

# Message 23: Be Strong and Stand

Ephesians Series

5.14.23

Ephesians 6:10–20 (CSB)

## CHRISTIAN WARFARE

<sup>10</sup>Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by his vast strength. <sup>11</sup>Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup>For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens. <sup>13</sup>For this reason take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand. <sup>14</sup>Stand, therefore, with truth like a belt around your waist, righteousness like armor on your chest, <sup>15</sup>and your feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup>In every situation take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup>Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit—which is the word of God. <sup>18</sup>Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints. <sup>19</sup>Pray also for me, that the message may be given to me when I open my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel. <sup>20</sup>For this I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I might be bold enough to speak about it as I should.

Introduction. Ephesus existed at the crossroads of the demonic and the Gospel.

A. As people came and went through the city, one thing was sure:

1. They would be confronted with the powers of light and the powers of darkness.
2. They would encounter warfare and wrestle against “principalities and powers in heavenly places.”
3. Everyone who stayed in Ephesus would have to confront these powers, first for themselves, second for their families, and third for their community.

#### 4. **There is no middle ground in Ephesus.**

B. Paul wraps up his letter with the final theme: Stand.

1. First, we are to Sit
2. Then, Walk
3. Finally, Stand

C. It seems appropriate that this message lands on Mother's Day and graduation.

1. Mothers and grandmothers are called to be a line of defense against those who intend harm for their children.

a. With weapons spiritual and physical, the mother's instinct to protect her kids, her cubs, is God-given.

b. The enemy of our souls knows that the surest way to bring a woman down is to go after her kids.

2. Graduates, this message is also appropriate.

a. You are being launched into a dangerous world.

b. You have already encountered spiritual warfare.

c. And in the days to come, you will encounter even more.

3. Graduates, moms, dads, and all believers are called to stand and be strong in the Lord.

#### 1. Stand.

A. I think all of us can be territorial.

1. If a kid is at a table in their classroom and someone comes and sits in their seat, an argument or fight often starts.

2. Seniors in high school often have a "senior row" where underclassmen can't park: it's their spot.

3. Every dad, or male over the age of 23, has their favorite "chair" that is their spot.

4. We all tend to be territorial, wanting to be established in our "spot" or space.

5. Where are we called to stand? What is our spot?

B. Vs. 10 says, "be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might."

1. Many of us practice this different from what it says:

a. We read "be strong,"... and then fight, fuss, and fume in our own strength, forgetting what comes next.

b. The preposition "in" tells us how we are to stand.

1. Prepositions "mark special relationships between persons, objects, and locations."

2. We stand strong "in the Lord and in the strength of his might."

2. We are at our strongest when we are "in the Lord" and "in His strength."

a. Of course, that's easier said than done.

b. And now, Paul tells the believers to stand firm in their spot.

3. Notice, again, the progression:

a. Seated with Christ in the heavenly realm,

b. walking worthy of our calling.

c. And now, STAND

## 2. Where are we standing?

A. Before we can understand the ferocity of the fight, we need to know what's at stake.

1. The context of Ephesians leads us to the reality of spiritual warfare.

2. There are spiritual battles being fought.

3. There is armor for us to put on.
4. A real enemy pulls the strings of systems, kingdoms, and ideologies.

B. Where are we called to stand?

1. Eugene Peterson describes it like this:

*Stand firm in this place of blessing that we now inhabit. What can we hope to add to the blessings of God that have been lavished on us? Do we realize how unique this is and how refreshing it is to simply be blessed? And by God no less? In a world that confronts us with demands, criticism, misunderstanding, mistrust, manipulation, rivalry, getting and spending, lies and seductions, is there anything like this - sheer, unqualified blessing? Stand still and take it in. (Peterson 2893-2896)*

2. Are we not called to stand in the presence and blessing of God?

- a. Are we not positioned to be standing in the place of victory, power, authority, and righteousness?
- b. So why are we willing to give it up so easily?

C. I believe the enemy knows the strategic value of where believers are called to stand better than we do.

1. When we don't know the real value of something, we sell short.
2. Satan has done a great job of convincing believers that what God has given them isn't as valuable as it really is.
  - a. It's as if believers are taking the family jewels to the pawnshop or selling them in a junk sell.
  - b. We are being convinced that the position God has given us isn't worth as much as it really is.
3. The result?

- a. We don't stand as strong as we should.
- b. We give ground when we should gain ground.

D. We need more men and women who know what and where God has placed them, and to stand strong in the Lord's strength.

1. We need believers who will say, That's my spot.
2. That's my place.
3. That's my blessing.
4. That's my inheritance.
5. That's my child.
6. That's my spouse.
7. That's what God has given me, and I will not give it up.

E. **And Christ, in His infinite mercy, has given us the tools not to be moved by the enemy's schemes.**

1. This is where the spiritual armor comes in.
2. We have not been left vulnerable or without the tools necessary to survive and stand.

### 3. Fighting a weakened enemy.

A. The Apostle Paul does not prepare the believers in Ephesus for peace but for war.

1. There are many in Christianity who want to take the blood and the warfare imagery out of Scripture.
2. But that is not the reality believers face.

<sup>12</sup>For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens. <sup>13</sup>For this reason take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand.

3. Ephesus was a secure Roman city.

a. It was protected by the might of Rome.

b. It is likely that there were very few veterans in the Church of Ephesus.

c. Yet, each believer was accustomed to the spiritual battle that raged in the city for the heart and soul of the people.

B. **The most important battle we all face is spiritual.**

1. Our enemy puts on human faces, and human ideologies, and organizes human systems.

2. But real warfare has spiritual origins.

3. One author said, "We need deliverance from evil that doesn't look like evil, evil that we are not likely to recognize as evil." (Peterson, 2942)

C. The Good News is that the enemy has already been weakened.

1. The Apostle Paul wrote to the city of Colossae:

Colossians 2:14–15 (CSB)

<sup>14</sup>He (**JESUS**) erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup>He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; he triumphed over them in him.

2. This is what Christ has done for us through the cross.

a. **Through His death and resurrection, Jesus disarmed these principalities and powers, and spiritual forces of wickedness.**

b. They are still real, and still active, and still threatening.

c. However, their power has been undermined.

1. Like a dog with no teeth,

2. A lion with no claws,

3. A snake with no fangs,

4. They can threaten and bark, charge and hiss, but they do not have the power they once had over believers.

D. But this only applies to those who are standing in Christ.

1. I found this explanation helpful:

...how can disarmed powers still constitute a threat? The answer is that they constitute no threat to those who are united by faith to the victorious Christ and avail themselves of his resources, the resources which are here described metaphorically as "the panoply of God." But to those who neglect those resources, and especially to those who are disposed to give them some room in their lives, they continue to present a threat.<sup>1</sup>

2. Apart from Christ, these powers are still very potent.

a. Apart from Christ, no human alive has the strength to withstand the attacks and temptations of Satan.

b. The enemy may be defeated, but he is taking many with him.

c. Satan is disarmed but not powerless.

c. Again, victory is only for those who are IN CHRIST JESUS.

d. Next week we will look at the 6 pieces of protection Christ has given us.

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce, F. F. 1984. [\*The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians\*](#). The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

#### 4. Some hills are worth dying on.

A. In Ephesus, upon the most prominent hill, stood the Temple of Artemis.

1. But down, where the people lived, there was a Church being birthed.

2. As these people worshipped Jesus, they could have this confident boldness:

a. That someday, every knee would bow and every person confess that Jesus was Lord.

b. Artemis didn't win.

1. The Temple, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, was destroyed by 401 AD.

2. Today, only a few fragments remain in the modern-day country of Turkey.

c. The Emperors are long since dead, relegated to history's pages.

d. But this Jesus is high and exalted and worthy of all praise.

B. It was not on the hills that celebrated a Greek god or a Roman emperor that changed the world.

1. But the hill called Mount Calvary.

2. It was there that the blood of Jesus was shed to provide forgiveness for you and me.

3. It was there that our enemy realized its defeat.

C. Don't die on every hill, but be willing to stand strong where it matters most.

1. Moms and Grandmas:

a. Some battles are not worth it.



b. But fighting for the souls of your kids, family, friends and neighbors IS worth it.

c. So don't stop now.

d. Every person needs a praying mom and grandma.

e. But so many do not have that spiritual prayer warrior in their life, so YOU be that person.

## 2. Graduates:

a. Your future is in front of you, and that's exciting.

b. But if you walk into that future only in your strength, experience, or expertise, you will not make it.

c. You need the Lord's help and strength, and He has made that readily available to you if you will ask.

d. Just remember that not every opportunity, choice, decision, or struggle is equal.

e. But those that involve sin and righteousness matter more than you understand now.

d. So don't die on every hill, but be willing to risk it all on those hills that matter to Jesus.

## Close: Prayer for Spiritual strength.

A. I know today is Mother's Day and we have several guests today.

1. Something we do almost every week is take a few minutes at the end to pray publicly and with each other.

2. Today, I want to lead us in a time of prayer for lost and hurting loved ones.

a. For our sons and daughters, nieces and nephews, and spiritual children.

b. We want to pray for them to come under the blessing and protection of Jesus, who has disarmed the powers and rendered them ineffectual.

B. I also want to pray for all of us to remain strong in the Lord.

1. This season has been incredibly hard.
2. And it may seem like you can't keep going on.
3. So I want us to pray for each other to remain strong and standing for ourselves and our families.

Prayer.