

That You May Be Able to Stand

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[0 : 00] Let's turn to the second of those readings, the New Testament, the epistle, the letter to the Ephesians, chapter 6, page 1178, and reading from verse 10.

Verse 10 to verse 13. This evening, finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

You remember, of course, as we've been making our way through this letter, the letter to the Ephesians, how the theme with which the apostle closes this letter is found at the beginning of chapter 5, the first couple of verses.

[1 : 22] Therefore, he says, be imitators of God as beloved children. Remember what we said when we were looking at that verse, that in many respects, that covers everything.

If you and I were imitators of God, that is the objective of the Christian life. In other words, when we wake up in the morning as Christians, we ask ourselves, how should we live today?

These few words, they cover the objective, the aim of the Christian life. Be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love.

If only we knew, if only I knew how to be an imitator of God and to walk in love as Christ's love does. And that's why it's so important, friends, to regularly sit at the Lord's table.

Because every time we sit at the Lord's table, it's one of those means where God has forced us. We were talking about this the other day, that God actually forces his people by command to sit at his table.

[2 : 26] This do, he says, in remembrance of me. Because if it wasn't for that command, then we would only do it when we felt like it. And that's when the circumstances would permit.

And all kinds of reasons would distract us and we'd be all over the place, only doing when we felt like it. No, the Lord says, you must do this. And we do it not simply to remember his death.

That's the primary reason why we sit at the Lord's table. He tells us that. But we do it also so that we can be reminded of who we are, of his love. Extraordinary nature of his love for us.

There used to be a tradition in our Highland communion services that you concentrated at some point in the service on the love of God in Christ Jesus.

And that was a good tradition. And I hope we never lose it. Because it is because of his love that we are sitting there and that we are receiving his presence and his word.

[3 : 26] And we are meeting with him as the God who loves us. Not because we deserve it, but because while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. It's extraordinary.

It doesn't make sense that God should love me. I cannot find any logical reason why God should love me. And it's because of that.

That love not only has renewed me and brought me to life in Jesus Christ. It has also given me the governing principle where I live the Christian life.

Walk in love, says Paul, as Christ's love does. That's to be the model. That's the blueprint. Never lose sight of the fact that you are beloved by Christ.

That you don't deserve it. That you're a child of grace. And treat everybody the same way. And treat the world in the same way. And make sure that you live as the Lord would want you to live.

[4 : 22] And live as he lived. And that's why we need to focus our eyes upon him and him alone. He is the one who has brought us together this evening. And he's the one who brought us this

morning to remember his death.

So we're to walk in love as Christ loved us. And gave himself up for us. A fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. And if we grow in our understanding of what these words mean.

Then we'll change. We cannot but change in our character. The more we come to terms with the love of God in Jesus Christ. It's a love that breaks our hardness and our pride.

And it melts us. It humbles us before God. And before other people. And it gives us a tremendous witness to the world. Of how life is to be lived.

And people will notice. There's no question. Remember the disciples. When they were persecuted because of their preaching. At the very beginning in Acts.

[5 : 20] When they went out to start preaching the resurrection. You remember what they said about them. That they took note that they had been with Jesus. In other words. That as they had lived with Jesus.

His influence upon them became evident. And it's the same with ourselves. As we live with Jesus. Like what Kenny I was saying this morning. As we live with Jesus.

As we meet with him. As we seek him. And as we see him in the gospel. His influence will have a direct result upon us.

And the way in which we live in this world. But that doesn't make it easy. And as the apostle begins to bring his letter to a conclusion. He wants to leave the Ephesian believers.

And no doubt as to how difficult the Christian life is. It's as if he's saying to them. Make no mistake. That what you have signed up for.

[6 : 17] If I can use that term. It's not a signing up. It's a believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. But what you have committed yourself to. Is nothing short of a warfare.

That will last for the rest of your life. And that's why he says. Finally. That word finally is very important. Verse 10. Finally be strong in the Lord. And in the strength of his mind.

That first word there. It means. It's not just. Here I am bringing my letter to a conclusion. He said. It actually means this. From now on. As long as you are in this world.

Your objective. Is to be strong in the Lord. Because your enemy. The devil. Goes about like a roaring lion. Seeking whom he may devour.

And that's why the rest of this chapter. The rest of this letter. Is given to what we normally call. Spiritual warfare. And that's the way I would like to spend the month of June. God willing.

[7 : 15] In going through this chapter. And in. Seeing the various elements. And what we call the armor of God. The various elements that are given.

I read the chapter earlier on. Take up the whole armor of God. We're going to be asking ourselves in verse 14. What is the belt of truth? What does that mean?

What significance is it? How important it is? What does it mean to put on the belt of truth? What is the belt of truth? And then. Secondly. He tells us to put on the breastplate of righteousness.

What is the breastplate of righteousness? Why is it so important? And. The shoes. Having put on the readiness. The shoes of readiness. Given by the gospel of peace.

That's the third thing. And then fourthly. He says in all circumstances. Take up the shield of faith. With which you can extinguish all the flaming darts. Of the evil one. And take up the helmet of salvation.

[8 : 10] And the sword of the spirit. Which is the word of God. Not forgetting to pray. At all times in the spirit. With all prayer. And supplication. And to that end.

Keep alert. And so on. We're going to be looking then. God willing. Over the course of the next three or four weeks. At the armor of God. We're going to be seeing. How important it is. Not only to recognize.

Each element. And what each element means. The belt. The shield. The sword. And so on. But how. You can't pick and choose. Which element you put on.

You can't have one without the other. It all has to be on. At the same time. And it has to be on. All the time. Every element. Has to be on. At all times. Take up. The armor of God.

And that's why he says. Finally. From now on. Make sure. He says. That from this day onwards. You are ready. For your enemy. When he comes.

[9 : 05] To us. So what we're going to be talking about. Is the. The. Spiritual warfare. That the Ephesian Christians. Had to face. And that you and I.

Have to face. As. God's people. And. What I want to do this evening. Before we go into that. Is to look at verses 10 to 13. And to ask ourselves.

Two questions. About what Paul. Talks about. In these verses. First of all. I want us to focus. On verse 12. For we do not wrestle. Against flesh. And blood.

But against the rulers. What are the rulers? Against the authorities. What are the authorities? Against the cosmic powers.

What does that mean? Cosmic powers. Over this present darkness. Against the spiritual forces of evil. In the heavenly places. Now. This is not the only time.

[10:01] This is not the first time. That the apostle brings up. This kind of terminology. In this letter. We're going to be asking. What does he mean? When we are to wrestle.

Against the rulers. And authorities. And cosmic powers. Against the spiritual forces of evil. In the heavenly places. That's the first question. And then the second question. Is simply this. How can I be strong in the Lord?

Verse 10. Finally. He says. Be strong. In the Lord. And in the strength. Of his might. Two very simple questions. One question. That naturally. Arises from the passage.

That really has to be. Explained. Or attempted to be explained. And then secondly. Verse 10. Be strong. In the Lord. And then we'll be in a position. I hope. To be able to look at the rest.

The armor of God. From verse 14 onwards. What then. Does verse 12. To 13. Mean. What are the rulers. The authorities.

[10:58] The cosmic powers. Over this. Because these. Are what. God's people. Wrestle. With. Every single day. There is never a day. In the life. Of a believer.

That. But that he. Or she. Has to wrestle. Has to war. Against these. Sometimes more than us. Thankfully. There are times. When. The wrestling.

Is less. It. Less. Intense. Thankfully. Uh. But sometimes. There is what the apostle calls. The evil day.

Stand. Therefore. In the eve. That you may be able to withstand. In. The evil day. And what he means by that is. That not only is the. World in which we live. One which is broken.

And separated from God. And ruled. By. The evil one. But. There are times. In the Christian life. Where that warfare. Is particularly. Intense.

[11:55] And the only way. To be ready. For that time. Is by doing. What the apostle tells us. And putting on the whole. Armor. Of God. So. What does it mean then?

What do we wrestle against? Rulers. And authorities. Well. Some people. And I'm not going to spend. Much time on this. Some people. Rackon that these. Rulers. And authorities. Are the. Rulers.

The influences. The governments. The systems. And the empires. Of this world. And. That's the way. They interpret that.

But I'm not going to go into. That interpretation. Because I don't believe. It's true. I don't believe.

That's what it means. At all. And I would direct you. If you want to really. Study this. To John Stott's commentary.

On Ephesians. Where he goes into this. In very great detail. In his. Bible speaks today.

Commentary. If you want to. Study. What this means. In detail. What the apostle.

[12:48] Is talking about though. Is not the systems. And the governments. Of this world. He's talking about. A dimension. That we can't see. A realm.

That we can't see. It's an invisible. Realm. It's an invisible. Existence. Or world. If you like. In which. There are.

Demonic. Beings. Demons. Demons. Demons. There is a huge. Massive. Innumerable. Army. Of. Spirits. Each one. I would guess. With a name. Each one. With. His own. Personality. Each one. With an objective. And a scheme. And a strategy. And there is a hierarchy. In this. Army. In which. At the top. If I can call it that.

[13:44] Is. Satan. Himself. Now. Right away. There may be. One or two. In here. Even in here. This evening. Who are laughing up your sleeve. And saying. Don't tell me.

That this guy. In the 21st century. Believes. In demons. And the devil. You're not alone. There are plenty of people. In the world. Perhaps even the majority.

Of people in our world today. In our country today. Who would agree with you. That. The notion. Is on the surface. Because everything is so invisible. And because we put our trust.

In science. And everything that can be. That can be researched. And deduced. And analyzed. Then. Of course. Any mention of spiritual beings. Must sound completely ridiculous. Let me tell you why I believe it. I believe it. Because. Jesus. Jesus. Believed it. What did he say to Peter? He turned around to Peter. One day. And he said. Peter.

[14:41] Satan. Has desire. To have you. Do you know what? If it's good enough for Jesus. Good enough for me. You know what it tells me also. That the beginning of this ministry. After he'd been baptized.

He went into the. Into the wilderness. For 40 days. And there. He was tempted. By the devil. And the Bible records. A person to person. Conversation. Between Jesus. And this being. Called the devil. If it's good enough for Jesus. Good enough for me. If he believes it. I believe it. It's good enough for the Bible.

It's good enough for me. That is a historical narrative. Of a conversation. That took place. Between the devil. And himself. He also believes in angels. Because on the other side of the balance. There are other spiritual beings. And instead of them being. Directed towards evil. They are directed towards good. They are directed to praising. And glorifying God.

[15:36] And the Bible is full. Of angels. Full of them. You find them. All over the place. Ministering. Glorifying God. It was the angels that were. Ascending. And descending. From the staircase.

In Jacob's dream. Angels that announced. The birth of Jesus. The angel Gabriel. Announced the birth of Jesus. To Mary. And when he was born. It was to the shepherds. That the angels appeared. And they. They. Announced glory to God. In the highest. And on earth peace. And good will. On. Or his favor. Upon all. In whom his favor rests. Jesus talks about. The angels of the little ones. Who believe in me. Whatever that means. We're not exactly sure. Of what exactly that means. But the Bible is full of angels. But it's also full. Of the reality. Of demons. As well. And there is a hierarchy. And that's why. That's what I believe. The apostle refers to. When he talks about rulers.

[16:34] Not just one ruler. But several rulers. And to prove that. That's why I read. That chapter. In the book of Daniel. Remember of course. How Daniel was praying. On this occasion.

And an angel came. And met with him. And he. Gave an account. Of how he would have come to him. Sooner. If it hadn't been. For the prince. Of Persia. And the prince of Persia. Obviously. In the context. Of that chapter. Is a demon. A devil. If you like. The prince of Persia. But he's the prince of Persia. So it appears.

That he has some kind of. Responsibility. Over what was going on. At that time. Particularly with reference. To God's people. It also appears. That he was given.

Some kind of responsibility. With the nation. Or the country. Of Persia. At that time. Of course. Persia. Was the big superpower. At that time. And yet.

[17:30] There is an unseen eye. There is someone. Who is looking. And trying to control events. In this world. So that the Persians. Are able to do. As much damage.

As they possibly can. Against the purposes. Of God. I believe that. I can't see it. I can't prove it. Except in the Bible. I believe it. And it seems to me.

If I'm going to believe. In the unseen God. Who created the universe. Then I'm going to believe. In what he says. And if he tells me. That there is. An enemy. An unseen. Spiritual enemy. With an army. Of followers. Who are intent. On destroying me. And you. And everything. That God does. Then. I would do. Very well. To believe.

What he says. Now I believe. Let me tell you. Just again. Just a little distraction. I think we've lost sight of this. In the. Western Christian church.

[18:27] Somehow or other. I think. I don't know why. I don't know how it's happened. But. I think. It's one of the things. We've lost sight of. And that is the reality. Of the warfare.

That takes place. In this realm. In this dimension. That is unseen. To this world. And I think. We would do very well. To explore it further.

Not in any kind of. Obsessive sense. Some people can be obsessed. With demons. And angels. And that's quite unhealthy. There's only one thing. We need to be obsessed with. And that's the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the gospel. That's what we need to be obsessed with. But. The Bible tells us. That there is. There are rulers. There are. Authorities.

And cosmic powers. And cosmic powers. Over this present darkness. Against the spiritual forces of evil. In the heavenly places. I remember one time. I was in Thailand. And I was at the Bible school. [19:22] I used to go. I haven't been now. For the last. Or three or four years. And. One of the. One of the. Great benefits. Of going there. Was not just to. To see the Karen people. And to teach the. Young people.

But. Also to meet with other Christians. From various parts of the world. Who were there. It was such a joy. To meet with other Christians. And I remember meeting this guy. Who was a lecturer. In a Bible college.

In Manila. In the Philippines. I got to know him quite well. In fact. I've kept up. I email him. Every so often. An awfully nice guy. Really fine Christian fellow. And I remember asking.

I remember sitting down. Over lunch once. And I said to him. What do you think. I said. You've met people from the west. And you know. You know. The Christian culture. In the Philippines. And in the far east.

I said. What do you think. The main. The main. Do you see any difference. Between what we emphasize. In the west. And what you emphasize. In the far east.

[20:18] And he said. Yes. He said. I'll tell you what. He says. You don't ever seem to mention. The spiritual forces. You preach the gospel.

You believe the bible. And we're one with you in that. But he says. One thing I do notice. That you never seem to mention it. You know. He was right. I had to hold up my hands.

I said. You're absolutely right. Because it's something I naturally recoil from. A. Because I don't understand it. And we love. We love to understand things. Don't we. We love to be able to say. Well. I've got a grasp on that. But there's no way. You're ever going to understand this. Because it's all so unseen. It's all so. It's all so dark. But that's not the point.

The point is. Is it real? And it is real. The bible says it's real. And the bible says. That's what we wrestle with. We wrestle with. Rulers and authorities.

[21:17] Cosmic powers over this present darkness. Spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. So be aware. Of that existence. That realm. Of that army of demons.

Now what's their purpose? Their purpose. Is twofold. Their purpose. Is to. Destroy the gospel. And to so destroy the world.

Which God created. And they've done a pretty good job so far. That was their purpose at the very beginning. That was Satan's purpose. It was Satan that came into the garden of Eden.

And tempted Eve. To disobey God. And when she did so. The whole world turned upside down. And if it hadn't been for God's grace.

Coming into a world. And establishing his purpose. In which Jesus Christ would come and crush. The head of the serpent. Then this world would have been destroyed.

[22:13] For sure. That was the devil's purpose. But God promised at that time. That there would be enmity. Between his plan. And the devil's plan. And that's the way it's been.

All along. The devil's plan is to destroy. Whatever God tries to do. And whatever he succeeds. Of course at the end. At the end of the day. God will succeed. He will overcome. And have the victory. But yet. That doesn't mean that there isn't a considerably powerful force. God's aiming to deceive. And to undermine. And to destroy. And to bring down everything that God.

So whatever God does. The devil tries to bring it down. That's what happened in Daniel. Daniel chapter 10. I was prevented. The angel says. I was prevented. Because the prince of Persia.

The prince of Persia held me back. So there's this real tension. And real war. Between the angels of the Lord. And the angels of the devil.

[23:10] Now although this realm is unseen. There's a real contact. Between that existence. And this world. In which somehow or other. There is an influence. And bear in mind this.

The devil only wants to influence. The minds of people in this world. He doesn't care who he possesses. Have you ever wondered. Why it was in the time of Jesus.

There were so many people. Who were actually physically possessed. Possessed by demons. I believe that they were. Actually physically possessed. It's not down to mental illness. Or psychiatric illness.

Or anything like that. They were actually possessed. By demons. Remember Legion for example. Who knows. How many demons possess Legion. You ever wondered. Why it is in today's world.

That doesn't appear to happen. To the same extent. I believe the reason is quite simple. Because it doesn't have to happen. The devil can use any way. That he wants.

[24 : 07] As long as he influences. The minds of men and women. And boys and girls. Away from the gospel. And that means tonight.

As we sit here in this church. Don't ever think. That a church is a safe place. It's not. The devil is never as active.

As he is. In a church building. Where the gospel is being presented. The gospel is not preached in a church. He's happy. Because you go away. None the wiser. But where the gospel is preached.

Where we open this Bible. We read from it. And we explain it. And we drive it home. In the power of the Holy Spirit. Then the devil is all out. To stop you. Coming to faith in Jesus.

All out. I'm asking you tonight. Has he won? Is he winning?

[25 : 06] If you're not a believer in Jesus. Then the devil. Has won. So far. His other purpose is to stop.

You. Progressing. In the Christian life. To make sure that your witness. Is as poor. And as. And as hopeless. As he possibly can. He wants to bring you down.

As a Christian. This is what I believe. That Paul is aiming at. In this chapter. When he says to them. He says. Be strong in the Lord. And put on the whole armor of God. Why? Why should. Why should demons.

Have such an interest. In me. And you. As Christians. Because he knows. That we are products. Of the grace of God. In this world.

He also knows. That it is through you and I. That this world gets to know the gospel. So if he can make us silent. If he can silence us. Or if he can.

[26 : 06] Get us to live in such an inconsistent. Pathetic way. That people. Don't see the gospel. Then he's happy. That is what. He is.

That is what. The. The. The. Our enemy. Will try. And he'll use. He'll pull out all the stops. And use every means. At his. Disposal.

In order. To do. That. There's also. A connection. Between. The cosmic. Or what Paul calls. The cosmic powers.

Or the cosmic. Forces. Forces. And the. Population. In which we live. Is also. Somehow. Able. To. Shift.

And influence. The minds. Of people. In various. Countries. And areas. Of the world. To keep them. Away. To keep them. Occupied. As long as people.

[27 : 00] Don't ever. Get to hear the gospel. Or don't get to take it. Seriously. He'll use. False religion. In order. To draw people. In fear. And superstition. Away from the gospel. As long as.

People believe. The wrong things. Then he knows. That they're finished. And they're destroyed. But he knows. Also. That we can be. So taken up. With everything. That we see. In this world.

That our minds. Will be obsessed. With this thing. And that thing. And the more. We fill our minds. With all the wrong things. Then the less. We're going to fill our minds. With the gospel. So he will use.

Every means. At his disposal. In order to keep. God's purposes. From getting through. To you. And to me. And to keep God. From doing. His work. In this world.

Ultimately. He's destroyed. Remember of course. We must always remember. That when Christ died. On the cross. He destroyed. The work of the devil. The war. Has been decisively won.

[27 : 56] And yet it's not over. The victory is won. In Jesus Christ. And we must always remember that. We're not dealing with. An insurmountable foe.

We're dealing with an enemy. Who has already been defeated. And yet. It's like D-Day. And V-D-E. The battle. The second world war. Was decisively won. On D-Day.

And yet the war continued. Until it was completed. And the war. Will not be completed. Until. The Lord Jesus. Comes again. We're also to be aware.

That every single one of us. It's not just a population thing. It's not just a government thing. It's not just. Not just the. The way in which public opinion works. And behind.

All of these things. Lies the influence. Of evil. And the evil being. We're also to know. That everything. About us. Is known to him.

[28 : 56] You ever seen these. Have you ever seen inside. A control room. Where there's. The CCTV cameras. All over a city. Lakes of Glasgow. For example. Don't have so many of them here.

In Stornoway. But you have them in Glasgow. In London. When you have CCTV cameras. All over the place. And you pass one. And you think. Well. No big deal. Then behind.

These cameras. Somewhere. In some building. Somewhere. There's this. Massive room. There's all these. Television screens. And there's hundreds. Of different areas.

Of London. And you can see. Everything that's going on. You can see people passing. Cars going by. And of course. The police take an interest. To see if any crime. Is being committed.

All. The whole place. Is being watched. Make no mistake. That's exactly. The kind of scenario. We're talking about here. Where this whole world.

[29 : 51] Is being watched. Including. Every single one of us. He knows. Everything. Everything. About us. Our names. Where we live. What our weakness. You know. They tell me. I was talking to somebody.

The other day. About. Google searches. Those of you. Who are. Computer literate. Will know. What I'm talking about. Those who. Do searches. On computers. These search engines.

That they have. That as you search. For various words. Or topics. Or themes. Or names. Or places. Is. The search engine.

Builds up. A picture. Of what you're like. It's quite frightening. Isn't it? It really is quite frightening.

That there's a computer. Somewhere in the world. That knows.

Who you are. And knows. What you're like. He knows. What you're. I shouldn't say he is. It. It knows. What you like. What you're interested in.

[30 : 47] What you look for. Be warned. It's true. And this realm.

That we're talking about here. Knows exactly the same thing. Except. A hundred times more. Know everything about. Now. There's all kinds of questions. Here. Aren't there? Does the devil know.

What we're thinking? Do demons know. What we are thinking. Right now? The Lord knows. What we're thinking. And that's what counts. But do demons know. What we're thinking. Right now? I'm not sure.

I'm not sure. If I can answer that question. Does the devil know. The future? Remember that the future. Belongs to God. I think I've asked this question. Before. I'm not entirely sure.

To what extent. That the devil. Or his angels. Know. What the future is. I don't know. But they know. An awful lot. About us.

[31 : 43] They know. Too much. About me. They know. What my weaknesses are. They know. Where I'm likely. To fall. And they know. Exactly.

When to strike. Believe me. In my own experience. As a Christian. I. It's. It's extraordinary. Sometimes. Where. All of a sudden.

You'll be attacked. There'll be a kind of an ambush. And where. You're going along. Quite nicely. Living through a day. And then. Something will happen. And all of a sudden. You fall. As a Christian.

You trip up. You're tempted. And before you know it. You're doing something sinful. And you look back over. And you say. Why did that happen? How can I explain.

How that happened? Have you ever had that experience? You probably have. Of course you have. You're thinking. Why did that happen? The only conclusion. That you've come to. Is that.

[32 : 39] Somebody's watching me. And he is. Ready to strike. Surprise element. Favorite strategy. Of the devil.

That's why. We need to have. The whole armor of God. So that we'll be able. To be prepared. And in the evil day. To stand. When he strikes. The most. When he strikes.

When we don't expect. I'm going to leave it there. It's 25 to 8. I'm going to leave it there. We'll come back to. Next week. Let's pray.

Moore. Let's pray. What? Let's pray. What? Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.

[33 : 36] Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.