

God's salvation, for His salvation is a gift which flows from His pure grace to all who exercise faith in Yeshua. We are reminded of what Paul wrote earlier in this epistle:

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Messiah Yeshua for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (Eph 2:9–10)

All of this helps us understand what a shock it must have been for those in 1st century Rome to hear the words of Paul, "And masters, treat your slaves in the same way!" From what we know of slavery in 1st century Rome, no slave owner could imagine such an appeal. And even more when we realize that the Greek command is in the present tense. "And Masters, keep on doing the same things to them (slaves)." So as shocking as these words would have sounded to the slave owners Paul addresses, they were to remember that for all who are in Yeshua, "old things have passed away, behold, new things have come" (2Cor 5:17).

Once again the application to our own lives in the 21st century is clear: we all are to serve one another in the fear and admonition of the Lord, and by so doing, to help each other grow in our understanding and love for God and what He has accomplished in His Son, giving us life eternal and dwelling with us through His Spirit Who abides with us and in us.

### **10 – Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.**

We come now to Paul's concluding words of this epistle which contain important exhortations for all believers and is therefore a fitting climax of the entire epistle. But these final verses are also a fitting conclusion to the second half of the epistle (4:1–6:9) which contains exhortations to live out the doctrinal truths unfolded in the first three chapters of the epistle (1:1–3:21). For if we are adopted as children into God's family through faith in Messiah Yeshua, then we must strive to walk as "children of light" (5:8). And we are reminded once again by the Apostle that our ability and strength to be living testimonies of God's greatness comes from the power He gives to us through His word and His being ever present with us and in us by His Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit).

The opening word of v. 10, “Finally” (Τοῦ λοιποῦ, *tou loipou*),<sup>1</sup> can be taken several ways: (1) “from now on”<sup>2</sup> or (2) “finally,” “in conclusion.”<sup>3</sup> Even though the expression in our text is in the genitive which favors the meaning “from now on,” because it introduces the conclusion of the epistle as well as a fitting concluding exhortation for the whole last half of the epistle, it seems obvious that Paul intends his concluding words to be the final concluding exhortation for the epistle as a whole. Thus he emphasizes the very means by which believers are enabled to live sanctified lives and thereby to be living testimonies of God’s great power, love, and holiness.

...*be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.* – “be strong” (ἐνδυναμοῦσθε, *endunamousthe* < ἐνδυναμόω (*endunamoō*)) is found in Paul’s epistles five other times:

yet, with respect to the promise of God, he [Abraham] did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, (Rom 4:20)

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (Phil 4:13)

I thank Messiah Yeshua our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, (1Tim 1:12)

You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Messiah Yeshua. (2Tim. 2:1)

But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion’s mouth. (2Tim. 4:17)

In our text, “be strong” is a present imperative (command) which

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- 1 For other times Paul uses τοῦ λοιποῦ as a marker to indicate a concluding statement or section, cf. Phil 3:1; 4:8; 2Thess 3:1.
  - 2 The use of the genitive (as here) usually favors the sense “from now on” or “in the future.” Cf. *BDAG*, p. 602.
  - 3 For this sense, the expression is usually in the dative, cf. *BDAG*, *ibid.*, and this is no doubt why some manuscripts are found with these words in the dative rather than the genitive. See William Larkin, *Ephesians: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Baylor Univ. Press, 2009), p. 156.

emphasizes the fact that this is to be the normal, ongoing reality in the life of the believer. Growing in spiritual strength is to be the norm for the life of all believers. For, as Paul makes clear in the ensuing verses, we are constantly engaged in a spiritual battle and must therefore always be strong in order to gain the victory.

Further, although the imperative (command) “be strong” is in the middle or passive voice, it nonetheless has an active sense, for the acquisition of the strength which is in God Himself comes about in the life of the believer by willing submission to His leading, and by actively seeking His truth and committing oneself to live it out by putting to death the desires of the flesh and willfully submitting to the Spirit.

When Paul’s exhortation to “be strong” is heard, there are doubtlessly many who consider themselves so weak as to wonder how such an exhortation could be followed, for such an exhortation is given to those who are engaged in battle (Joshua 1:6–7, 9). What is more, when in the throws of the battle, a command “to be strong” seems far less welcomed than an announcement “I’m here to do the fighting for you!” But what we learn from Paul’s command to “be strong” is that the life of faith is not one of “rely and relax,” expecting the Lord to do our fighting for us, but rather to know the truth and to act upon it and thus to take up the weapons of our warfare and to engage the enemy, defeating him and gaining the victory. Thus Paul gives us the means by which we are to “be strong.”

... *in the Lord* – Clearly it is our union with Messiah that enables us “to be strong.” It is not our own strength that wins the battle but the very power and omnipotence of God Himself Who is almighty in power. Considering the scriptural command to “be strong,” Calvin notes:

But when our weakness is considered, an exhortation like this would have no effect, unless the Lord were present, and stretched out his hand to render assistance, or rather, unless he supplied us with all the power. Paul therefore adds, “in the Lord.” As if he had said, “You have no right to reply, that you have not the ability; for all that I require of you is, be strong in the Lord.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus we see once again that the means of sanctification within the life of the believer in Yeshua is twofold: (1) to grow and be strengthened in our faith through the knowledge, acceptance, and application

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1 Calvin, *Ephesians*, p. 331.

of the truth, and (2) to put to death the deeds of the flesh and to resist and defeat the enemy. Clearly our sanctification is a cooperative work between the believer and the indwelling Ruach HaKodesh, for holiness is the supreme work of the indwelling Spirit in every true believer.

The words "in the Lord" (*ἐν κυρίῳ*, *en kuriō*) emphasizes our union with Him (1) in His death, (2) in His resurrection, (3) His dwelling with us by the Spirit, and (4) the divine promise of eternity with Him.

*Union with Messiah in His death*

Now if we have died with Messiah, we believe that we shall also live with Him, (Rom 6:9)

*Union with Messiah in His resurrection*

Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Messiah was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (Rom 6:4, cf. Eph 2:4–5)

*Union with Messiah by the indwelling Spirit*

...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matt 28:20b)

*Union with our Heavenly Messiah*

and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Messiah Yeshua, (Eph 2:6)

As such, since through His grace and the infinite value of His death all who are His are one with Him, we therefore have full access to the One Who is almighty, that is, able to accomplish all of His will, and nothing can stand against Him and be victorious.

...and in the strength of His might. – Paul now adds a modifying clause to emphasize the fact that the strength which he commands is not that which has its basis within the believers themselves, but is a strength that is given to them by God Himself. It is the incomparable, almighty power of God that was demonstrated in the resurrection of Yeshua that is the source for the believer in Yeshua to "be strong." For in His resurrection Yeshua showed Himself to have subjugated all other powers.

...what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Messiah, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at

His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. (Eph 1:19–21)

Surely the ultimate success of all who are in Yeshua rests upon the omnipotent power of God alone. And this success is pictured by Paul as warfare in which the believers are engaged in battle against the enemy, i.e., Satan and his demonic legions. It is clear that no human power alone can resist the devil's designs. But the one who is in Yeshua is able to be strong and victorious in this spiritual battle for He is the Almighty One against Whom no one nor any thing is greater.

This is evident in the manner in which Paul writes of "the strength of His might" (τῷ κράτει τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ), for he uses two words which carry a similar sense, so that the phrase is fashioned as a superlative "His mighty strength," i.e., "the One Who has strength greater than all others."<sup>1</sup> Paul used the same words in 1:18–19, amplifying the sense of "the strength of His might" with the previous phrase "the surpassing greatness of His power."

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might. (Eph 1:18–19)

One wonders if Paul may have had a text like Is 40:26 in mind when he used this terminology, seeing that the Lxx uses the same Greek words in a similar fashion.

Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power (ἐν κράτει ἰσχύος), not one of them is missing. (Is 40:26)

What is the means, then, by which the believer is enabled to "be

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1 It is similar in thought to the Hebraism that uses the infinitive absolute followed by its cognate verb to create an emphatic statement (e.g., Gen 2:17, "you shall surely die" [מות תָּמוּת]).

strong in the Lord”? It is by committing ourselves to daily communion with Him through reading, studying, and knowing His word, through regular prayer and praise, and by committing ourselves to fellowship within the gathered body of Messiah in which we care for one another. This enables us to grow in our ability to affirm the fact that nothing is impossible for God. Thus, through the work of the Spirit we are enabled to lay hold of this promise and thus engage the battle for righteousness. With confidence and strength we affirm the almighty power of God and are more and more enabled to put to death the deeds of the flesh so that our lives honor Him in all things. By faith in God and His almighty power, we dispel fear and are able to accomplish the work He gives us to do.

As Gurnall writes:

...it is the saints’ duty, and should be their care, not only to believe God Almighty, but also strongly to believe that this almighty power of God is theirs, that is, is engaged for their defense and help, so as to make use of it in all straits and temptations.<sup>1</sup>

## **11 – Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.**

It seems quite certain that Paul intends us to understand that the former command “be strong in the Lord” is accomplished by putting on the armor. Even as a soldier must prepare for the battle he intends to enter, so we must recognize that we too are in a spiritual battle and that only as we are properly prepared will we be victorious. Thus, the opening imperative, “Put on” (*ἐνδύσασθε*, *endusasthe*)<sup>2</sup> clearly emphasizes that the spiritual life of the believer in Yeshua is a cooperative reality, the believer submitting to the Lord, and the Lord empowering the believer. Once again, the path of sanctification for all who are “in Messiah” is not “be still and let God do the work,” but is one of active obedience and service. Surely the outcome is guaranteed, for in an ultimate sense, the

1 William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1964 [first published in 1662-1665]), p. 28.

2 The fact that *ἐνδύσασθε* is an aorist imperative does not indicate that the armor is envisioned as being put on once for all. The verb *ἐνδύω* is regularly in the aorist aspect as it envisions a completed action, i.e., putting something on. See Merkle, *Exegetical Guide to the Greek NT: Ephesians* (B & H Academic, 2016), p. 211.

battle has already been won. And it is this reality which gives further courage and strength to the believers, for it is the sure hope of Yeshua's return that is constantly to be before their eyes.

Obviously Paul is using a military metaphor to describe the spiritual warfare in which every true believer is engaged. Thus he speaks of "the full armor of God" (τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, *tēn panoplian tou theou*), language taken from the military in Greek and Roman times. The "full/complete armor," the "panoplia," describes the full set of armor that a soldier would wear as he entered battle. Though not every piece of the normal "panoplia" is mentioned by Paul, the emphasis of his words here is that everything necessary, both to engage in the battle and to be protected from the enemy is supplied to us by God. This is why Paul writes of the full armor "of God," for God is the "Captain" Who supplies the armor to all those He enlists, and He gives them everything necessary to achieve victory in the battle. It is our responsibility to utilize, i.e., to "put on" the armor He has provided.

Paul borrows a comparison from the military art, and bids us put on the whole armor of God. We ought to be prepared on all sides, so as to want nothing. The Lord offers to us arms for repelling every kind of attack. It remains for us to apply them to use, and not leave them hanging on the wall.<sup>1</sup>

... so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. Here we see why the child of God so much needs the divinely given armor. The warfare in which we are engaged is no common warfare, for the enemy is the devil himself (διάβολος, *diabolos*)<sup>2</sup> who is ἰσὺς, Satan, "the slanderer." What is more, the battlefield is often in a realm that is unseen, i.e., in the thoughts of one's mind or in the words and conversations in which one engages day by day. In short, the enemy exists in the spiritual realm though he uses the physical world as his stage, as we see in the next verse (v. 12).

By having on the armor of God, the child of God is enabled to "stand firm against the schemes of the devil." The "stand firm" means to hold one's ground, that is, to stand for the truth and to make it known, not only by one's words but also by one's whole life—relationships, activities, work, entertainments, etc.

But to engage the battle and be victorious, we must recognize that

1 Calvin, *Ephesians*, p. 334.

2 On *diabolos*, see the comments on 4:27, p. 269 above.

the enemy is formidable. Paul here refers to “the schemes of the devil” (τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου, *tas methodeias tou diabolou*). The “schemes” of the devil are his “methods” and “strategies” used to trick, coerce, confuse, and entice those he seeks to control. We have seen this Greek word *methodeia* previously, in 4:14.

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; (Eph 4:14)

Interestingly, this word is only found these two time in the Apostolic Scriptures.<sup>1</sup> In both cases, the word carries the sense of “scheming,” “craftiness,”<sup>2</sup> portraying the ability to trick someone into doing what they otherwise would not. While it is clear that the enemy of our souls is limited and is not “all knowing,” an attribute which only God has, the enemy is scheming and is able to trip people up by luring them into his traps.

Hendricksen makes a good point regarding the “schemes of the devil.”

Now this expression “crafty methods” will be no more than a hollow sound unless we give scriptural content to it. Some of these clever ruses and vicious stratagems are the following: mixing error with just enough truth to make it appear plausible (Gen 3:4, 5, 22), quoting (really misquoting!) Scripture (Matt. 4:6), masquerading as an angel of light (2Cor 11:14) and causing his “ministers” to do likewise so that they “fashion themselves as apostles of Christ” (2Cor 11:13), aping God (2Thess 2:1–4, 9), strengthening people in their belief that he does not even exist (Acts 20:22), entering places where he is not expected to enter (Matt 24:15; 2Thess 2:4), and above everything else promising people that good can be attained through wrongdoing (Luke 4:6, 7).<sup>3</sup>

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1 Note the Lxx of 2Sam 19:28 uses the cognate verb, *μεκθοδεύω*, to carry the sense of “slander.”

2 *BDAG*, p. 625.

3 Hendricksen, *Ephesians*, p. 272,