Session 2
Standing Strong in the Strength of the Lord
(Ephesians 6:10-13) Dr. Gregg Laskow

1. **The believers' position and power in Christ to stand** (v.10)

A. The believer has a new identity (position) in Christ:

- Although Paul does not mention justification by name, it is implied earlier (Eph. 1:6-7; 2:8, 13-16):
    - In justification, through faith, the perfection of Jesus Christ is imputed to the spiritual account of the believer, as he is judicially and forensically reckoned (declared) righteous, clothed in the righteousness of Christ.
    - Justification is finished and complete with no variation, change, fluctuation, oscillation, or flux. It is complete.
- Although Paul does not mention regeneration by name, he clearly uses different vocabulary to explain it:
    - *"You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked … we were dead in our trespasses, made alive together with Christ*" (Eph. 2:1-2, 5).
- Paul mentions "adoption" (Eph. 1:3-14) according to the purpose of His will.
    - In adoption, the Father adopts the justified, regenerated sinner into His family, and gives him all the rights consistent with sonship: an inheritance, a seal, and access to the Father (1:13-14). All of humanity is spiritually likened to the children of the devil (Jn. 8:44), until God monergistically justifies, regenerates, and adopts.

What has God in Christ done?

- We were dead (2:1) and now alive (2:5).
- We were under the dominion of Satan (2:2), and now seated in the heavenlies (2:6).
- We were objects of wrath, and now we are His glorious inheritance (1:18).
- We were separated from God (2:12), and now we are brought near (2:13).
- We were foreigners, and now we are fellow citizens in His kingdom (2:19).

* We have been transferred from alienation with God to reconciliation through Christ!

Application/Observation:

B. The believer has a new impulse (power) in Christ:

- The power that raised Jesus from the grave is in us: the power of the might of Christ is inside of us *"to the praise of His glorious grace"* (1:6). Additionally, God has prepared us for good works in Christ (2:10). These *"good works"* are the fruit of being *"in Christ"* and consistent with *"walking worthy"* (4:1) and being *"strong in the Lord*" (6:10).
- Being *"strong in the Lord"* is the fruit of one's position in the Lord. It is only because of our position in Christ that we can have a new power (v.10):
    - The Greek translation in English reads: *"Finally, be strengthened in the Lord, that is, in the might of His strength."*
    - *"Be strong"* echoes Joshua's call to *"be strong"* (Josh. 1:6, 7, 9), when he was to lead the nation into Canaan to conquer, defeat, and drive the pagan nations from the land. Paul, however, is not addressing physical enemies, but spiritual ones.
- *"Be strengthened"* is in the present imperative passive, meaning to be endowed with power to become able.
- Power does not come from the believer, but through union with Christ.
- *"In the Lord"* denotes the sphere from which the strength comes.
- Believers are not merely to be strengthened by the Lord in an instrumental sense, but are to be strengthened in the Lord through their union with Christ.
- The first command to *"be strong"* is to receive strengthening, while the second, *"put on"* is to take up the armor actively.

Application/Observation:

C. The believer is to put on Christ and "walk" worthy of Him:

- The armor of God is not a "new" theological concept, but one that Paul has already mentioned! It is a metonym, another way of saying "walking worthy" and walking in the power of the Spirit.
- Paul has already mentioned being chosen (1:4), adopted (1:5), accepted in the beloved (1:6), redeemed and forgiven (1:7), sealed with the Holy Spirit (1:13), made alive with Christ (2:5), raised and seated with Christ, (2:6),

God's workmanship (2:10), brought near to God (2:13), reconciled to God (2:16), a member of God's household (2:19), a dwelling place of God by the Spirit (2:22).

Paul has already described the armor!

- Belt of **truth** (v.14): *"Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the **truth"*** (4:25).
- Breastplate of **righteousness** (v.14): *"Put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true **righteousness** and holiness"* (4:24).
- Shoes and gospel of **peace** (v.15): *"Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of **peace** … Christ is our **peace*** (4:3; 2:14).
- Shield of **faith** (v.16): *"I have heard of your **faith** in the Lord Jesus … Christ may dwell in your hearts through **faith**"* (1:15; 3:17).
- Helmet of **salvation** (v.17): *"For by grace you have been **saved** through faith"* (2:8).
- Sword of the Spirit (the **word** of God) (v.17): *"Cleansed by the water of the **word**…"* (5:26).

Summary:

- *"Walking worthy of the calling"* (4:1) is living out (sanctification) the position the believer has in Christ. It is the working out in worship.
- Sanctification is an imperfect work while justification is a perfect one. Justification declares a man right before God through faith, and sanctification is the making of the man inwardly righteous.
- The armor is a synonym for sanctification. Paul uses a common image (a Roman soldier) as an illustration and reminder to walk worthy. The armor is the practice of the position. Putting on the "new self" (4:24) is the same principle as putting on the armor of God. It is walking, standing, and living in the sphere of union with Christ.
- Putting on the armor, and standing, is to be the regular behavior.
- It combines power, human cooperation, and participation. Find your strength in the Lord (2 Tim. 2:1).

Application/Observation:

2. **The believer's posture and program in Christ to stand** (v.11-13)

- After spending the first three chapters addressing the believer's standing in union with Christ and the indicatives of Christ's work, Paul focuses on the imperatives of this new standing. This is sanctification, which is a synergistic work (Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 1:29).

A. The believer's posture is awareness of spiritual warfare by living accordingly:

- The word *"devil,"* or *diabolos*, means *"slanderer," "accuser,"* or *"adversary."*
- Paul mentions the *"schemes"* of the devil. He does not define these schemes, but he uses the image of *"flaming arrows"* (v.16).
    - We can extrapolate from the rest of Scripture what this looks like: intelligent, crafty plots to hinder the believer from *"walking worthy"* (4:1).
- The Greek word for *"schemes"* or *"wiles"* is where we get our English word "method" from, and it can mean "pursuit" or "a way or proceeding."
- It is cunning, calculated, crafty, scheming, trickery, and a deceitful, methodical strategy.

Application/Observation:

The character of the devil and his host:

- Scripture does not specifically spell out his role and function before the rebellion in the spiritual realm, and Scripture may use the sins of human kings as a mirror of what happened before the Fall in Genesis 3 (Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:12-17; Rev. 12:7-9).
- The devil (Satan) is a fallen angel who tempts, deceives, and accuses (Gen. 3; Matt. 4:1-11; 1 Pet. 5:8; Eph. 6:11-12). He can transform himself as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14).
- Satan is likened to *"a strong man"* (Lk. 11:21), *"a roaring lion"* (1 Pet. 5:8), the *"prince of the power of the air"* (Eph. 2:2), and the *"God of this world"* (2 Cor. 4:4).
- He can use physical disturbances to disturb the equilibrium of the soul (Job 1; 2 Cor. 12:7-9).
- The Christian is summoned to a life of duty, which assumes hardships and difficulties, as *"through many tribulations, we must enter the kingdom of God"* (Acts 14:22).
- While Satan cannot possess the believer, He can oppress.

The content of the devil and his host:

- *As created spiritual beings, they are not omnipotent* (all-powerful): God does all things according to the counsel of His own will (Ps. 115:3; Prov. 19:21; Isa. 46:9-10; Dan. 4:35), but not Satan and his host.
- *As created spiritual beings, they are not omnipresent* (present everywhere at the same time): they can be in only one place at a time. We know of only six people in Scripture who are mentioned as being directly tempted by the devil (Eve, Job, Jesus, Judas, Peter, and Ananias).
- *As created spiritual beings, they are not omniscient* (all-knowing), although they actively tempt. Satan and his host can choose when to tempt.
- They are crafty, intelligent, and finite creatures who can be in one place at one time. We are not told how many there are. It is often difficult to discern whether there is demonic activity with or without the impulse of sin and the flesh.
- Paul does not describe how this influence happens. Anger can give the devil a foothold (Eph. 4:26-27), he has *"schemes"* (6:11), the evil one "shoots his flaming arrows" (6:16). He can tempt sexually (1 Cor. 7:5), urge us not to forgive others (2 Cor. 2:10-11), and our flesh can be tormented through a *"thorn"* (2 Cor. 12:7).
- The believer must be cautious of not *"engaging in civilian pursuits"* (2 Tim. 2:4).

Application/Observation:

B. The believers' program in Christ to wrestle victoriously against spiritual forces of evil:

- Paul uses the imagery of *"wrestling"* (v.12) which the Ephesians would recognize, alluding to the Olympic games and the training of the Roman soldier in close combat.
    - The Greek word for *"wrestle"* can be translated as *"struggle"* and is only used in this pericope. This unusual word may be intentionally chosen to represent the personal nature of our fight against evil.
- There is a sinful dynamic and robust interaction between the lust of the world, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Regardless, we are not unaware of His schemes (2 Cor. 2:11).
- This "wrestling" can occur at any time, through success, difficulty, and discouragement. This is a spiritual fight, not a physical one.
- The flesh is a term that describes an internal source, either the physical body and/or the corrupted nature in Adam that rebels against God (Rom. 7:18; Gal. 5:17, 19-21).
- Contextually (v.12), the wrestling is not against flesh (humanity) but against the forces of darkness, which work concurrently with sin and the flesh.

What are the *"rulers and authorities, and cosmic powers*"?

- These two powers are mentioned ten times in the present order (Lk. 12:11; 20:20; 1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10, 15; Tit. 3:1). It can refer to either human or angelic leaders. Since warfare is not *"flesh and blood,"* it must refer to spiritual beings.
- The *"cosmic powers"* is only used here in the NT and describes the strength of the rulers.

What is this "present" darkness?

- *"Darkness"* is the realm and power of sin, where there is: (1) a spiritual/moral evil (Jn. 3:19-20; Rom. 13:12; 1 Jn. 1:5-6) and (2) demonic/cosmic power (Lk. 22:53; 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:13) as the domain of this *"present darkness."*
- Darkness is the sphere to which they belonged (5:8).

What are the "spiritual forces in the heavenly realms"?

- It summarizes the rulers and authorities.
- Paul may be referring to local customs, traditions, and deities such as Artemis, Cybele, Isis, Serapis, and over four dozen other gods and goddesses worshipped at Ephesus, as an example of these spiritual forces in the heavenly realms.

How can we discern what is of the forces of evil?

- Another translation of "evil" is "wickedness," which refers to depravity.
- It opposes God's self-revelation and will of command and will of decree. It opposes God's prescriptive and descriptive elements and operates in darkness, not light.
- It opposes the preeminence of Jesus Christ and His kingdom.

- There is a warfare not only in the heavenlies, but also here, on earth. Believers are seated next to Christ in the heavenly places, so in a sense, we are there, and we are also here. Our struggle is not there, but here. We live in the present evil age (5:16).
- The spiritual powers of darkness have an essential character of wickedness.
- The devil tempts from the outside, the flesh is internal, and sin is conceived and acted out. Satan works through the weakness of the flesh and cannot force believers to sin.
- A person sins because he is tempted and drawn away from his own desires (Jas. 1:14).

Summary:

- Paul does not catalog all the ways spiritual entities oppose us, nor does he map a demonic hierarchy. It is neither helpful nor wise to try to identify the people in government as under demonic or satanic influence. The cosmic powers are a comprehensive summary of all classes of hostile, evil spirits.
- *"Rulers and authorities"* refer to personal, demonic intelligences. While they can use structures, traditions, and institutions, the confusion comes when we try to identify which is which.

*What is "the evil day," and why is Paul concerned about standing firm in it (*v.13)?

- While some believe it is (1) a singular day, or (2) the days preceding the Day of the Lord, Paul most likely is referring to extraordinary trials or intense periods of temptation where demonic assault appears to come with unusual force.
- The degree to which Paul intends to allude to eschatological overtones is not specifically stated.
- Believers live in a present evil age (Eph. 2:1-3; 6:12) which is characterized by intense demonic activity and filled with much evil. The final resolution will be when Jesus intervenes, and all powers are brought under the headship of Christ.

What does the Lord want from His people?

- He wants us to be *"strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might,"* standing against the schemes of the devil, wrestling victoriously, without "falling," and above all, "standing firm."
- Only after putting on (thinking, behaving, and being motivated in union with Christ) can the believer stand against the schemes of the devil by *"walking worthy"* in the power of the Spirit.

Application/Observation:

Dr.GJL@GTY/09/19/2026