

# “Strong in God’s strength”: Ephesians 6:10-13

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost – August 15, 2021

Tom Mount – Holy Trinity Chico

## Scripture reading – Eph 6:10-13

<sup>10</sup> “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. <sup>13</sup> Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.”

## Introduction

- Why is life so hard at times? Eph 2:2-3: world, flesh, spiritual powers of darkness.
- In Eph 6:10-20, Paul is going to focus on the third of these. Today, going to look at vv. 10-13; next week, look at vv.14-20: spiritual weapons, prayer.
- Paul talks more about spiritual opposition here than anywhere else in his letters. Ephesus was rife with occultic activity.

## Exposition

- **“Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power” (v.10).** Lit., “the strength of his might” (cf. 1:19-20). They knew what it was like to be strong in their gods and goddesses; in astrology, use of magic, witchcraft, and the use of amulets and incantations. They were used to harnessing these powers for their own purposes. Here they’re told that real strength is “in the Lord” (Jesus): in being united with Christ through a deep, growing dependent relationship.
- **“put on the full armor of God” (v.11).** He repeats this in v.13. It corresponds to 4:24: “put on the new self.” Similar armor imagery is used in Isaiah: belt (11:5), breastplate (59:17), feet (52:7), shield (21:5), helmet (59:17) and sword (49:2).

- **“so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.”** The devil, *diabolos*, is associated with Satan, and the “ancient serpent” in Rom 12:9 and 20:2 (cf. 2 Cor 4:3; Eph 2:2). He is the archetypal spiritual rebel. He devises schemes, *methodeia*, “strategies, methods” against God’s people (cf. 2 Cor 2:11). What are his schemes? 1) To deceive, mislead, lie to us: e.g., 2 Cor 5:4; Rev 12:9; 20:8; 2) To harass us through phenomena, trials, sickness: e.g., 1 Thess 2:18; 2 Cor 12:7; 3) To tempt us to sin and mistrust God: e.g., Gen 3:1-7; Lk 4:1-13. We must “stand,” *stanai*, against them; 4x.
- **“our struggle is not against flesh and blood” (v.12).** “Struggle” is *pale*, “wrestling” close quarter, intense hand-to-hand fighting. Popular sport in Asia Minor. He means: “We don’t merely struggle with people.”
- **“rulers... authorities... powers of this dark world... spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”** Familiar terms referring to various ranks of invisible spiritual beings, the *elohim* in the OT (cf. 1:21; 3:10; Ps 82:1-8; 86:8; 89:5-8; Deut 32:8,17).
  - The gods and goddesses were honored as a normal part of everyday life in the Greco-Roman world of the first century.
  - Paul gives guidance to Christians in 1 Cor 10:20-21: avoid demons. There are no innocuous spirits: they are either really good, or really bad. If you mess with them, you open the door to be demonized.
- **“when the day of evil comes” (v.13).** We are in the “last days” (Acts 2:17; 2 Ptr 3:3) in which “the days are evil” (Eph 5:16). And difficulties will intensify prior to the appearing of Jesus: e.g., Mt 24:8; Mk 13:8; 2 Thess 2:1-12. In the meantime, there are certain historical moments when evil is especially pervasive, characterized by political instability, social disruption, mass migrations, formalized violence or informalized.
- **“stand.”** Stand in truth, purity and holiness. Stand for the freedoms that God has given us; stand for Gospel (vs. counterfeit versions).

## Take away

- How do we “stand”? Through daily disciplines: communion with Lord, prayer, living lives of purity and righteousness, meditating on his word, fellowshiping with his people.