

Antioch Christian Fellowship/March 24th – “HOW TO BE STRONG IN THE LORD”

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

– Ephesians 6:10-11 KJV

(In conclusion, be strong in the Lord [draw your strength from Him and be empowered through your union with Him] and in the power of His [boundless] might. Put on the full armor of God [for His precepts are like the splendid armor of a heavily-armed soldier], so that you may be able to [successfully] stand up against all the schemes and the strategies and the deceits of the devil. – Ephesians 6:10-11 AMP)

The Book of Ephesians is one of the simplest and yet most profound books of the New Testament. Consisting of six chapters, the first three chapters (1-3) proclaim the believer’s **WEALTH** IN Christ, and the last three chapters (4-6) proclaim the believer’s **WALK** IN Christ. And as we have been looking at FAITH so deeply in our recent Sunday messages, it is ONLY our FAITH in God’s promises concerning our WEALTH IN Christ that will determine how we show it in our WALK with Christ.

THIS is why Paul prays such a prayer in **Ephesians 1:17-19** ...

BASICALLY, HE PRAYS THAT WE WOULD [FINALLY] “GET IT,” MORE AND MORE!

As Paul summarizes the book of Ephesians, he sheds light on the cosmic and personal battle that every human being is involved in, while offering THE BELIEVER’S SOLUTION FOR VICTORY (which is THE WORLD’S ONLY SOLUTION for it, as well).

As believer’s we achieve this VICTORY by **FOUR ACKNOWLEDGMENTS!**

ACKNOWLEDGMENT #1 -

WE ARE LIVING IN AN EVIL DAY (Eph.6:13).

- II Timothy 3:1-5
- I Timothy 4:1
- I John 2:18
- Isaiah 5:20
- Matthew 24:12 (“and because of the multiplication of lawlessness, the love of many shall grow cold.” – *The New Testament, An Expanded Translation*, Kenneth Wuest)

ACKNOWLEDGMENT #2 -

BEHIND THIS EVIL, IS A POWERFUL DEVIL (Eph. 6:12)

- I Peter 5:8, John 10:10, Job 1:7
- II Corinthians 11:14
- II Timothy 2:26 (how the devil takes non-believers captive to do his will)
- Job 1:15 (how he takes control of the Sabaeans to attack Job’s family)
- Job 1:16 (how he controls weather patterns and fire from the sky)
- Revelation 13:15 - performs lying signs and wonders as men worship statues, trees, nature, and “communicating spirits” (I Cor. 10:20)

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- Matthew 16:22-23 - he even influences believers and tempts us through our pride, anger, fears, and lusts.

This. Now. Leads. Us. To. Our. Most. PIVOTAL Acknowledgement:

ACKNOWLEDGMENT #3 -

We Are Weak & Needy And Do Nothing Right On Our Own.

Because we will ONLY grab a hold of the Lord daily, when we are persuaded of our daily (and even our moment-to-moment) weaknesses.

“If you feel that you are a strong Christian, let me ask you why you have failed so much and why do you still fail? What happens to your resolutions and resolves? Why do you so often find yourself in the place of repentance? Why are you sometimes attacked with feelings of utter hopelessness and almost despair? ... To what is it due?... It is all due to the plain fact of our weakness; it is because we are insufficient and fallible?”

– *The Christian Soldier, D. Martin Lloyd-Jones (“The Call To Battle”)*

“Furthermore, human will-power alone is not enough. Will-power is excellent and we should always be using it; but it is not enough. A desire to live a good life is not enough. Obviously we should all have that desire, but it will not guarantee success. So let me put it thus: Hold on to your principles of morality and ethics, use your will-power to the limit, pay great heed to every noble, uplifting desire that is in you; but realize that these things along are not enough, that they will never bring you to that desired place. We have to realize that all our best is totally inadequate, that a spiritual battle must be fought in a spiritual manner.”

– *The Christian Soldier, D. Martin Lloyd Jones (“The Call To Battle”)*

BECAUSE to be “Strong in the Lord,” we must **FIRST** be willing to acknowledge our WEAKNESS and hence our DEEP, DEEP NEED for His Help!

- Matthew 26:41
- Romans 7:18
- Psalm 39:4
- II Corinthians 12:10 - “Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities....for when I am weak, then am I strong.” **WHAT IS PAUL TEACHING US IN THIS CHAPTER ABOUT OUR PERCEIVED/CONFESSED WEAKNESS BEING THE GATEWAY TO GAINING GOD’S STRENGTH????**

ACKNOWLEDGMENT #4 -

GOD’S STRENGTH IS TO BE OUR STRENGTH, AND IS THE ONLY STRENGTH THAT CAN WITHSTAND THIS EVIL DAY AND OUR EVIL NATURE WITHIN.

- Psalm 62:11
- Psalm 50:15
- Colossians 2:3

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“Be strong in the Lord... But what does it mean, and how are we to do it? It is a resounding phrase. To read it, to repeat it, is not enough. We like singing the words of the hymn, “Put on the Gospel Armor.” But what does it mean in practice? Let us investigate the matter. Christianity is not a form of psychology. You do not just walk along the road saying, “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might,” using it as some kind of incantation, or auto-suggestion, repeating the phrase to yourself. That is not Christianity at all!

It is true of the cults, of course; it is the psychological method. You repeat the phrase such as, “Every day, and in every way, I am getting better and better.” You persuade yourself, and you think less and less about your health, and you therefore begin to feel better. Up to a point it works, but only up to a point...

When you turn Scripture into a drug, into something which gives you a temporary relief without your knowing why or how, the effect does not last. It gives a temporary feeling of exhilaration, but fails when you are in the struggle and in the heat of the battle.

—*The Christian Soldier*, D. Martin Lloyd Jones (“The Call To Battle”)

... To be strong in the Lord means meditating about Him and His strength. It is not just a phrase an incantation, a formula. It means that you sit down and remind yourself of these things... We should not read the Scriptures merely in order that we may say that we have read our daily portion, and so have done our duty... That is not reading the Scriptures; that may be quite useless. You must stop and think. So go back to the Gospels and look at Him and “the power of His strength.”

—*The Christian Soldier*, D. Martin Lloyd Jones (“The Call To Battle”)

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- 1). How does the ever-contagious “spirit of the world” entertain/lull me into forgetting how evil the day is according to God?
- 2). How does humanism (“I can do it myself”) and pantheism (“all is well in the world if we just focus on the positives”) around me cause me to forget how weak I am?
- 3). Though God is never the author of our evil choices, what has He permitted in my life recently to show me how unpredictably weak I am without Him? Am I using this to realize His saving love for me—as demonstrated through the cross—and pray and declare my need for Him like never before?
- 4). Where have I been guilty of mechanical Bible reading without standing in awe of the power of Christ? Where have I reduced Christianity to what I “do” and “don’t do,” while forgetting it is a beautiful intimate relationship with the God who knows me, loves me, and died for all my sins so that I could be with Him forever?
- 5). How long have I been neglecting proper daily Bible reading and prayer, and how have things gone off-course in my heart because of that?
- 6). What are some new ways I can look forward to the devil and the power of evil no longer having the same influence in my life?