

Be Strong in the Lord



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 9

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Ephesians 6:10–20; Romans 13:11–14; 1 Thessalonians 5:6–8; 2 Corinthians 10:3–6; Hebrews 12:4; Ephesians 1:21; Ephesians 3:10.

MEMORY VERSE: “Finally, let the Lord make you strong. Depend on his mighty power [strength]. Put on all of God’s armor [battle suit]. Then you can remain [stay] strong against the devil’s evil plans” (Ephesians 6:10, 11, NlrV).



“The Lord opened the eyes of the young man. And he saw that the mountain was full of horses and chariots of [made from] fire all around Elisha” (2 Kings 6:17, ICB).

“**THE SERVANT OF ELISHA** got up early. When he went out, he saw an army with horses and chariots [war wagons] all around the city. The servant said to Elisha, ‘Oh, my master, what can we do?’ Elisha said, ‘Don’t be afraid. The army that fights for us is larger than the one against us.’

“Then Elisha prayed, ‘Lord, open my servant’s eyes. Let him see.’ The Lord opened the eyes of the young man. And he saw that the mountain was full of horses and chariots of [made from] fire all around Elisha” (2 Kings 6:15–17, ICB).

When Paul wrote Ephesians 6:10–20, he prayed that God would open the eyes of his readers the same as Elisha asked God to open his servant’s eyes. Paul asked God to help Christians understand the worldwide war between good and evil. When Paul’s readers understood this Bible truth, they would “see” the things God did to save them. Then Paul’s readers would have hope!

STAND STRONG IN THE LORD! (Ephesians 6:10–20)

Read what Paul writes in Ephesians 6:10–20. What does Paul ask Christians to do? Today, God asks us to join Him in the fight against Satan. This fight is the worldwide war between good and evil. What do Paul’s words mean for us, today, as God’s soldiers?

Paul wants members of the church to understand that their work for God is the same as a real war with weapons. So, Paul preaches to them a “war sermon” to help them get ready to fight the battle against evil. Paul starts his war sermon by saying, “Finally, let the Lord make you strong. Depend on his mighty power [strength]” (Ephesians 6:10, NIV). Then Paul commands church members to put on the whole battle suit of God (Ephesians 6:11). Then members will be ready to stand against the devil’s clever tricks (Ephesians 6:11). Paul tells his readers that the war they fight is against the powerful, spiritual army of evil (Ephesians 6:12). Satan is the general of this evil army. Again, Paul tells his readers to put on the whole battle suit of God. Then they will stand strong in the fight (Ephesians 6:13). God’s battle suit includes many parts: belt, chest piece, shoes, shield, helmet, and sword (Ephesians 6:14–17). In this suit, Christians will be ready to fight. Paul also invites his readers to do what wise soldiers did before they marched into battle: they prayed (Ephesians 6:18–20).

In the Old Testament, God’s prophets, or special messengers, preached war sermons to Israel’s army before they went to fight the enemy (read Deuteronomy 20:2–4; Judges 7:15–18; 2 Chronicles 20:13–20; 2 Chronicles 32:6–8; Nehemiah 4:14, 19, 20). In these sermons, the prophets said that Israel’s success in battle didn’t depend on weapons or the size of their army. Israel’s success in battle depended on God and His might. When Israel trusted in God and not their own strength, they won. Paul uses these ideas from the Old Testament to help church members understand four important ideas: (1) God gave the church work to do. The church must do it. (2) Satan, their enemy, works hard to destroy their work and their lives, even if they can’t see him. (3) God gives us everything we need to win the fight against Satan. (4) The church must work together.

Paul warns us that we fight against evil angels. What is our only hope to win this fight?



God’s battle suit includes many parts: belt, chest piece, shoes, shield, helmet, and sword (Ephesians 6:14–17).

FINDING STRENGTH IN JESUS (Ephesians 6:10–20)



Paul prays that God will send His Holy Spirit to Christians to make their hearts and minds strong (Ephesians 3:16).

Read again Paul’s “war sermon” in Ephesians 6:10–20. What part does the worldwide war between good and evil have in Paul’s message? Why is understanding this Bible truth so important to our faith each day?

Paul tells us where we get our strength: “Finally, let the Lord make you strong” (Ephesians 6:10, NIV). Our strength comes from the Lord. The Lord is Jesus Christ (also, read Ephesians 2:21; Ephesians 4:1, 17; Ephesians 6:1, 21). “The Church gets her strength from the Lord Jesus who woke up from the dead. Now He is the Captain who leads His church in the fight against evil.”—G. G. Findlay, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (New York: Ray Long and Richard R. Smith, 1931), page 398, adapted.

In Ephesians 6:10, Paul wants us to understand an important Bible truth. The church’s strength doesn’t come from its members. The church’s strength comes from the Lord Jesus Christ. This Bible truth shows us another important idea in Paul’s letter: God shares His strength with His followers (Ephesians 1:19–22; Ephesians 2:4–6; Ephesians 3:16, 17). Strength for every fight, now and in the future, comes only from our connection with Jesus.

Jesus isn’t the only One who gives us strength. All Three Members of the Three-in-One God work together to make us strong. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit get us ready to fight against evil. God the Father gives us His own weapons. We learned about these weapons yesterday. God gives us His battle suit (Ephesians 6:11, 13; compare Isaiah 59:17). In an earlier lesson, we learned that the Holy Spirit makes Christians strong. Paul prays that God will send His Holy Spirit to Christians to make their hearts and minds strong (Ephesians 3:16). The Spirit gives Christians the “sword,” which is the Bible (Ephesians 6:17). Also, Christians must remember to “pray in the Spirit at all times” (Ephesians 6:18, ERV). Paul wants his readers to understand that the Three-in-One God will get them ready to fight against Satan and his evil army.

PAUL'S LETTERS AND THE WAR BETWEEN GOD AND SATAN (Romans 13:11–14)

Read Romans 13:11–14; 1 Thessalonians 5:6–8; and 2 Corinthians 10:3–6. How do these verses compare with Ephesians 6:10–20? What word pictures does Paul use in each set of verses? Why does Paul use these word pictures?

As we already saw, Paul uses word pictures about war and battles to explain Bible truth. Paul invites Christians to fight as soldiers in the war against evil. Paul uses word pictures about war and battles to help his readers understand the Good News about Jesus. At the cross, Jesus won the fight against Satan and his evil angels (Colossians 2:15). Now Jesus fights for us in heaven. Jesus signs us up to join His army. Jesus leads His army into battle to win the war against Satan (1 Corinthians 15:54–58; 2 Thessalonians 2:8; Romans 16:20). As we read Paul's letters, we see that Paul understands that the worldwide war between good and evil "has been happening for a long time. This war has been fought at different times and places in human history. God's army fights against Satan's army, and the earth is the battlefield. God and Satan will continue to fight this war until one army wins the final battle."—Peter W. Macky, *Saint Paul's Cosmic War Myth: A Military Version of the Gospel* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), page 1, adapted.

In Paul's "war sermon" (Ephesians 6:10–20), he talks about several ideas he already shared with us: (1) God makes Christians strong with His might (Ephesians 1:18–20; Ephesians 3:16, 20). (2) Jesus wins the fight against Satan and his evil angels (Ephesians 1:20–23). (3) In the past, we were dead. But now, Jesus gives us new life and invites us to join His army. Jesus gives us strength to fight against Satan, our old master (Ephesians 2:1–10). (4) God gives us the job of showing Satan and His angels that God is wise (Ephesians 3:10). (5) Paul uses Psalm 68:18 to show that Jesus is a powerful Warrior from heaven (Ephesians 4:7–11). (6) Paul commands Christians to "put on [wear]" the Good News about Jesus the same as clothes (Ephesians 4:24, NKJV). The Good News is the same as a battle suit. When we wear God's battle suit, we are ready to understand the worldwide war between God and Satan. Then we will have hope that Jesus will share with us His success against Satan.



Paul uses word pictures about war and battles to help his readers understand the Good News about Jesus.

STANDING ON THE BATTLEFIELD (Ephesians 6:10–20)

Read Ephesians 6:10–20. How many times in these verses does Paul use the word “stand” or “standing”? Why is this idea so important to Paul?

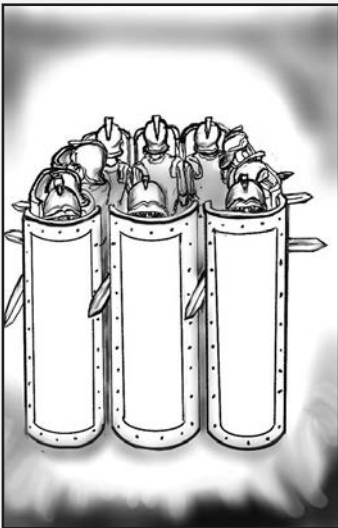
What does Paul mean when he says that we must “stand strong” (Ephesians 6:14, ERV)? “Stand” is a military word picture that shows how soldiers fought in battle. If we want to understand how soldiers “stood” and fought in Bible times, we need to read the battle speeches of Thucydides. Thucydides was a writer who lived during Bible times. Thucydides wrote a lot about war. Thucydides said that an army must do three things to win a war: (1) Soldiers must march to meet their enemies. (2) Soldiers must attack the enemy and stand to fight them hand-to-hand. The soldiers must not run away. (3) Soldiers must push back the enemy (read Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* [New York: E.P. Dutton, 1910], 4.10.1–5).

The most important part of the battle happened when the two armies crashed into each other. Then they made “a terrible noise. Brass armor and weapons, wooden shields, and bodies all came crashing together.”—Victor Davis Hanson, *The Western Way of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pages 152, adapted. If an army wanted to win the fight, they must stand firm and strong at this time. They must not run away when the other army ran toward them and tried to push them back.

So, when Paul tells Christians to “stand strong” (Ephesians 6:14, ERV), he wants them to see a picture of soldiers “fighting close together. The soldiers are fighting hand-to-hand with the enemy. The soldiers are giving hundreds of blows and getting hit up close by hundreds of blows.”—Victor Davis Hanson, *The Western Way of War*, page 152, adapted. That is why Paul says that the church’s war against Satan and his army of evil angels is the same as a hand-to-hand fight (Ephesians 6:12; also, read Thursday’s study for more information on this topic).

What does this word picture about war teach us? It teaches us that we must not relax in our fight against Satan and his evil angels. We must use every weapon that Jesus gives us to win the fight (read Philippians 1:27).

Read Hebrews 12:4. How does our study for today help us to understand better the meaning of Hebrews 12:4?



When Paul tells Christians to “stand strong” (Ephesians 6:14, ERV), he wants them to see a picture of soldiers fighting close together.

FIGHTING AGAINST EVIL (Ephesians 1:21)

What are some of the different names that Paul gives to the evil spiritual powers we fight against? Read Ephesians 1:21; Ephesians 3:10; and Ephesians 6:10–20 for the answers.

Paul talks about our fight against evil spiritual powers (Ephesians 6:12). Paul says this fight is the same as the sport of wrestling. Wrestling is a sport between two fighters or wrestlers. One wrestler tries to hold the other wrestler down so that he can't move or get up. The person who wins the wrestling match is the one who throws or forces the other person to the ground. In Paul's time, many soldiers practiced wrestling to get ready for war and to be good soldiers. So, the sport of wrestling is a good word picture for the hand-to-hand fighting that happens when two armies fight each other. Paul uses wrestling as a word picture to help us understand the real fight that happens between Christians and evil angels.

In Ephesians 1:21, Paul says that Jesus is above all evil powers. Jesus is more powerful than they are, too. Does that mean we can relax and take it easy in the spiritual war against evil? Paul warns us that we don't fight only against human enemies. We fight against evil angels (Ephesians 6:12). Satan is their general (Ephesians 6:11). So, we must be ready at all times to fight. We must stay strong in the faith. At the same time, we don't need to be afraid. God is with us in the fight (Ephesians 6:10). God gives us the best weapons to fight with. God gives us His own battle suit (Ephesians 6:11; compare Isaiah 59:15–17). God also gives us Bible truth, His holy life, peace, faith, mercy, His promise to save us, and His Holy Spirit (Ephesians 6:13–17). God goes ahead of us into the war. God covers us from head to toe in His battle suit. So, there's no way we can fail (Romans 16:20; 1 Corinthians 15:23, 24; 2 Thessalonians 2:8)!

We can't fight against the powers of evil on our own. We need help. Jesus is stronger than Satan and all his evil angels. Jesus won the fight against them at the cross. Why is holding on to Jesus our only hope if we want to win the fight against evil?



Paul uses wrestling as a word picture to help us understand the real fight that happens between Christians and evil angels.



Ephesians 6:10–20 and the book of Revelation show the final fight when Jesus will win the war against Satan and his army.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “In our work for God, we must be strong if we want to succeed. As loyal soldiers for Jesus, we must share the Good News in places that are under Satan’s control. ‘Our fight is not with people. It is against the leaders and the powers and the spirits of darkness [evil] in this world. It is against the demon world [Satan and his angels] that works in the heavens’ [Ephesians 6:12, NLV]. What if we stop fighting? What if we decide to relax? What if we let Satan make us his prisoners? Will we be free from the fight and all the suffering that comes with it? Yes, we will. But the peace we will get from this decision will come at a terrible price. We will lose Jesus and heaven. We can’t accept peace that comes from losing Jesus. It is better for us to fight to the end of earth’s history than for us to get peace that comes from leaving God and choosing sin.”—Ellen G. White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 8, 1888, adapted.

“Did you know that Ephesians 6:10–20 shows us many of the same ideas that we find in the book of Revelation? Both Ephesians 6:10–20 and the book of Revelation teach us the same basic idea about the end times (read Revelation 12; Revelation 16:12–16; Revelation 19:17–21; Revelation 20:7–10). In both Ephesians 6:10–20 and the book of Revelation, we learn that God’s people are under attack by an enemy who came from heaven. This powerful enemy, Satan, is hard at work today. In both Ephesians 6:10–20 and the book of Revelation, God’s people are encouraged by God’s promises about the future life in heaven. Also, both Ephesians 6:10–20 and the book of Revelation show the final fight when Jesus will win the war against Satan and his army. Then God’s kingdom will continue forever. Satan and his army will be destroyed, and God’s people will live with Him in glory forever.”—Yordan Kalev Zhekov, *Eschatology of Ephesians* (Osijek, Croatia: Evangelical Theological Seminary, 2005), pages 217, 233–235, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① When have you fought against evil angels? What helped you the most at those times?
- ② How can you help someone who is being hurt by evil angels? What help do you find in Ephesians 6:10–20?
- ③ How do we best “fight against the devil’s evil tricks” (Ephesians 6:11, ERV)?

CHOOSING THE BEST WORDS

Alexei Arushanian was a 33-year-old Ukrainian man living in Poland. Alexei was putting a new window in a customer's apartment. The customer was a woman who liked to read about God. Alexei saw that she had a Bible and other religious books in her home.

Alexei belonged to a group from his church who gave people copies of Ellen G. White's *The Great Controversy*. The work was hard because not many people liked to read. Alexei prayed for a chance to share a copy of the book with this woman.

The woman was about 40 years old and lived alone. She offered Alexei a cup of tea. Alexei sat and sipped the tea as the woman worked around her home. The woman sang as she worked. Alexei prayed about what to do.

Finally, he said, "I see that you love to read books."

The woman answered, "Yes, I really love to read. You may have noticed that I don't own a TV. I read all the time."

The woman continued working and singing.

Alexei had an idea. He asked, "Are you a Christian?"

The woman nodded. "Yes, I sing in a church choir."

Alexei smiled. "I also go to church. My church is located at Foksal 8." He gave her the address of the only Seventh-day Adventist church in Poland's capital, Warsaw. Alexei said, "I'm a Protestant. I belong to the Seventh-day Adventist Church."

The woman was very interested. Her interest gave Alexei courage. He said, "I want to give you a gift. It is a very interesting book about the history of the Christian faith."

The woman agreed to look at the book.

Alexei took his tools out to his car. He worried that the woman would refuse to open the door when he came back with the book. But the woman welcomed Alexei back in. Alexei saw that she liked the cover of the book. The woman opened the book and started to look through it. Alexei could tell from the look on her face that she didn't agree with everything she read.

Alexei said, "It's up to you to accept or reject the message in the book."

The woman accepted the book. "Thank you very much."

Alexei talked with the woman a little longer. When Alexei left, he was filled with joy. He was so happy that he found a way to give the woman the book. Alexei says, "I could have said nothing and not offered the book to her. She must decide to accept the book and its message or not. My job was only to offer the book to her."

This quarter's 13th Sabbath Offering will support the church's work in Europe, which includes Poland. Thank you for planning to give a big offering.

INSIDE Story

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



"My job was only to offer the book to her."

