

There Is Strength And Freedom In The Gospel

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 November 1987

Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 00] I was appointed for the epistle for tonight, which is the sixth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, and beginning at the tenth verse.

And if you're all there with me, I will know it because I'm going to read the first half of the first verse, and you're going to read the second, and I'll check the volume to see if you're all in on it.

Are you ready? Ephesians 6.10. Finally, be strong in the Lord. And that is the strength of the Son.

Well, that's my first point. Now, I don't know how strong you're feeling or whether you're...

I don't know what to think of you. But I know from my own experience that strength is not something that really comes from me.

It's a sense of being strong in the Lord. That is, in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are to be strong. A lot of people, I think, show weakness.

[1 : 19] They show an inability to cope with emotions. They show the wounding and hurt of loneliness. They show very often the wounding and hurt of misunderstanding, of jealousy, of feeling sorry for themselves, of guilt and various kinds of afflictions.

And those things seem to come at us, and we lose our strength. We become weak and passive and unable to cope.

And we think there must be something wrong with us. And when we come across a passage like this, Be strong in the Lord and the strength of his might, we think to ourselves, Well, whoever wrote that doesn't understand the problem.

There's something wrong with me. Well, yes, there is something wrong with you. But if you look at this passage carefully, you'll see what it is that's wrong with you and with all of us.

And if you read it carefully, you will see that you're to be strong in his might and to put on the whole armor of God so that you can stand against the wiles of the devil.

[2 : 36] You have an enemy under whose control you are. And he renders you weak, impotent, and useless, so that you are weak in the devil but strong in the Lord.

And it's the devil who weakens you so that you can't do the thing that you're called upon to do. He gets at you through fear, anxiety, depression, discouragement, and all sorts of ways.

And you find yourself very weak and overcome by the reality of evil in the world. Now, look how it works out. We're not contending against flesh and blood.

That's not the enemy. But against principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

That's a fairly formidable army that you face. The opposition of evil is very real.

[3 : 45] That Christians find themselves in the place where their knees are weak and their hands hang down and they're hardly capable of standing up straight is not surprising, considering the reality of the forces of evil that are set against you.

You have that lovely story in Luke's gospel of the strong man. And in a sense, Satan is the strong man.

And he has rendered us impotent to challenge his authority, to challenge his tyranny, to challenge his rule. We haven't got that kind of strength to do it.

And so we tend to fold up in weakness under the pervasive power of evil in our world. That's what Paul says to us.

And that's not something which is sort of general and out there. That power of evil is tailor-made to fit you, so that Satan knows how to render you powerless, weak, and incapable.

[5 : 01] He knows how to destroy you and make you totally ineffective as a person. Paul doesn't hide from this reality as we do.

We are super sophisticated people who live in a world of inevitability. Things happen. So, if you win some, you lose some.

Let me tell you that there is a force at work in our world to make sure you lose everything. That you end up a loser. And that's what's true of our world.

The only peace you will get is the peace of submitting to his tyranny and watching yourself slowly decay under the innervation that sets in because of the power of evil in the world.

So, the first thing I want you to look at in this passage is how descriptive it is of the powers of evil. And Paul knows this.

[6 : 06] If you went back to Acts 20 and read Paul's farewell to the elders of the Ephesian church, you'd see how very much he was aware of the terrible tyranny of Satan against them.

We're not contending against flesh and blood. If we were, then it would be a simple contest. But we're wrestling against principalities, powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places.

Now, I'm sure that Paul doesn't want to make you paranoid and to say that the Vancouver City Police Force is in the hands of the devil or the public transit system is in the hands of the devil or visa cards are the sign of the devil's kingdom or, you know, city government or multinational corporations.

No, he may be able to use those things from time to time, but Satan himself is the one whom we have to fight against.

And we have to fight against him in the name of Jesus Christ and in the power of Christ. And he tells us how to do it. And none of you, you're either so totally in submission to him that you don't try and lift a finger anyway.

[7 : 31] Again, you're a blah kind of person, spiritually. But if you are living your life as a Christian, you're going to meet this opposition all the time.

And it's best that you recognize it. And Paul says it's not hard to recognize. That's why he tells you to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might and to put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to do it.

In other words, you're not to be able to do it in your own strength. You're only to be able to do it as you put on the whole armor of God. Therefore, take the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand.

We're now at verse 13. At the end of the day, you'll still be standing. At the end of the day, which is the evil day, when all the pressure comes on you, when all the force of Satan is to defeat you, that you will, at the end of that day, being strong in the Lord, be able to stand.

I mean, I go home lots of times when I can go through the door without opening it. You know, I just crawl underneath it. You feel so low, you know, so utterly defeated.

[8 : 51] And this word is for us, that we are to find our strength in the Lord, not in ourselves. And this is our spiritual strength.

This is the ultimate battle. Now, the battle against, you know, the battle we have to maintain our levels of physical energy are one thing. But this spiritual battle is the fundamental battle, Paul says. And it's a battle against the very formidable powers of evil. And he says that what you're to do is you're to stand, therefore having girded your loins with truth.

I don't know if you suffer from lying loins, but most of us do. And that the needs and demands of our loins are such that we are often deceived.

I don't know whether this refers to that or not, but it always reminds me of that, so I thought I'd pass it on to you. Having girded your loins with truth, having truth in that area of your life, which is so basic to the whole of your life, so that your loins are to be girded with truth.

[10 : 10] Maybe the truth of doctrine, John Stott suggests, perhaps the truth of a right relationship, the truth in your heart, that is, that kind of truth.

But you've got to have it, because that's what protects you. You've got to be willing to face the truth and to avoid the lie. And your loins have got to be girded with truth.

The second thing you've got to do is put on the breastplate of righteousness, that is, a right relationship with God and a right relationship with other people in terms of moral and ethical behavior, which is the expression in your life of that right relationship which you have to God.

And that protects you, that breastplate of righteousness. Having your feet shod with the equipment of the gospel of peace.

I think that's important. I mean, they suggest that the reason it talks about having your feet shod is that that's the way you stand.

[11:19] And you wouldn't go on a, I mean, there's British Columbia boots. You know them with those funny soles on them. And some people wear them all the time. And they're a sort of status symbol out here in BC, that you're a mountain climber.

You're ready to go anywhere at any time. Well, that's what Paul's talking about here. Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. That you have something to say, you have something to offer, you're ready to offer it, you're ready to go, you're ready to take your stand.

Because your feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. And do you know what I, I mean, I find this, and I suspect that you must find it too.

But it's that you're talking to somebody and the gospel seems irrelevant.

You can't see how it applies. You can't see how it might affect that person. You can't see how you could share it with this person or that person. Somehow it seems to evade us.

[12:29] And when Paul says, your feet are to be shod with the preparation of the gospel, I think he means that you're to be ready to share the reality of the gospel. And in order to do that, you've got to stay in touch with what the gospel is.

You've got to be thinking about it. You've got to know what it is. You've got to know how to explain it. You've got to be prepared. You've got to be ready to take your stand. Your advice may be very good, but it doesn't compare with the reality of being able to share the gospel with somebody who is in need of it.

We'll come back to that later in the chapter. But feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace is something that Paul advises, and later on it's something he asks for.

Then he says, above all, taking the shield of faith with which you can quench the flaming darts of the evil one. And, you know, this is supposed to have been a big shield that was made up of linen and leather and would stop things and you could move it anywhere.

And when the burning arrow of lust comes at you, you stop it. And when the burning arrow of false guilt comes at you, you stop it.

[13:45] And when the burning arrow of depression and discouragement comes in to reduce you to nothing, you stop it. These are the ways that day by day misunderstandings, the fiery darts of the wicked one come at us.

And if you know where they're from, and if you know what their purpose is, then you can stand up to them. Now, if you don't understand that, then you are wide open to getting just cut to pieces by the fiery darts of the wicked one.

Helpful to one another to be able to encourage one another to do that. So you've got to have that shield. And then the helmet of salvation, which is the hope which we have.

See, our salvation is a hope that we have. And it's a hope that's based on the character and nature of the promise of God to us. And we have, in a sense, the present awareness of a future reality. And that future reality is the fullness of salvation, which belongs to us according to the promise of God in Christ. And that helmet of salvation is that hope.

[15:08] And that protects us from getting hit over the head and being rendered senseless. That hope belongs to us.

The helmet of salvation, the sword of the spirit, the effectiveness of the word in defending yourself and the effectiveness of the word in cutting down the enemy.

That the word of God is that sword of the spirit, which is partly a defensive weapon and partly an offensive weapon. And it is to be the means by which you can defend yourself from people when they attack you unjustly.

And it's also the means by which you can cut people down when they build for themselves lies and subterfuges on which to live. And you can cut through all that to the reality of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. And that's all. All six of them. Six pieces of armor. And in verse 18, he says, pray at all times in the spirit with all prayer and supplication.

[16:22] To that end, keep alert with all perseverance. And I like perseverance better. Making supplication for all the saints.

And again, John Stott points out in his commentary, this isn't a sometime religion. This is an all-time religion. You know, it's not pray sometime with some prayers for some perseverance for some of

the saints.

Which is about as far as most of us get. But we're not to be sometime prayers. We're to be all-time prayers. You know, pray at all times for all the saints with all perseverance.

We're to keep at it. And that it's to be a perpetual habit of our lives. And then Paul says, And for me, that utterance may be given me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel. What God has done for us in Christ. And that, I think, is why we so easily lose touch with the reality of the gospel. Because of the mystery of it. It comes by way of God showing us.

[17 : 33] So that when we are in contact with a friend, when we're in an encounter with a person, when we are in a situation, we need to be in touch with the mystery of the gospel. We need to be able to explain it.

We need to understand it. We need to know how to apply it. We need to read it through the pages of the newspaper. We need to see it through all the Canadian content on the CBC television and the American content.

We need to be in touch with the reality of the gospel in every situation. And Paul says, I want you to pray for me. That if I'm up against the great people of this world, that two things might be done for me.

One is that I may be able to give expression to the gospel to be given utterance of it. And two, that I might be bold to do that. I won't shrink away from it.

And I think that's so important for us. And, you know, it's easy for me to be bold up here because I've been, you know, I've been up preaching for years. But boldness in talking one-to-one to somebody whom you deeply respect and is probably far more intelligent than you are, than I am, is hard work.

[18 : 42] And the prayer that utterance may be given and boldness in opening my mouth to proclaim the mystery of the gospel. That kind of utterance and boldness Paul prays for, asks for himself.

And I would like you to pray for me that way. And I would like you to want people to pray for you that way. That that utterance, that ability to express the gospel.

Most of us can express the bitterness and malcontent that seethes in our hearts. But to give expression to the mystery of the gospel is the thing that we're supposed to be good at. Paul says, I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly as I ought to speak.

And you know, when the mayor of Vancouver has his picture taken formally, he has around his neck the chains of office, showing the high dignity and honor that is his.

And Paul, who as he wrote this, was in chains, said, that I may be an ambassador and that these may be my chains of office as an ambassador of Jesus Christ, sharing the gospel.

[19 : 55] That I might be recognized as having the high dignity of being one who speaks for Christ boldly and without shame. Well, I'm through.

I leave verses 21 to 24 to your careful perusal. There was one other thing that I wanted to share with you, and I'll do that just as I close.

And that's this. Paul is asking to find a freedom to utter with boldness in opening his mouth the mystery of the gospel.

And here he is, a man in chains. And I'm sure that he wants freedom.

And I'd like you to look at what the chains are that you're in. And they may not be chains that are forged of metal, but they may be stronger for all that than if they were.

[21 : 13] But in your situation, under your circumstance, if Paul can ask us to pray for his freedom, then we can ask that we be prayed for that we might find freedom in the situation in which we find ourselves.

Whatever it is that has us chained, that we might find the freedom to be the effective servants of God, acting in the strength of God, putting on the whole armor of God.

God, because God, I'm sure, intends to meet us in this situation and to wonderfully provide for us in the situation in which we find ourselves.

And so when Paul says, put on the whole armor of God, I'm sure he means that to apply to each of us in the circumstances of our lives. loins girt with truth, the breastplate of righteousness, can I get them all?

Sandals, of the preparation of the gospel of peace, the sword of the spirit which is the word of God, the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation belong to each of us.

[22 : 38] and we need to claim them because we can't carry on the warfare without them. You're a monkey if you think you can.

You just can't. And that's why God has provided them and that's why Paul tells us to put them on and that's how God provides for us in a world in which the profundity of evil surrounds us all the time.

Mostly renders us useless. but that's not God's purpose that we should be useless but that we should be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Now if you'd please turn to page 234 in the Green Book of Alternative Services we'll find there our response to having heard the Word of God read to having heard the Word of God explained and that response is the Nicene Creed.

[24 : 00] Please stand. I believe in one God the Father Almighty maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible and in one Lord Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God begotten of the Father before all worlds God of God light of light very God of very God begotten not made being of one substance with the Father through whom all things were made who for us and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary and was made man and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate he cursed and buried and the third day he rose again according to the scriptures and ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of the

Father and he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead whose kingdom shall have no end and I believe in the Holy Ghost the Lord the giver of life who proceeds from the Father and the Son who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified who stay by the cross and I believe on the Holy God and I saw the church I acknowledge the of the permission of sins and I look at the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world now Amen Let's kneel to pray Let's take a moment just to be quiet before the Lord and reflect on what Harry has said and reflect on what the Lord might be saying to us about the chains that are binding us Let's be quiet for a moment Lord in your mercy hear our prayer you turn with me in the service book to page 236 We'll follow the order for prayer there Beginning two-thirds of the way down the page In peace let us pray to the Lord Lord have mercy for peace from on high and for our salvation let us pray to the Lord For the peace of the whole world for the welfare of the holy church of God for the unity of all let us pray to the Lord Lord for for our bishops for all the clergy and people let us pray to the

Lord for Elizabeth our queen and for the leaders of the nations and for all in authority let us pray to the Lord for this city of Vancouver and for every city and community for those who live in them in faith let us pray to the Lord for good weather and for abundant harvests for all to share let us pray to the Lord for those who travel by land water or air for the sick and the suffering we think of Harvey Guest traveling to Toronto we think of Don Johns and Lionel Gurney in India now for prisoners and captives for their safety health and salvation let us pray to the Lord for our deliverance from all affliction strife and need let us pray to the

Lord for the absolution and remission of our sins and offenses let us pray to the Lord for all who have died let us pray to the Lord remembering all the saints we commit ourselves one another and our whole life to Christ our God Almighty God who has given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications unto thee and us promise that when two or three are gathered together in thy name thou wilt hear their requests fulfill now O Lord the desires and petitions of thy servants as may be most expedient for them granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth and in the world to come life everlasting for thou father are good and loving and we glorify thee through thy son

[29 : 19] Jesus Christ our Lord in the Holy Spirit now and forever Amen service service continues near the bottom of the next page let us humbly confess our sins to almighty God almighty God our heavenly father who of his great mercy hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them that with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him have mercy upon you pardon and deliver you from all your sins confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Lord now we stand to sing and during our singing the offering will be received the song is in the red hymn book the small red book it's 26 oh welcome all ye noble saints of old as now before your very eyes unfold the wonders all so long ago foretold

God and men at table are sat down God and man at table are sat down elders martyrs all are falling down prophets patriots are gathering round what angels long to see now man has found God and man at table are sat down God and man at table are sat down who is this who spreads the victory feast who is this who makes our warring cease Jesus risen Savior Prince of peace God and man at table are sat down

God and man at table are sat down beggars lame and hell is also here repentant public hands are drawing near way wayward sons come home without a fear God and man at table are sat down God and man at table are sat down worship in the presence of the Lord with joyful songs and hearts in one accord and let our host and table be adored God and man at table are sat down God and man and table are sat down when at last this earth shall pass away when

Jesus and his bride are here to stay the feast of love has just begun that day God and man at table are sat down God and man at table are sat down God and man at table are sat down man or we go on with the service I'd just like to take a moment just to explain something that we're going to be doing slightly differently today that is that when you come up to receive communion when you're given the bread it will be in the form of a small wafer What we're going to ask you to do is instead of eating that wafer to hold it.

When the wine comes along, as the words are said for the receiving of the wine, to dip that bread, that wafer in the wine and then eat the combined bread and wine by putting it in your mouth.

[34 : 15] So we'll be trying that today as a different way of receiving the body and blood of Christ. Now our service continues on page 241.

The Lord be with you. And with us with you. Lift up your hearts. With the hearts of the Lord. Let us give thanks unto our Lord God.

It is meet and right and so to you. It is very meet, right and our bounden duty that we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto thee.

O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty, everlasting God, creator and preserver of all things. Therefore, with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious name, evermore praising thee and saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory.

Glory be to thee, O Lord most high. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. For those of you and of us. Please kneel.

[35 : 51] Blessing and glory and thanksgiving be unto thee, Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who of thy tender mercy didst give thine only Son, Jesus Christ, to take our nature upon him and to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption, who made there by his one oblation of himself once offered a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, and did institute and in his holy gospel command us to continue a perpetual memorial of that his precious death until his coming again.

Hear us, O merciful Father, we most humbly beseech thee, and grant that we, receiving these thy creatures of bread and wine, according to thy Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, may be partakers of his most blessed body and blood, who in the same night that he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he break it and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat.

This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. Likewise, after supper he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins.

Do this as often as ye shall drink it in remembrance of me. Wherefore, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, we thy humble servants with all thy holy church, remembering the precious death of thy beloved Son, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension, and looking for his coming again in glory, to make before thee in this sacrament of the holy bread of eternal life, and the cup of everlasting salvation, the memorial which he hath commanded.

We praise thee, we bless thee, we thank thee, and we pray to thee, Lord our God. And we entirely desire thy fatherly goodness, mercifully to accept this, our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, most humbly beseeching thee to grant that by the merits and death of thy Son, Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, we and all thy whole church may obtain remission of our sins and all other benefits of his passion.

[39 : 03] And we pray that by the power of thy Holy Spirit, all we who are partakers of this holy communion may be fulfilled with thy grace and heavenly benediction through Jesus Christ, our

Lord, by whom and with whom, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory be unto thee, O Father Almighty, world without end.

Now at the bottom of page 245. Now as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say, Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever.

For thine is Hod Little Earth. Then, I esteemed the temple to the heart of God. This is a living guest and ■■ you via email. And a faith that shall not■■ e with the wrong of the Lord as it is, the peace of God■ will die for the Lord, and is the king and will ■■■■■■■■il be worthy of honor.

[40 : 35] And a feel good to forgive us all the Fan chicks, and the smoothies that will not into temptation, and the remin While roars the physical work, and God is the first son of this crisis of ■ Benadon, to give you three disciples of God.