

Intro: Colonel Johann Rall and George Washington in the Revolutionary War. Be prepared for the battle, read the note the Spirit has left us through the apostle Paul. Today we will look at the *what* and the *why* of this note of imminent battle. Next week we will look at the *how* in the armor of God.

1. "Be strengthened in the Lord" (The What)

a. in the power of His inherent strength (three words for power, ability, strength)

- i. The word is passive, indicating that the power comes from an external source, i.e. the Lord
 - 1) The Lord is always the subject of the strengthening, the source from whom power and ability flow
 - 2) However, it is also commanded, indicating that we are responsible in some way to find our strength in the Lord

ii. This strength is connected to the gospel, faith in Jesus, the hope of the nations

1) In understanding

- a. Eph 1:16ff – to know Him, the hope of our calling, the riches of our inheritance, the surpassing greatness of His power toward us, etc.

Ephesians 1:16-21 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

- b. Eph 3:16 – Paul's prayer for strength from the Holy Spirit *in order to know (experientially) the nature of the love of Christ*

Ephesians 3:16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith - that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

- c. 2 Timothy 2:1 – be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus

2 Timothy 2:1 You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, ² and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

2) In proclamation

- a. Philippians 4:13 – Christ strengthens us to persevere in the gospel
- b. 1 Timothy 1:12, Christ Jesus our Lord gave Paul strength to proclaim and defend the glorious gospel of the blessed God

1 Timothy 1:12 I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service,..

c. 2 Timothy 4:17 – strength to proclaim the gospel to the nations

2 Timothy 4:17 But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.

- b. This strengthening is supernatural in Scripture
 - i. Power in Ephesians (1:16ff; 3:14ff)
 - ii. The power of the Holy Spirit is the deepening of faith in Christ
 - 1) Romans 15:13
 - 2) 1 Cor 4:19
 - 3) 1 Thess 1:5
- c. Rather than picturing our walk together as a leisurely stroll or a comfortable cruise, Paul pictures our walk together, in Christ, with a picture of warfare
 - i. If we conclude that we don't have the power of Christ within us, we become functionally hopeless and don't expect any true transformation of heart or desire in ourselves or in others (Rom 15:13)
 - ii. If we conclude that *we* are the power, we become arrogant and self-righteous, treating others with disdain and contempt, in other words: faithless and opposed to God (James 4:6)

2. Put on the full armor of God (The Statement of the How)

- a. Plural – We put on the armor *together* and we stand *together*
- b. From walking to standing (defensive) in the flow of argument
 - i. Defense in power (in the Lord), His resources: strength and armor
 - ii. The armor gives us strength to stand against something
 - 1) Defense against unrighteousness and unbelief

3. This War is a Spiritual War (The Why)

- a. We need spiritual armor for a spiritual battle
 - i. Eph 4:20-27, v27 “do not give the devil an opportunity”

Ephesians 4:20-27 But that is not the way you learned Christ! - ²¹ assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²² to put off your old self,¹ which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. ²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil.
 - ii. Battle is in the heart and mind, which leads to disobedient faithless living
- b. The devil strategizes against us to drive us back w/o power
 - i. What is the devil's goal?
 - 1) Satan means “adversary”
 - 2) Matt 4:9 – to steal God’s glory and be worshipped
 - 3) Luke 8:12 – to steal away the Word of God from men’s hearts so that they will not believe and be saved
 - 4) John 8:44 – murder, lie (no truth in him)
 - 5) Acts 13:10 – deceit, fraud, enemy of righteousness, against the LORD
 - ii. Spiritual schemes in heavenly places

- 1) **Satan's opposition is not to be found so much in the bizarre and the supernatural as it is in that which seems natural and even human.** You will notice that the subject of demonization is not raised in our text. Neither is any emphasis given here to lying wonders and signs, although these are a part of Satan's arsenal of weapons. Satan tempted Adam and Eve to doubt God's goodness and to disobey His Word. His opposition to Job was evident in the form of natural disaster and human illness. The same appears to be the case with his affliction of Paul (see 2 Corinthians 12:7). His temptation of David seems to be in terms of an appeal to his pride (1 Chronicles 21:1). So, too, his temptation of our Lord was an appeal to what we would think of as natural ambitions and desires (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). (Bob Deffinbaugh)
- 2) Satan's desire is to get us to distrust the Lord (see Adam and Eve and Jesus' temptation) and to do things in our own perceived wisdom and benefit
- iii. The armor of God gives us the strength to stand against the devil's strategies of deception and unbelief
 - 1) Look at the armor in the next few verses and see how they relate to faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ
 - a. This armor is the Gospel of Christ
 - i. The command to "put it on" indicates our responsibility to clothe ourselves in this armor, to make Christ the controlling reality of our lives
 - ii. Is 59:16-20 – He is the Warrior-King of whom are in union with
 - iii. Romans 13:12-14 – armor of light = Lord Jesus Christ to fight against temptation of flesh/darkness
 - iv. 1 Thess 5:8-10 – our hope is salvation, our armor defends us until His return to finish it
 - 2) How does the gospel give us peace, salvation, etc.?
 - 3) Satan's defeat is spoken of in terms of the gospel in the NT
 - a. John 12:31 – ruler of this world is cast out
 - b. John 16:8-11 – ruler of this world is judged
 - c. Our defense against Satan's fraudulent and deceptive accusations and temptation is the gospel of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection achievements (truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, the Spirit through the Word)
 - c. "in the heavenly places"
 - i. 1:3 - every spiritual blessing lies here (the gospel blessings IN CHRIST)
 - ii. 1:20 - Christ is seated here
 - iii. 2:6 - We are seated with Christ here
 - iv. 3:10 - rulers and authorities dwell here and are illuminated by the existence of the Church (the Christ-redeemed and betrothed)
 - v. 6:12 - evil spiritual powers dwell here against us

Conclusion:

Paul has passed you a note: You have an enemy who wants to destroy you with unbelief and self-dependence. He is on the lookout, seeking someone who does not have the armor of Christ guarding their hearts and their minds. The question now becomes: Will you put down your cards and gird up? Are you hiding within the confines of your recreation and comforts, oblivious to your enemy's attacks, or are you standing firm behind your Warrior-King, fully girded in the gospel promises? It's time to be men!