

## The Conquering Offensive!

Our Spiritual Warfare

Martin G. Collins

Given 27-Sep-14; Sermon #1234

A few days ago we observed the Feast of Trumpets which symbolizes a vast turning point in human history and world history. It pictures the pivotal change over between the age of man—of darkness and of Satan—to the age of God; the Millennium; and the Kingdom of God.

So here we are, in symbol, between the time that Jesus Christ returns to conquer and rule over the nations and the day that Satan will be placed in restraint in the abyss for a thousand years. This will be the time of a paradigm shift not only in earthly history, but in universal history as well. It is hard to imagine that time that is coming up.

In one week we will observe the Day of Atonement, which among other things, symbolizes Satan and his demons' removal from influencing mankind and their imprisonment in the place of restraint.

For almost six thousand years Satan has invisibly swayed the nations; he has guided human governments, influenced man's civilizations, possessed powerful leaders, and inspired world wars. Satan's influence has had a significant impact in causing misery, hate, suffering, and violent deaths. He has plagued mankind since Adam and Eve disobeyed and lied to God.

Satan, our accuser, our adversary, or attacker, is still the major hindrance to all of us that are seeking God and being one with Him.

God is not in competition with Satan. There is no great controversy. The question of who will rule the earth has already been decided. Jesus Christ has already overcome Satan and qualified to replace him and we are joyful for that.

But what are we faced with today in the current, literal world? What will Christ replace? What must we be doing now? Should we be in a defensive holding pattern? Or should we be on the conquering offensive?

The whole state of the world and all the difficulty of living, especially living God's way, in these confused times in which we find ourselves, is not easy, to say the least. It is not that life has ever been easy in this world for Christians. It was not easy for the early Christians, and today, in some respects, the problem is even more acute and more

urgent than it has ever been.

Now there was a time just before the modern age when at least a man's home was more or less shut off from the world, but now the world comes into the home in many different ways, not only through radio and television, but now with the Internet, wireless, and other media. Thus the fight of faith becomes particularly difficult and strenuous for us.

In addition to all of this, there is the general strain of times and the anxiety of the hour, because there are wars and rumors of wars; pandemics and rumors of pandemics; financial crashes and rumors of financial crashes.

**Ephesians 6:10-13** Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness 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.

So many Christians today would judge the teaching of these verses as relatively unimportant. They would encourage us to think positively and peacefully as if there were no spiritual battles going on at all. They see Christianity, not as an entrance into warfare, but as an exit from it.

They see it as the solution to our problems. They think that if you are sick, Jesus will make you well; if you are discouraged, Jesus will make you happy. You get the impression from those who talk like this that, to believe in Jesus Christ is to enter upon a smooth plain and to enjoy smooth sailing.

Another wrong approach to the Christian life does not so much deny the reality of spiritual warfare as to insist that although it exists, it is all over and done with, in a certain sense. They believe that because of Christ's victories our warfare is always defensive, rather than offensive in its struggle. There may be some truth in that because Satan's deception always has some small truth in them, but the problem is that this thinking had been carried over into expressions of what it means to live the Christian life, which suggests that there is very little that we do as Christians.

Mainstream Christianity tries to encourage people by misleading them to think that the

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battle is not ours but rather God's alone and He does all the fighting, and at the most you only need to stand your ground. It is true that the apostle Paul uses the word "stand" four times, but when he speaks of our armor, he speaks not only of the offensive armor, such as our helmet, breastplate, and shield, but he also includes our offensive weapon, our sword.

Whether or not he is thinking of fighting offensively or defensively, he is thinking of fighting with vigor against the most powerful and cunning of foes.

The proper balance is struck here in Ephesians 6:10-11 which contains two commands: 1) "Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power" [or "in the might of His power"] and 2) "Put on the whole armor of God so you might take your stand against the devils schemes"

So we are reminded by this combination of commands that we are unequal to the battle and we have no strength. Our strength must come from Christ, and nevertheless, imbued with His strength, we are to fight these spiritual forces arrayed against us.

The fact that Paul follows this beautiful and uplifting portrait of peaceful Christian homes and joyful Christian relationships in Ephesians 5:22-6:9 with this stark description of warfare, indicates that these things will not be achieved without a conflict. Clearly the victories of God's way of life are to be achieved by a relentless and life-long struggle against evil. And even then they are realized only to the extent that we take advantage of God's armor.

The apostle Paul told us to be strong in the Lord and put on the full armor of God and now he tells us why this is necessary in verse 12.

**Ephesians 6:12** For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

When Paul says that we do not struggle against flesh and blood he is not denying that we do, at times, actually struggle on the human level. He is saying that our struggle is not just on that human level. We do obviously have a visible physical struggle but over and above what we see, there is an invisible spiritual struggle going on against Satan and his forces and we cannot see Satan or his legions. Yet as Peter said in I Peter 5,

**I Peter 5:8** Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks

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about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

If we are to be successful in this battle, we must be alert to it and equipped to use the armor that is needed. Right here we have something that sets Christianity apart from the philosophies of this world. The world of our day is secular, that is, that it operates only within the jurisdiction of this age and it is materialistic, which means that it considers only what it can see, touch, and measure to be real.

For our contemporaries the world is a closed system and that is why talk about the devil is hardly regarded as serious. People still talk about God, He gets some respect out of deference to religious traditions. But Satan? People laugh at the mere suggestion that our warfare is spiritual. They accuse us of neglecting the real battle, which in their opinion, should be waged against such tangible things as poverty, oppression, the poor and hungry, and other various forms of social injustice.

Now we do not want to deny for an instant that any of those are real problems and we should do all we can to alleviate or abolish them, but we ask if the real problems of this world are merely material and visible, how is it that they have not been solved or eliminated long ago? Notice that Paul repeats the word, "against" here.

**Ephesians 6:12** For we do not wrestle *against* flesh and blood, but *against* principalities, *against* powers, *against* the rulers of the darkness of this age, *against* spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

That is not the way one I supposed to write according to the experts. If one of our modern editors had gotten hold of Paul's manuscript, he probably would have taken out the three occurrences of "against" so that the sentence would read something like this: "Against rulers, the authorities, the powers of this world, and the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms." I think Paul knew exactly what he was doing when he repeated that word "against," and more to the point is that God had His own clear purpose when He inspired and directed his writing.

Now this is a way of saying, with emphasis, that in warfare in the Christian life, Christians are really up against it. I think that is a good way of putting it in modern vernacular. It is not just a string of things that we should be concerned about. There are enemies and we must fight against them, and we must fight against the rulers, and fight against the authorities and against the power of the dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms.

Paul is using terms which take the powers that are arrayed against us together. The distinction is between the various areas of life over which they exert an evil influence. When Paul talks about rulers, he is thinking about Satan's control of certain regions.

A ruler governs a certain territory, a certain portion of land, and in human terms, one ruler presides over England, and another over South Africa, and so on. Apparently the demons also operate that way. In fact they would have to because unlike God, they are not omnipresent, that is, they are not everywhere at once as God is and they are finite creatures, though of great power. So they must be in one place or another.

When Paul speaks of them as rulers, he is probably thinking of them regionally. We know that in some areas of the world the power and influence of Satan is very strong and obvious and in other places, particularly where the gospel of Jesus Christ has gone, it is comparatively weaker.

What about authorities? Authority is not the same thing as ruler. Bill Gates exercises no physical rule, but yet he has great authority and power because of his money. Authority has to do with values. So when Paul speaks of authorities he is saying that the values of our culture as well as specific territory are demonically controlled.

We need to see that the dominant values of our culture, the "me first" philosophy, pleasure for its own sake, materialism, and other things are not Christian, but rather are controlled and manipulated by Satan for his own base ends. We are to be at war against them.

Power concerns control, so the power is with those that control what people think and do. I relate this to the secular media which controls so much of the world's contemporary moral philosophy. But it is not just the media, it also refers to powers that stand behind even these very powerful figures.

The final words make clear that Paul is not just thinking about evil men and women who somehow control others for their own dark designs. He is thinking rather of the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

The emphasis here is upon the evil of this spiritual control. It would be possible to have a holy beneficent power, which does exist. It is the power of God in which we are encouraged to be strengthened. "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." But the spiritual forces against which we struggle are not holy or beneficent, they are wicked and destructive.

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The Christian's warfare is not merely a struggle between truth and falsehood, good and evil, as most people would understand these comparisons. There is a philosophy of history that looks upon struggle between truth and falsehood as being essentially good. The thought goes, that is the way progress comes: truth and error struggle, truth wins. That is how people simplify it.

Now similarly, we are to suppose that good inevitably triumphs, but this is not always the case. Truth is often bested, evil does win, at least temporally. We know that eventually the truth and good wins out.

The dramatic increase of error and evil in society will carry the world into a new dark age, therefore Christians must do more than stand firm, we must fight for God's truth and His way of life, and guard it with all our might. This begins in our homes and in our congregations.

We must never forget that everything given to us to make our victory possible is from God the Father through Jesus Christ. Is it truth? He is truth.

**Ephesians 6:14** Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth [Is it righteousness?], having put on the breastplate of righteousness.

Jesus is the one who said, in John 14:

**John 14:6** Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

In I Corinthians 1, Paul writes:

**I Corinthians 1:30** But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—

Is it the gospel? The gospel is the gospel of peace of Christ.

**Ephesians 6:15-17** and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace [Is it faith in Him?]; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. [Is it salvation? Again, Christ is our salvation.] And take the helmet of salvation,

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and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Christ gives everything we need, which He made possible by His death.

**Acts 4:10-12** “Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Even in prayer and speaking, it is a gift. He has opened up for us to be able to have intimate conversation with God.

**Ephesians 6:18-19** Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel.

Not one of us can stand against the spiritual forces of evil in our own strength, not even for a moment. But in Christ we can fight on to victory.

When Christ returns leading His spiritual army, the battle will not be an entirely physical one, and because that is true, His saints will have prepared to fight alongside Him.

**I Thessalonians 5:8-9** But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

These are spiritual things that Paul was talking about here and spiritual things are what we should be preparing to use at Christ's return. In this life of ours we will not have trained to fight physically against God's enemies. The saints will have trained people to fight spiritually and there will be spiritual tools that will be used against both physical and spiritual enemies; against the ongoing battle, which began with Satan and ends on the Day of Atonement.

We already know what our spiritual armor is which is listed in Ephesians 6. The question is: are we learning to use it now for the present battle and will we have become proficient in using it upon Christ's return?

The antichrist world system will be crushed using Christ's spiritual power and might over physical and spiritual adversaries, and Christ with His saints will fight human and demonic forces.

**Jude 14-15** Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

Notice there that it mentions "ungodly" three times, so obviously ungodly is both physical and spiritual, and breaking both the spirit and the letter of the law.

Jesus Christ has already conquered Satan and his demons in one sense and He is worthy to rule the nations, however Christ has not *subdued* Satan yet. Satan and his demons will be cast into their place of restraint by the power and might of God which we are learning to have access to and learning how to use.

What does Paul mean when he says that, "we are wrestling, not against flesh and blood, [in ourselves or any other people] but against these spiritual powers and rulers."? We are told that these principalities, these unseen instigators of wickedness that are at the back of evil, are controlling the minds of evil men and all their activities. They are set against us in order to try to defeat us, to spoil our Christian lives, and bring the whole of the gospel into disrepute.

A man who does not understand the nature of the problem, is confronting a man that is already doomed to failure. That is what we see in the world. If they do not change their ways and submit to God, repent, call upon the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, overcome their sins and be forgiven, then they are doomed to failure.

Christians are like first year college students. They think at first that every subject is simple and that there is little or no difficulty, then comes the exams and then they immediately realize their areas of weakness. That is what happens to us as we go through trials. We see what areas we need to work on, but we can also see where our strengths are.

The first thing you have to do is understand the nature and character of your problem. We have to realize that as a Christian we are called to a battle—warfare, struggle—and not to a life of ease. There are various, almost endless ways in which Satan, in his wiliness and subtlety, tries to trap, ensnare, confuse, and confound us.

For us to be forewarned to the character and strategy of the enemy is absolutely essential, because to be forewarned is to be forearmed, as the adage goes. That in itself is half the battle, but we must remember that there is the other half of the battle we need to work on. Most people feel that they are sufficient enough to solve any problem that comes their way, until they are in the midst of a spiritual problem that has become a trial.

Who is sufficient for these things? Who can stand against such mass hordes of evil with all their subtle and destructive power? To consider the problem in isolation, even though absolutely essential, could lead to no result except that we would all feel depressed and entirely hopeless.

We can be thankful that the Word of God is always realistic and never hides any of the truth or gives a false impression. It is not a true gospel that gives us the impression that our lives as Christians is easy and that there are no problems to be faced.

In a sense the Bible can be very alarming and unnerving at first, even terrifying at times, as it show us the problems that will confront us as a result of going against the culture of the world. But God's inspired written Word does not stop halfway. It goes onto the second half and shows us the way in which we can be enabled to wage the battle, and not only to wage it, but to also be triumphant in it. It show us that we are meant to be more than just conquerers.

The apostle Paul goes on to show us this second half, and he does this in his usual way. He puts this before he states the problem. He says:

**Ephesians 6:10-11** Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God [then he mentions the problem after stating these two things.], that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

God encourages us with what He reveals through Paul here and we are told that despite all that is against us, whether in the realms above or in the world in which we live, with

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all its strains and stresses, as God's people we can be enabled to triumph and rejoice in the midst of it all and to know that victory is assured.

What is offered to us, as we find ourselves facing all this wrestling and struggling and combat, notice that there are just two things: 1) "Be strong in the Lord and the power of His might" and 2) "Put on the whole armor of God."

So as we come to look at these two things, let me preface them with some preliminary comments. The first is that both of these are necessary and we must not take one without the other.

Notice the order in which Paul put these things, he did not tell us to put on the armor first and then be strong in the Lord. No, it is the other way around. There is a real significance in the order here. There is clearly a relationship between the two factors.

So often people just take one or the other of these factors and therefore shipwreck their faith in the process. There are some who say that all you need to do is hand it over to God and rely on His strength and do not say anything about the whole armor of God. When they do that, what they are doing is having faith without works.

Others, who put the whole emphasis on putting on the whole armor of God, as if they could wield it themselves. They forget their absolute dependence upon the power of the Lord and His might and strength.

We see then that there are several interesting concerns in the mere presentation of these two things, which are essential to a triumphant living of God's way of life.

Let us start with the first one here: "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." Picture this as a great order issued by this mighty captain—the apostle Paul. He is relaying God's Word, it is a word sent out to the Christian army gathered together with the enemy there in position facing it. Here is the word that comes from this great leader, who himself, had great experience in warfare personally and who had the care of all the churches upon him and had seen firsthand the conspiracies of the evil one against God's people. In fact, he had been martyred eventually.

Here then is a great order for the day: "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." Hold on to this and do not forget it. In the heat and thick of the battle, later on in the day, whatever happens, never forget it. Never lose sight of this great guiding and controlling principal. This is necessary first before you can put the armor on.

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Now what does it mean and how are we to do it? It is a decisive phrase. To read it and repeat it is not enough. We like singing the words of the song "Onward Christian Soldiers" but what does it mean in practice? Do we ever meditate on the words?

Christianity is not a form of philosophy. You do not just walk along and say be strong in the Lord and in power of His might, using it as some kind of incantation or auto suggestion repeating the phrases to yourself. That is not Christianity at all.

I am amazed at how many ministers and pastors that think philosophy and theology go together. Nothing could have deceived them more and everyone I know of who thinks this way is no longer a minister in God's church. It will pull you away.

The same is true of the false religions, it is the psychological, brainwashing method. You repeat the phrases 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, you therefore begin to feel better up to a point, but at that point you have already deceived yourself. It is not the way of God.

If we are not careful, we can be in danger of abusing the Scriptures in this way. We use them as mere phrases in that way, or just spout them out lightheartedly without much thought. We sing our hymns and feel better for the time being.

When you turn Scripture into a drug, which gives you a temporary relief without you knowing why or how, the effect does not last. That is what many people do in the world when they go to church—scripture expounded. They feel good about themselves, they are zealous and enthusiastic at least for an hour or two until they get back to their lives again. It gives a temporary feeling of exhilaration, but fails you when you are in the struggle and in the heat of the battle.

What then is the true application of the apostle Paul's teaching? The first thing to realize is the need to be strong because of the power of the enemy. Never underestimate that power. God always calls us to face the enemy and as Peter says, "to realize that he is a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

We are told that the archangel, Michael, dare not speak lightly or loosely to Satan and when he debated with him concerning the body of Moses, he did not bring a railing accusation against him.

**Jude 9** But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for

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slander but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

He put it in God's hands, even though he might have had equal power to Satan, or maybe even more being an archangel himself.

The enemy is terribly powerful, full of subtleties and wiles and is full of guile. He can even transform himself into an angel of light as Paul informs us in II Corinthians 11.

**II Corinthians 11:14** And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.

Another practical reason from the human perspective, is that if you are to be able to stand, and withstand in the evil day, you need this strength. Though God's way of life should be lived consistently, in one sense there are variations. There will be evil days and some days are worse than others and they can be exceptionally bad at times.

In general, at the present time we are living in a very evil day. It is evil in every respect. I am not thinking only in international intentions, but also because evil and sin are so powerfully organized and so entrenched in this society. It is an evil day because of the confusion of many of the churches which sometimes seem to deny, not only the whole of the gospel, but even reject the belief of God Himself.

It is not easy to be a Christian at a time like this when you have men and women living two separate, hypocritical lives, one at church and a different, secular one at home and at work. Christians are being confused by these things, particularly the children. Satan is unusually busy and active creating this uncertainty about the essentials of the faith, and producing this confusion. Thankfully our children are sanctified because we are members of God's church. However Satan can still get to them, especially if they are in public schools.

Undoubtedly we live in a very evil day and if we are to withstand such a time as this, there is only one way and it is the way that the apostle Paul teaches us here. We need this spiritual power and the whole armor of God and only then can we stand.

Though the confusion is terrible, those who believe the truth can stand—do not be disheartened, do not be discouraged, do not be misled, and do not be put off. You may feel like you are standing alone, but you can still be enabled to stand strong though the days are so cruelly evil.

But there are other reasons that should encourage us all to seek this strength and this power. Why should I be strong in the Lord and the power of His might? To be strong in order to avoid personal failure is one of the reasons, because when we do fail in sin, we become miserable and joyless. So to save yourself from the misery, that is the inevitable consequence of any failure in the Christian life, "Be strong in the Lord and the power of His might."

But there is an even greater reason than the fear of personal failure. Be strong because you are who you are, because you are what you are, and we are individuals in this gift of salvation, but we are not isolated units. We are multiple members of the Body of Christ, we belong to God, and we belong to God's Family. Remember always that Jesus Christ is not ashamed to call us brethren. He tells us that in Hebrews 2.

**Hebrews 2:11** For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.

Remember also that God is not ashamed to be called "your God." The name of God and Christ is upon us.

**Hebrews 11:16** But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

Why should we be strong? Well, for His sake even more than for our own sake. In a sense this is an alarming thought and yet it is one of the most glorious truths that we can ever realize about ourselves. That the reputation, in a sense, of God the Father and the Son is somewhat in our hands and that any failure in us brings the great and holy name into disrepute.

To make this point clear, we are representatives and not isolated individuals, we are one in this great and mighty army, so any sin or failure we have, personally or as a group, reflects on the name of Jesus Christ and God the Father and to tarnish that name is a horrible sin.

It is not only that we may live a joyous life, that we must be strong, we must learn to look at things from the standpoint of the church and this great spiritual army with banners, lead by Jesus Christ who is the captain and leader of our salvation.

We give proof of the truth of the gospel by being strong in the Lord and the power of His might and by being spiritually triumphant and prevailing in trials.

To live righteously is difficult in this world and when we see someone who is succeeding, someone who can stand against the enticements and the insinuation of evil, someone who is not carried away off his feet by the popular thing, someone who stands steadfastly for the truth and for everything that is worthy, we are greatly encouraged.

In our daily lives, whatever our earthly calling, we all live in some kind of circle. We are surrounded by people who are blinded by Satan and carried along in evil ways by his will. We will read here in II Timothy 2.

**II Timothy 2:26** and that they [those who are in opposition] may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

There then are some of the reasons and preliminary considerations of why we must be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

The second general principal is we have to realize our own weaknesses and our need for help. That is the presupposition of what Paul is saying here. He is not only concerned about this because of the power of the enemy, he is equally concerned because of our own weakness and lack of strength.

The best way to realizing this impotency is to understand something of the power of the enemy. There is ample teaching in the Bible to bring you to that knowledge. Go to the very beginning of the Bible and you see the example of Adam, who, as you well know, was sinless and perfect but he was confronted by the manifestation of the wiles of the Devil.

Though Adam and Eve were created perfect and had lived a life of fellowship and communion with God, they failed so easily. The subtlety of the enemy with the insinuation that God was against man, that God was unfair to man, was too much for them and they failed.

When Satan launches his attack, what is man? If Adam and Eve, in that perfect state failed, who are we to stand without God's Holy Spirit? The point is that we cannot stand

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without God's Holy Spirit.

Look at the Old Testament saints, the patriarchs, the godly kings, and the prophets—they all failed. Not one of them could stand up to Satan. All men have failed, they have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. They have succumb to the wiles of the Devil.

This has been the universal testimony of all the saints. One of the assurances of the saints is that they do not give the impression that the life of a Christian is an easy one. The person that gives the impression that life is easy, has confused something else with Christianity. He has found what he thinks is a shortcut which he imagines brings him to a place where everything is quite simple.

Simple and easy is not the lifestyle. The greatest saints have always testified to the fierceness of the battle, to their own weakness, to their own lack of ability, and we must then pay heed to what this great cloud of witnesses are saying to us today.

But you can also pay attention to your own experience. If you feel you are a very strong Christian, let me ask then why have you failed so much then 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 attacked with feelings of hopelessness and despair?

It is all do to the plain fact of our weakness. It is because we are insufficient and fallible. We must face this honestly and we have to admit to ourselves that we are weak. We all want to think of ourselves as strong and able to scale the tallest mountain, but we have to face human pride. Admitting to pride is half the battle. We have to know that we are weak and therefore strive to do a great deal of self-examination.

That was the main problem with the Pharisees, they thought that they were right with God and that there was nothing wrong with them, but they were riddled with flaws and weaknesses.

Are there areas in us that inherently render us incapable of fighting the battle against self, sin, and Satan? We have to realize that mere principles of morality are not sufficient for us. The world has always been interested in what it calls “the good life.”

Philosophers have always been interested in happiness, but the trouble has been that they have never been able to grasp it. Principles of morality are good as far as they go, but they are not enough. You can read books on ethics but it is a very different thing to

put them into practice.

The apostle Paul never depreciated the law of God, because it is spiritual, and that it is emanating from God, who is Spirit. Knowing that God's law can only be perfectly kept with God's Holy Spirit dwelling in him, Paul describes his struggle with his own human nature, which is common to man. We will read Romans 7:18. This is a perfect description of our struggle with sin, Satan, the world, and our own human nature.

**Romans 7:18-25** For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

We see that a certain thing is right, but the problem is, how am I to do it? It is when we really face the problem that we really begin to realize the extent of our weakness. Furthermore human will power alone is not enough. Willpower is excellent and we should be using it, but it is not enough.

Hold on to your principles of morality and ethics; use your willpower to accomplish things; pay heed to every noble and good desire that is in you, but realize that these things alone are not enough and that they alone will never bring you to the desired place. We have to realize that all our best is totally inadequate. A spiritual battle must be fought within a spiritual manner which means that we have to have God's Holy Spirit in order to do it. It all comes from God the Father and Jesus Christ, but we have to do the works part of faith.

The problem is not just a problem in moral living. That is the limit of the physical government's concern on how we conduct ourselves. It knows nothing of the spiritual principles because it knows nothing of Satan and his demons, the principalities and powers. That is why it believes that education can really solve the problem and reform people, and why it evokes the aid of psychotherapy and various other methods in prisons. But the more it follows these deceptions, the more it seems to increase,

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because carnal human beings do not realize the spiritual characteristics of the problems.

You and I have to realize that living God's way of life does not follow automatically upon conversion. "Many are called; few are chosen." There is a great deal of hard spiritual work to be done. And of those who are called and not chosen are those who did not put enough effort into it; who did not work spiritually hard enough.

**Matthew 18:3-4** and [Jesus] said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

A major part of humbling ourselves is in recognizing our weakness, but pride clouds our mind to what our weaknesses are.

A person may recognize the truth intellectually and he thinks that he needs the act of God in Christ to save him, but he seems to leave it at that. He feels that in the future he is going to live God's way of life by his own power and he has a new understanding, so now he is going to live this life. But it cannot be done because he is trusting nothing but his own human strength. This is a battle that can only be fought in a spiritual manner and with spiritual understanding and powers.

**John 4:24** "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

So both spirit and truth are required within the worship and also in the battle that we have.

Now the law of God is a reflection of the character of God and it can only be understood and perfectly kept with the Holy Spirit. True worship of God requires spiritual understanding of God's law of love, which is the foundation of God's truth.

**Galatians 5:17** For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

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So realizing that all that is still true of me and that I am still here in this warfare and up against this terrible power, what is the next thing? Here is the third principle: to realize that God is strong; He is mighty. As the Old Testament reminds us, the name of the Lord is a strong tower. His very name is strong.

**Exodus 20:7** “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.”

The name of God and the name of Jesus Christ are important to Them and they are essentially and vitally important to us as well. The name represents Him, who He is, and what He is. The important thing we have to realize is the greatness of His strength. That is what Paul is saying to us in Ephesians 6.

Listen to the words, examine them in detail, he says: “Be strong in the Lord and the power of His might.” Do we realize its full significance? What does he mean the power of His might?

The basic thing here is the “might.” We are directed to the power of His might. The difference between power and might is that “might” means power and strength as an imbuelement. “Might” means inherent power, something a man is given. Think of a very strong muscular man. The might is that man's inherent muscular strength and power.

“Power” means the manifestation of that might. The might is there as a potential; as something inherent manifesting itself showing itself useful; showing that it can be effectual. It means that this great reserve of strength and power is actually in operation doing something, not the imbuelement itself, but the proof of the fact that you have the imbuelement.

The apostle Paul uses the two terms and it is important that we look at both. So you start by reminding yourself of His strength—look at Him, look at His power.

You have been looking at the enemy and have seen his strength, and you have looked at yourself and are trembling in your weakness and in your effectiveness, he says “Look at Him, be strong in the Lord.” To be strong in the Lord you must remember the power of His might and His strength. We are to look at and realize all the reserves of strength and power that are in Him. That is what these New Testament epistles are saying.

**Colossians 2:9 (ESV)** For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,

It is there in Him.

**Colossians 2:2-3 (ESV)** that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

They are all there, they constitute this might and this tremendous inherent strength and power.

To be strong in the Lord includes meditating about Him and His strength. It is not just praise or incantation, it is not just a formula. It means that you sit down and remind yourselves of these things and you look at Him and remind yourself of some of the things that are true concerning Him.

This is one of the main reasons for reading scriptures regularly and reading the four gospels in particular. We should not read the Scriptures that we may say that we have read our daily portion and so have done our duty. It is not a mechanical thing that we do. Please do not become content with a mere mechanically reading of the Scriptures without really looking at them and meditating on them, without realizing what they are saying, and without drawing lessons for yourself out of them. It takes time to read and study the Scriptures properly

Where do we see His strength? We see it in His life. We see Him here in this world in the likeness of sinful flesh, we see Him in the same world that we are in. We see that He obviously knew hunger and thirst, physical weakness and tiredness, that He knew what it was to be disappointed with people. He has gone through it all and yet what we see, as we look at Him, is that He stands and He always stands.

There is never a wavering, faltering, or falling. He stood in the world and in the flesh, with the Adversary and everything else against Him. But He still stood and therefore, as we look at His life, we see immediately one who walked steadily through this world, without deviating, who walked faithfully and righteously.

We see even more than that. We see all His miracles, we see especially in the miracles in which He cast out demons. He was one who could command the demons. He speaks with power and authority and the demons have to come cringing to Him asking him to spare them and not cast them into the deep. That is power! He was a human being with the both the Spirit of God and the spirit of a human being within Him.

The disciples could not do that. They could not cast anything out. The demons came to Him and said, "We know you are the holy one of God." Here is the one who, when the demons were operating powerfully, with a word could drive them out.

Look at the boy at the foot of mount of the transfiguration. The father had brought the boy to the disciples and they had done their best, but they could not help and the poor boy became a victim of Satan's power. But at a word from Christ, just one word from Him, Satan is driven out and the boy is healed and restored to his father. There we see His power in operation, and we see something of the power of His might.

He is the master of the principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and the spiritual wickedness in high places.

But we are not done with the power of His might yet. It is revealed in His own temptation. He was tried directly, not by some of the emissaries, not by other principalities, but by Satan himself and all his wiles. Satan appears to have taken charge of the situation because he realizes it is the biggest problem that he has ever confronted. So he came to Jesus and tempted Him for forty days and forty nights, in the wilderness and on other occasions, but Satan was utterly and entirely defeated.

With the words of Scripture, Jesus repels and Satan falls back defeated waiting for another time. Satan failed despite enormous efforts.

The apostle Paul says to make practical use of that power yourself. Jesus, with all His power and operation, met Satan in single combat and Jesus easily defeated him, therefore, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."

The power was already in Him. When Satan comes He shows it and lets out a little and Satan is immediately repulsed. James has the exactly the same way of grasping this point. He says:

**James 4:7** Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

That is the way that it works out. But it does not work out until you and I are quite sure about Christ's power and really do know something of the power of His might, the inherent power that is in Him.

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Finally, Jesus Christ proves and demonstrates His power at His crucifixion and in the resurrection. This day seemed to be the day of the power of evil and sin. The powers of evil, Satan, and the world thought that to be the case. They reviled Him, they laughed at Him, and jeered. "If you are the king of the Jews then save yourself!"

They thought that He could not do it and that Satan had defeated Him. But what was happening there, Paul says in Colossians 2:15, was He was taking these principalities and powers and putting them to an open shame triumphing over them in it. In other words, He was victorious over them when they thought that they had defeated Him.

This is the supreme paradox. Jesus appears to be dying in weakness and there is inherent strength there. There is this might of His, the power of the divine nature of God there. Jesus turns even that into the vanquishing of Satan and the setting of His people free. He is the complete master over all the powers that are set against us, He defeats them all.

**Psalm 68:17-18** The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of thousands; the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the Holy Place. You have ascended on high, you have led captivity captive; you have received gifts among men, even from the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell there.

Christ is the conqueror over everything that is set against us, but we must remember that God is the author of this victory. He formed the plan and executed it in the offering of His Son.

This is not some psychological formula that you and I can apply. It all comes back to this—to truly knowing Him. You will never know spiritual power in your life until you know Him. How do we do that? What is the test of knowing Jesus Christ? The apostle John gives a clear definition in I John 2.

**I John 2:3-4** Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

The various sections of the armor are nearly all directed to that end, to know Him and to know the truth concerning Him. We start with that here, "In the Lord and in the power of His might," and realize that His power is available for us.

Then we must realize that we belong to one who is the Lord and Master and that all the fullness of deity dwells in Him. There is invincible power and might in Him, and that it is power and might that not only remains potential, but also becomes actual and shows itself on our behalf.

This power and might enables us, even in this evil day to withstand, to be strong, to fight this spiritual battle against principalities and powers, and to bring honor and glory to His great and holy name.

Satan is a terrible enemy, but we can be encouraged by what the Day of Atonement symbolizes—Satan and the demon's removal for a thousand years. Their imprisonment and removal from influencing and deceiving, so that mankind can at last be made at-one with God.

If it were not for God and the provisions He has made for us for this warfare, we would be rightly downcast and discouraged and severely depressed, but we are not to allow ourselves to become that way. Although we face a great and terrible enemy, the victory is not our enemy's but God's and it becomes our victory also if we arm ourselves with the armor of God and preserver to the end.

The conclusion is a simple one: do not trust in yourself. If you trust yourself as Peter did, you will fail as his example shows us. Peter told Jesus in Mark 14,

**Mark 14:29** Peter said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be."

But that very night, Peter, who considered himself the strongest of all the apostles, denied his Lord three times, on the last occasion, with cursing. If we trust ourselves we will fail.

If we know our own weakness and therefore turn to God as our necessary defense against Satan, then we will be able to stand against Satan's schemes.

Let us end on a positive and thankful note

**I Corinthians 15:57-58** But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

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The literal translation of this scripture is this: "But thanks be to God who keeps on giving us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

We experience the power of His resurrection in our lives as we yield to Him and He will never leave us or forsake us because we are of the body of Christ.