

CHIEF

MINISTRIES

December 2019

As we finish out this year, I want to encourage you to be strong and stand. I have seen countless men, whom I'll call brothers simply because it came out of their mouths that they were, fold like accordions when the pressure came. When they were maligned, talked about, put in a situation that called for integrity, uprightness, or godly behavior they missed the mark. I'm waiting for the heart of repentance to be seen, instead they offered up excuses for their behavior. "I'm a work in progress". Well, progress last time I checked meant positive, forward movement, not turning and running away from God because you temporarily stumbled. "I'm going through sanctification". Yet, I thought if you sanctified something, it was "set apart" to be holy, not set apart to continue doing foolishness! This is why I love Ephesians and what it says: *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. (Ephesians 6:10 KJV).*

Finally, Paul has come to the crux of the matter, the place to where he has been leading us for five and a half chapters. He has revealed our incredible wealth in chapter 1, the rich treasury we have in Christ Jesus. He has shared some of the deep secrets of the Kingdom, that we are chosen in Christ Jesus from the foundations of the world, adopted into the family of God, and accepted in the beloved. He tells of our marvelous redemption and God's workmanship in our lives in chapter 2. We are made alive by the blood of Jesus, no longer bound by guilt and condemnation, and Gentile and Jew are one in Him. We are saved and being saved every day by His grace, seated with Him in the heavenlies, and the enemy is under our feet.

Then in chapter 3, Paul begins to teach us how we are strengthened by our inner man by the power of the Holy Spirit, that our response to all God has done for us is to "*bow our knees to the father.*" (v.14). He addresses our worship unto God and explains that a constant attitude of worship releases God's holiness, power and glory in our lives. Then in chapters 4 and 5, he turns our attention to our walk, that we are to walk worthy of the calling God has placed on our lives, not just witnessing about Jesus but being a witness to those around us that Jesus is our Lord.

In chapter 5 Paul explores our role as the submissive bride of Christ and talks about our wedding to Christ Jesus. Then he continues to firmly instruct us in the principal of authority and submission in chapter 6 using the examples of children and parents and masters and servants. By the time we come to Ephesians 6:10 we are perfected for ministry and corporately edified, unified and made doctrinally "wind-resistant". Now, Paul is going to tell us the point of everything we have learned and all the training we have been through. God has prepared us for spiritual warfare.

After Moses died and Joshua became the leader of the children of Israel, God commanded Joshua to take the promised land and assured him of victory. Then, He proceeded to command Joshua, not once but several times, to "*be strong and of good courage.*" (Joshua 1:6). The apostle Paul reiterates the same

command to the church in Ephesians 6:10: *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. (Ephesians 6:10 KJV).*

Being “strong in the Lord” is not an option in the Kingdom of God! We are commanded to be strong because every believer is involved in intense spiritual warfare, every day, in all areas of life. The original text translated “finally” as *tou poilou*, which means “to the rest” or “as what remains for you to do.” What remains for the church to do? We must “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” We are chosen and prepared to do battle against all enemies of the kingdom of God. Finally, after Egypt and after the wilderness – we are matured and empowered to fight the good fight of faith!

The war in the spirit realm is an ongoing battle between the Lord Jesus Christ and Satan, and we are the body of Christ on this earth. Therefore, Satan is the enemy of our souls. Before we were saved, he hated us because we were made in the image of God, but we were under his control. Now that we have received Jesus as our Lord and Savior and entered the kingdom of God, we are a threat to Satan’s rule on earth. Jesus gave us authority over him! Paul is saying, “finally, my brethren, it is time to use the authority you have through the blood of Jesus. This is a war from which you cannot and must not back down!

As the Joshua generation, we are a warring bride, a fighting church, a possessing church that combats the adversary. We are taking back what rightfully belongs to the kingdom of God. There is no escaping the fight, not because we are revengeful, hateful, warring people, but because the enemy of our souls is vengeful and hateful and warring in nature. We engage in spiritual warfare because Satan opposes every step we take into the Promised Land. God has given His people a vision and a hope and a future which is sure, but His people must fight to possess all He has given.

At this point you may be asking, “why does our loving heavenly Father make us fight for the blessing?” I firmly believe there are some things about God we cannot know or understand until we go through some struggles with His help and on His behalf – and He knows it. He knows that we will only learn and appreciate the keeping power of His word and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit when we are in the middle of a strong battle. In the crucible of crisis, suddenly something we read or studied weeks or months ago appears and are thinking at just the right moment to give us hope and faith for that particular time and place.

It all begins with a vision, a dream, a word from God that lays the foundation and sets the compass for our life. Just as He sent Joshua into the Promised Land to spy out all that had been given Israel, He gives us a foretaste of the thing He desires to give us, and He shows us how much we will enjoy it. He shows us that He is going to do great and mighty things in our lifetime and that His provision is already on the way. And then all hell breaks loose! We cry out, “Lord, I thought the prophecy was that I was going to fulfill this great calling in Your name, that the windows of heaven were opening to me, and that together we were going to do great exploits. Well, I crossed the Jordan like you told me to, but all I see is this great, impenetrable wall!”

If we had to summarize one principal related to the receiving of God’s blessing, it would be this: Not without a struggle. Whatever God shows us, speaks to us, puts in our spirit, or whatever has been prophesied to us about our ministry, our life, our finances, our children, our marriage, our grandchildren, we must understand that it will not happen without a struggle on our part.

The Lord may show us Jericho and tell us it is ours, but we still must march around 7 times, shout, and then defeat the inhabitants once the wall is down (see Joshua 6). The Lord may show us a land flowing with milk and honey and say to us, "This is yours," but it will still be up to us to rid the land of God's enemies before we can settle down to eat the grapes. (see Numbers 13:1-14, 25).

We have to learn the skills of spiritual warfare. We are going to have to roll up our sleeves and do some hand-to-hand combat with the enemy of our souls if we are going to drive the enemy away from our blessing and claim it as our own.

Unfortunately, this generation of believers has been taught that anything that comes against us can just be removed, gotten around, or cast out. We hear, "you don't have to take it, you're a Christian. You have authority!" There you are, a Christian, which means your whole foundation is built on a Man who had to endure beatings, whipping, all manner of verbal and physical abuse, and then crucifixion. Once, He turned to His disciples and said, *"If you're going to follow Me, you have to take up your cross. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you. There is a price you must pay for the gospel."*

The strength of God is not proven in how much we cast away. The strength of God is proven in how much we endure. Jesus proved His strength when they nailed Him to a tree and He preached with nails in His hands. Stephen didn't stop the stoning, but forgave his persecutors, looked up, and worshiped Jesus while stones were beating him in the head. This is being strong in the Lord and in the power of His might!

This generation of the church has not had to endure much of anything. It's going to be embarrassing when many of us get to heaven and gather with the saints of the ages. They will talk about being beheaded, skinned alive, boiled to death, tortured and seeing their whole family executed. Then we will say, "somebody talked about me so bad". "We are really up against it because we had to go to the bank three times to get the loan." "They didn't support me in the choir when I sang my song." "I was in charge of the Kairos weekend or reconciler's motorcycle ministry weekend and they had the nerve to ask me too fast all weekend!" These things are not suffering for the Lord!

In this country, even in our prisons, we think suffering for the Lord is fanning ourselves because the air conditioning went out in the service. If we're not careful we won't have anything to say in heaven, except putting our head down over in the corner and saying, "Thank You, Lord, for letting me in by the hair of my chinny-chin-chin. I'm just glad to hang out with these good brothers and sisters." We are to take up our cross and go forward. But when we fight to possess the promises of God and fulfill His calling, the Scripture we are studying says not to fight in our own strength.

Any time a person attempts to go into battle against spiritual forces in their own strength, they invite disaster into their lives, setting themselves up for heartache and failure. The Greek language in this verse gives us the key to receiving the strength of the Lord. The phrase "be strong" is derived from the Greek word dunamis, which means power. Many Christians have heard this, but knowing the form of the word is important because it is a verb in the passive voice endunamoo which means "empowering" or "making strong" is being done to us by God. Paul is saying, allow God to fill you with His power.

The image here is not of an athlete who has become strong because he has done push-ups, sit ups and lifted weights. Such athletes would be strong by their own efforts. No! Believers who are strong become so because they receive the literal strength of God from God. They are allowing God to empower them with His strength and might.

The phrase “the power of His might” is full of meaning also. The words “power” and “might” are kratos (intensity of the power) and ischus (the power itself). We could translate these words as “finally, allow yourselves to be made strong by the power of His power.” Literally, “the power of His might is like saying the “wetness” of water, the “sweetness” of sugar or the “blinding brilliance” of light. We must allow the Lord to empower us with the very essence and substance of His power.

However we translate this verse, Paul is talking about a lot of power!

It’s one thing for Paul to tell us, “just allow God to fill you with His power,” and is another thing to know how to allow God to do that. Do we just get in our prayer closet, close our eyes and say, “Do it, God!”? Thank God, the Holy Spirit gives us an explanation.

“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” (Ephesians 6:11).

As an act of our will, we are to allow God to empower us by suiting up in His armor. Only then can we hold our ground when the devil assaults us. We stand movable and unshakable against the attacks of the enemy and defeat him with God’s power and might when we put on the armor of God.

The truth is, we don’t have any idea what we look like in God’s armor or what we can do until we put it on. Most of us have gone shopping for clothes and we look through racks and racks of different things. We know, however, that until we take that new outfit back to the dressing room, remove everything that goes with the old outfit, and actually put on the new clothes, we are never going to get a true picture of what we will look like.

The same is true for spiritual clothes. We must take off the old man to fully see and appreciate the new man. We must take off every piece of natural armor to fully see and appreciate our godly spiritual armor. Paul describes this casting-off-and-putting-on process in a number of his letters. *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (Galatians 3:27). The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. (Romans 13:12).*

To put on the whole armor, we must strip off every warring device of the carnal man, every weapon and strategy of the flesh we have used to engage in natural fights, overcome natural obstacles and endure natural phenomenon. We must put off our own ideas and strategies for fighting in the spirit realm.

- We must take off lies and put on truth
- We must put away sin and put on righteousness
- We must cast off guilt and death and put on salvation and eternal life
- We must get rid of strife and put on peace
- We must put off doubt and unbelief and put on faith
- We must put away ignorance and put on knowledge of the Word
- We must put away our fleshly desires and learn to walk in the Spirit

Every piece of spiritual armor is vital, and no piece of the old natural armor can be retained because none of it is suitable for the spiritual fight ahead. The old weaponry and strategies are only going to weigh us down, slow us down, and cause us to stumble in the heat of the battle.

It's kind of difficult to fathom that this is the same Paul who, a few verses before, in chapter 5 of Ephesians, wrote about our intimacy with the Lord. We enjoy the gentle embrace of Jesus as He holds His bride tenderly in His arms, our head laying on His chest, covered with His love and protection. Now, suddenly we are moved from the warmth of His touch to the battlefield of the soul! But friend, that's the way life is: One minute you are worshiping God with ecstasy and the next you are in the heat of spiritual battle. And it's all God! He's the God of warm and intimate embrace and He's the God of fierce and enduring battle – and you cannot win a spiritual battle without being intimate with the Lord.

Think again of the analogy of the dressing room, which is a private place in which we can put on new clothes. Lying in the arms of our Bridegroom is our spiritual dressing room, the place we become strong in the Lord and the power of His might. In the secret place of the Most High, under the shadow of Almighty God is the private place where we put on His armor and receive our battle plan. We must be the bride of Christ to become a warring church!

The very idea of armor evokes a picture of imminent war, battling, fighting and life and death conflict. There is no need for armor unless we are in immediate danger of being injured or destroyed by an enemy. The armor Paul tells us to put on is armor aimed at diverting a disaster. We must wear this armor if we intend to stand against the onslaught of the devil. *“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” (Ephesians 6:11).*

I find these words of Paul extremely encouraging. For the Lord to tell me to put on armor that I might stand indicates to me that I'm in the right spot. When the time comes for the Lord to tell me to suit up and fight, the Lord has me precisely where He wants me to be. It's as if He walked me right up to my destiny and said, “we're here on the edge of your Promised Land. Don't let any of the things you see make you think that what lies ahead of you isn't for you. Don't look at how high the wall is or how many enemy chariots you see. Don't see how many problems are coming against you. Don't focus on your inner weaknesses and fears. I've brought you here. Now all you have to do is suit up in My armor and stand until the land is yours!”

To stand is to both obtain and maintain what God has given us. We must never enter a spiritual battle thinking that we simply need to fight it and win it and never think about it again. Once we have obtained a promise of God, we must continue to stand strong in the power of His might in order to maintain our position and blessing.

Don't let the wind blow you this way and that or move you to the left or the right. Don't let the cunning persuasion of men sway you from your spot. Once God has placed you in a position, stand there until He calls you to move forward. Celebrate your victory, but never let down your guard. You must continue to stand if you intend to keep what God has given you!

Paul had some interesting things to say about Satan's attempt to break him. *And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ^{v23} except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. ^{v24} But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. (Acts 20:22-24).*

Even though Paul knew great trials awaited him if he continued his call to preach the gospel, he refused to be dislodged from his spot in the Lord. He was fully girded up in the armor of God, and he refused to be removed from the territory He had given him. He refused to give in and return to a reliance upon fleshly

desires and human caution. He refused to be constrained by a desire to take it easy and let others carry the banner of the gospel.

God calls us and equips us and empowers us to progress, but He also calls us to stand in our faith, fully clothed in the armor, so that we don't digress. It is up to us to stand in the land where he has placed us until He calls us to move forward and claim more land. The armor is God's, but the stand is ours. Armor doesn't stand up by itself! We stand in the armor.

Furthermore, there is no need to put armor on a person who is running away! God's armor is for those who are going to stand and defend those things that are truly important to them. Is there anything today that God has given you about which you feel strongly enough to stand with all of your faith? That's the stuff you want to armor for! The armor that God gives you is used to stand against the enemies so that he cannot take back what God has already given to you in the spirit realm.

- Are you willing to stand for your eternal salvation and the gifts of the Spirit within you?
- Are you willing to stand for your peace?
- Are you willing to stand for the salvation of your children?
- Are you willing to stand for your marriage and family?
- Are you willing to stand for the opportunity to preach the gospel?
- Are you willing to stand for the ministry that God has given you?

In case you are questioning the importance of standing, notice how many times Paul repeats the word "stand" in this passage about spiritual warfare:

*Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil v13
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. v14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, (Ephesians 6:11, 13-14).*

As for me and my house, we will choose to be strong in the Lord, then stand and keep on standing!

Standing with you,

Chief

If you want to know more about CHIEF Ministries or would like to be a part of this, please go to www.chiefministries.com and www.chiefshouse.org

Christ's

Heart

In

Every

Felon