Being Active in Gospel Community
      * Paul wrote this letter to a community of believers, so it is implicit that he is calling them to be strong together!
      * CGs, fellowship on Sunday, taking part in one of the equipping opportunities we have going on
    - Be engaged in God’s mission
      * Share your story…pour into others
      * This may seem counter-intuitive, but God has promised to empower us for His mission.
  + Forsaking passivity and pursuing Christ’s strength is hard work, but it must be done if we are going to grow strong in Christ.
  + And here is the beautiful part, if we as a church do this together, our whole congregation will be strong in the Lord!
* Lastly, we see that we can practically be made strong in the strength of another by ***PUTTING ON* the armor of God**.

*TRANS: In the next verse Paul gives us a second imperative, which further answers the question of “how” we are to be strong in the Lord.*

* Look with me at the beginning of verse 11…we are exhorted to “Put on the whole armor of God”
  + If we are going to be strong in the Lord and prevail in the deadly spiritual warfare that we are all engaged in, we must put on God’s full armor.
* This exhortation to **put on** the full armor of God recalls the earlier instruction in Eph. 4 about ‘putting on the new self’, which was *created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness*. (Eph. 4:24)
  + The verb used in Eph. 4:24, translated “put on,” is the same verb used in Eph. 6:11.
    - This means that just as we are to actively be putting on the new self in Christ, we are to actively put on the armor of God.
    - We don’t just put it on one day and then never again, we have to put on the armor of God EVERYDAY!
* Since we are engaged in an ongoing spiritual warfare, it makes since that we would need to put on armor.
  + Think about the functionality of armor in battle for a second.
  + What does armor do?
    - It protects, can serve as a weapon, and identifies the allegiance of soldiers in battle.
  + If you are in Christ, you are engaged in spiritual warfare each and every day. God has not left us to fend for ourselves in this battle, but has rather provided us with armor.
* Let’s spend a couple moments and break down what we are told about this armor we are to put on.
* First we can see that the armor God’s supplies us is SUFFICIENT.
* Notice that we are exhorted to put on the “**whole** armor of God.” This exhortation to put on the whole armor makes sense right?
  + If a soldier goes into battle with a helmet and shield, but without a sword, he won’t be able to fight.
  + Likewise, if a soldier goes into battle with a sword but without his shield and helmet, he will quickly get killed because he will be extremely vulnerable to attack.
* So we need to take up the **whole** armor of God.
  + Not just particular pieces we enjoy taking up or pieces that are convenient for us…we need the entire armor of God if we are going to survive the deadly spiritual war in which we are engaged in.
* Next, we can see that the armor God supplies us is POWERFUL.
* The armor we are to put on is not just any armor…it is the “armor…of…God.”
  + This armor that all believers are supplied is the armor of the almighty God!
  + Our God who possesses immeasureable, unstoppable, incomparable power is the God who supplies us with armor for the spiritual battle.
  + His armor is the strongest, most effective, most reliable. If we are going to stand a chance in the battle that is being waged for the souls of men and the glory of God, we must diligently strive to put on the whole armor of God!
  + If you don’t put on the armor of God, you will fall to the enemy.
    - 1 Peter 5:8 describes our enemy as “prowling around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”
  + If you are not putting on the armor of God, you will be devoured. You will be easily tempted into sin, easily enslaved into sin, and will lack the protection that God offers us.
* Next week, Tanner is going to walk us through the specific pieces of the armor of God and how they are to be taken up. But for our purposes in these verses, realize that the armor we are to put on is completely sufficient for the war we are in engaged in and is powerful because it is the armor of all-powerful God.
* *So what about you brothers and sisters? Do you need strength today? Is there any area of weakness in your life where you need the strength of the Lord?*
  + *Maybe your anxious about sharing your faith…*
  + *Maybe you feel weak in fighting temptation and have an ongoing sin struggle…*
  + *Maybe you are struggling to find hope and joy…*
* *I don’t know where you specifically need strength, but brothers and sisters…we can BE STRONG IN THE LORD and can PUT ON THE SUFFICIENT AND POWERFUL ARMOR OF GOD.*

*TRANS*: *In the remainder of v. 11 we are going to see the goal of Being Strong in the Lord and Putting on the Armor of God, and then in v. 12 Paul is going to explain why believers need God’s mighty armor if they are going to stand firm. So the second exhortation I have for you this morning is to…*

**POINT #2**: Wage war against the spiritual forces of evil in this world. (11b-12)

* In the second half of verse 11, the goal of being strong in the Lord and putting on the armor of God becomes crystal clear: “that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.”
* Four times throughout Ephesians 6:10-20, Paul uses the language of standing, standing firm, and withstanding.
  + It conveys the imagery of holding a position and resisting against an enemy in battle.
    - Planting your feet firmly in the ground and vowing to not budge an inch
    - It’s the imagery of the Pat’s offensive lineman blocking for Tom Brady…they are seeking to stand strong against the enemy…not to budge an inch.
* In the passage we are told that the enemy we are resisting is the devil and his schemes.
* As we plunge into these remaining two verses, I want to say a couple things about the devil and the spiritual forces of evil mentioned.
  + The devil and his demons are very real adversaries
    - The devil is mentioned many times throughout Scripture as being present and active in our world.
    - We can see from Scripture that the devil rebelled against God and is the prince of demons (2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6, Isaiah 14:12-15)
    - We can see the devil at work in the garden of Eden tempting Eve to take of the forbidden fruit and even in the desert tempting Jesus as he was fasting for 40 days and nights.
  + The devil and demons oppose and try to destroy every work of God.
    - Just as Satan tempted Eve to sin against God in the Garden of Eden, so he tried to get Jesus to sin and thus fail in his mission as the Savior of the world.
    - The devil’s tactics are to use lies, deception and every other kind of destructive activity to cause people to turn away from God and destroy themselves.
    - They use every tactic they can to blind people to the gospel and keep them in bondage to things that hinder them from coming to God.
  + The devil and demons have limited power.
    - In the story of Job, we see that the devil could do only what God permitted him to do and nothing more.
    - Jude 6 says that demons are kept in “eternal chains” and Jude makes it clear that they can be resisted by Christians through the authority Jesus gives.
    - In the gospel of Luke, Jesus sends out 72 of his disciples and they come back with this report, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” (Luke 10:17)
  + The devil and demons work off of our own sinful nature.
    - There are two temptations when thinking about the devil and his evil minions.
      * We can live as if they don’t exist, and believe they do nothing.
      * Or we can believe that the devil and demons are the cause of everything bad that happens to us.
        + My perpetual sin is the cause of the devil
    - Neither of these assumptions are true. The Bible makes clear that we are born with a propensity to sin. We have a sinful nature that naturally rebels against God and His revealed will.
    - Satan and his demons work to capitalize on our sinful desires by tempting us to sin.
    - There is no one to blame for our sin but ourselves! Satan and his armies merely work to tempt us into sin.
* With this understanding of our spiritual adversary, let’s return to Ephesians 6:11.
* We are commanded to be strong and put on the armor of God to stand against the “schemes of the devil”
* The word translated from the original Greek as “schemes” is referring to methods or strategies employed to accomplish a specific goal.
* The devil employs different methods for your unique situation in life. His methods are tailor made for you and these methods are meant to destroy our lives, and oppose God’s perfect and good will for your life.
  + These schemes most often come in the form of temptations in our lives.
    - He tempts us to anger by getting us to stew on how a coworker mistreated us.
    - He tempts us to sexual immorality about feeding us lies… “just this once is fine” or “everyone else is watching porn, why should I suppress my natural desire?”
* What is your greatest temptation today? Have you thought about that lately? What methods is Satan employing in your life to draw you to sin?
  + I encourage you to take some time this afternoon or later this week to really consider this question.
  + Ask God to reveal that to you and then pray that God would give you strength to overcome it!
* In verse 12, Paul explains further why we need God’s mighty armor if we are going to stand firm against the devil.
  + READ V.12 WITH ME
* The supernatural, powerful, and cunning nature of the opposition against us makes the use of God’s armor absolutely necessary.
* In the text, our struggle against the devil and his forces is described as “wrestling”
  + This word is not seeking to convey a WWE wrestling match where no one really gets hurt and everything is planned out.
  + This was a term that would have been used to refer to close hand-to-hand combat.
  + Hand-to-hand combat that would be an intense struggle and matter of life or death.
* And Paul makes the point that we are not fighting against mere flesh and blood, this is an intense battle with powerful spiritual forces!
  + The devil and his minions are not small human foes that we could some how muster up the strength to defeat.
  + Those tempting you to sin and working to keep you and your loved ones from Christ is an enemy that can only be defeated by divine empowering.
* Paul goes on to stress the power of the enemy we are wrestling against when he describes them in v. 12 as “rulers…authorities…and cosmic powers over this present darkness.”
* In modern scholarship there is much debate as to whom Paul is exactly referring to in this specific passage but it is clear that Paul’s objective is to get his readers to feel the weight of the battle that is being waged and the power of the enemy that is scheming to destroy our lives.
  + I like what NT scholar Peter O’Brien says about this passage and the forces listed:
    - “Paul’s point is that the Christian life as a whole is a profound spiritual warfare of cosmic proportions in which the *ultimate* opposition to the advance of the gospel and moral integrity springs from evil, supernatural powers under the control of the god of this world.”
* Brothers and sisters, don’t miss the battle that is being waged for your joy in Christ and the eternal salvation of your friends, families, and coworkers who are separated from God.
  + The evil one and his forces are scheming to keep the eyes of unbelievers veiled to the truth of the gospel.
    - To keep them in the dark, following the course of this world, ultimately leading to their eternal separation from God.
  + The evil one and his forces are scheming to keep you, Christian, from pursuing greater satisfaction and joy in Christ.
    - He is working to keep you preoccupied with this world so that you will neglect your privilege to pursue Jesus Christ daily and His glory in your everyday life.
* Let us not be a community that is ignorant of the spiritual warfare that is being waged each and every day on this earth.

*TRANS: So what hope is there? If our enemy is so great and powerful and is daily scheming to destroy us what are we to do?* [PREGNANT PAUSE]

* The decisive victory over the powers of evil against us has ALREADY BEEN WON BY GOD IN JESUS CHRIST!
* Look with me at 1 Corinthians 15:55-57
  + “*Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*”
* The two goals of Satan and his powers is to draw you to sin, and bring you to death. THE POWER OF BOTH HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY DESTROYED through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God!
* Jesus Christ came to this earth on a rescue mission.
  + He knew the strength of our enemy, the sins that we have committed and the eternal death that awaits us.
  + Jesus came to this earth to live a life unaffected by the temptations of the devil and his demons. He never once sinned.
  + But he didn’t just come to live a sinless life…He came to rescue sinners like you and me from the power of sin and Satan by dying on a cross as a ransom for our sin.
  + In His death on the cross, the wrath of God on sin was satisfied.
  + In His resurrection, Jesus secured the promise of victory over evil
* It doesn’t get any better than this folks!
  + If you have turned from your sin, and placed faith in Jesus for salvation from sin and death, victory is yours!
* So we who are in Christ Jesus wage a war that we has already been won. We live in an already-not-yet state.
* Jesus has already won the victory over sin and death, but the battle is still being waged on this earth. It will continue to be fought until Jesus Christ returns to this earth to completely disarm and destroy all spiritual forces of evil, and restore the earth with peace and His presence. But we fight as victors!
  + We can now fight the spiritual war in immense confidence that comes through the finished work of Jesus Christ’s life, death and resurrection.
* Think about this for a moment:
  + If a soldier in battle knows that his victory is sure, he fights with great confidence.
    - Since he knows that his victory is secure in the battle he is in, he will take more risks!
    - He won’t sit in the back, he will rise up and fight on the front lines!
* Followers of Jesus, so it should be with you and me!
  + We ought to willingly take up arms against these spiritual forces of evil against us.
  + We ought to take risks like giving away our possessions.
  + We ought to take risks like sharing the gospel with our unreached coworkers, neighbors, and friends.
* Brothers and sisters, we are in the midst of a spiritual war for the souls of men and women. The victory has already been won in Christ Jesus. How could we not joyfully and willingly join the Lord on His glorious mission to seek and save the lost??

*CONCLUSION: So to conclude our time, I want to ask a couple questions…*

* Have you turned from sin, and placed faith in Jesus Christ for salvation?
  + If not, I plead with you to do so today.
  + The enemy against you is too great to defeat on your own. Your sin against God will most certainly lead to spiritual death, unless you turn to Jesus for salvation.
  + Turn from sin and place faith in Christ for salvation today.
* For those of you who have placed faith in Christ for salvation…
  + Are you standing in Christ’s victory today? Are you actively seeking to be strengthened by the strength of Christ?
  + Pray for strength, forsake passivity, and put on the armor of God.
* Redemption Hill Church, I love you and my wife loves you. We are thankful for you and have so enjoyed our time as members of this church.
* I can’t wait to return to this church in 10 years and see how God has worked.
* Let Redemption Hill Church be known for its love and devotion to our victorious Savior, Jesus Christ.
* **Redemption Hill, Stand Strong In Christ**.

***PRAY WITH ME…***