

11. 5 Last Days Commands-Part 11

Be Strong

a message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
(3-15-26)

Find this week's sermon audio and video message [HERE](#).

For those who are new, we have been looking at the subject of how as Christians we are soldiers of Jesus Christ, fighting in a war—a war that's taking place in the last days (the time just prior to Jesus' return).

The question we've been dealing with is—are we doing what the Word commands for those living in the last days?

Today, we are continuing our series, “**Five Last Day's Commands**”—or “*Five Commands to Christians Living in the Last Days*”—which comes out of:

1 Corinthians 16:13-14 (NKJV)

¹³ Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. ¹⁴ Let all *that you do* be done with love.

This morning, we find ourselves looking at the fourth command in this series where Paul tells us as Christians to—“**Be Strong.**”

IV. Be Strong

Last week we looked at the command for us as Christians to ‘**Be Brave**’—but last week's command and today's go hand in hand—Which is why God often couples them together in Scripture:

Deuteronomy 31:3, 6 (NKJV)

³ The Lord your God Himself crosses over before you; He will destroy these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess them.... ⁶ Be strong and of good courage [brave], do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He *is* the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.”

Now when we talk about being strong in the Christian life against our enemies (the devil, our fallen nature, and the world at large)—it all starts with the ‘heart’ or in other words with our inner man.

A. Inner preparation for being strong

No one knew that better than Paul the Apostle—which is why his command to ‘**be strong**’ is directed at the *inner man*.

The Greek word for ‘**strong**’ is often used in the New Testament to denote ‘*inner, spiritual strength that leads to growth and victory in the Christian life.*’ The verb is in the *passive* voice which in the Greek denotes ‘*an action being done to us not one that we do to or for ourselves.*’

In other words, the strength that Paul was speaking of was the inner supernatural strength that only comes from the Holy Spirit who is in us:

Ephesians 3:16, 20 (NKJV)

¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man.

²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

The word ‘power’ is the Greek word *dunamis* the same word we get the English words ‘*dynamite*’ and ‘*dynamic*’ from—which is the same Greek word used in Romans 1:16 and Acts 1:8—

Romans 1:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

Acts 1:8 (NKJV)

⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

The same power that *saved* us, is the same power that *equips* us for service—but also is the divine power we need for living the Christian life on a daily basis!

Paul understood very well that he couldn’t live the Christian life in his own strength—he absolutely needed the power of the Holy Spirit. This was the conclusion he finally came to after years of trying to have victory through hard work and raw determination—a truth he tries to pass on to us in Romans 7 & 8 by sharing his personal testimony.

Romans 7 is a chapter of defeat where Paul talks about his struggles to live in obedience to the Law of God (commands) but failing miserably—*“I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate that I do.”* (verse 15)

So, Romans 7 is a chapter of defeat and ends with a cry of defeat—*“O wretched man that I am!”* Yet when we *‘turn the page’* and come to Romans 8—we find a chapter of victory that ends with a shout of victory—*“We are more than conquerors...!”*

You say, *“What happened? How did Paul go from miserable failure to glorious conqueror so quickly?”*

Well, in Chapter 7 Paul uses the personal pronouns **“I”** and **“me”**—**46 times**. In other words, the focus of chapter 7 is self—it was Paul’s testimony of when he tried to defeat sin in his life through his own strength and human resolve.

So, what we have in Romans 7 is Paul addressing the utter failure of trying to use human strength as a way of conquering over his fallen sinful nature and obeying God! That’s why it is a chapter of defeat ending with a cry of defeat—*“O wretched man that I am!”*

But in Chapter 8 (a tremendously uplifting and victorious chapter), the key word is Spirit—as in Holy Spirit!

**The word *Spirit* is used 23 times in Romans 8—
more than in any other chapter in the Bible!**

That's why it's a chapter of victory that ends with a shout of victory—"We are more than conquerors (thru our relationship with Jesus and the indwelling Holy Spirit)."

When it comes to living the Christian life, we need God's power or else defeat, frustration, and exhaustion will beat the life out of us and cause us to want to give up.

Now with that in mind, coming back to our text, when Paul commanded us to 'be strong' in 1 Corinthians 16:13, the verb is in the *passive* voice and literally means "**be made strong**"—as in 'the work of making us strong is a work of the Holy Spirit that He must do in you."

Paul communicated the same thought in Ephesians 5:18 in a different way—

Ephesians 5:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the [Holy] Spirit,

When Paul admonished believers not to be 'drunk with wine' what he is saying is—to not allow yourself to be brought under the influence (the control) of alcohol or drugs of any kind.

He goes on to explain why—"in which is dissipation"—the Greek word means, "A life wasted and destroyed through a lack of self-control" (the same Greek word is translated 'prodigal' in Luke 15:13). Then Paul gives the alternative to living under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs—

Ephesians 5:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; **but be filled with the Spirit,**

Now what exactly does it mean to be "filled with the Spirit"?

Well, Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest gives four things from Ephesians 5:18 that come through in the Greek that will help us to understand what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

1. "Be filled with the Spirit" is a command (imperative in the Greek) that God expects us to obey.

It's not a suggestion, it's a command—a command that is plural in the Greek which means it applies to all Christians—not just to a select few like missionaries, pastors and church leaders.

It's a command because we can't begin to do the work God has called us to do without the power that comes from being filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8)—"so don't even think about it!"

2. In the Greek the verb "filled" is in the present tense and denotes a continuous action—"be continually being filled with the Holy Spirit".

Now this is important because God never intended us to be reservoirs to "contain" the Holy Spirit, but channels through which the Holy Spirit could flow through us to a lost and dying world.

John 7:37-39 (NKJV)

³⁷ On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

³⁹ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

To keep the Spirit flowing in and through our lives we must stay connected (in fellowship) with the Lord—How?

In Ephesians 5:18 Paul told us to be continually filled with the Spirit and in Colossians 3, the parallel passage, he substituted the phrase, “*Let the Word of Christ dwell [continually] in you richly*” (Colossians 3:16).

We stay in fellowship with the Lord (abiding in Jesus) by being in the Word of God, and as such we will then enjoy a constant flow of the Holy Spirit in and through our lives. (Of course, sin will sever that fellowship and will dry up that flow of power until we repent.)

3. In the Greek the verb “filled” is in the passive voice which indicates an action being done to us and not controlled by us.

In other words, we do not fill ourselves, the Holy Spirit does the filling, but our responsibility is to *permit* the Spirit to fill us. (Hence the command mentioned in point #1)

The Holy Spirit *will never* force Himself on us but will fill us as much as we desire or as much as He can depending how much we are already filled with self.

The prayer of many Christians is: “*O Lord give more of Your Holy Spirit to me*”—but according to Jesus in John 3:34 God doesn’t give His Spirit by ‘measure.’

In reality, our prayer should be, “*Lord help me to give more of me to Your Spirit*”—the idea is that of surrender.

4. In the Greek the word “filled” expresses the idea of being “controlled by”.

Luke 4:28-29 (NKJV)

²⁸ So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,

²⁹ and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff.

It means that “*they were controlled by wrath*” and for that reason tried to kill Jesus.

Acts 13:45 (NKJV)

⁴⁵ But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.

“*The Jews were filled with envy*” (Acts 13:45) means that the Jews were controlled by envy and opposed the ministry of Paul and Barnabas.

To be “*filled with the Spirit*” means to be constantly controlled by the Holy Spirit in our *mind*, our *will*, our *emotions*, and of course in our *actions*. It’s the same idea that Paul expressed in Galatians 5:16—

Galatians 5:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ I say then: Walk in the Spirit [live under the control of the Spirit], and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

One of the reasons why the Holy Spirit has so little control over many Christians is because they think He works *automatically* in their lives. So, they're waiting on Him to work but He is waiting on them to surrender.

Galatians 5:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ If we live in the Spirit [we're saved], let us also walk in the Spirit [live under the control of the Spirit].

Just as the Holy Spirit didn't *indwell* us until we invited Jesus into our hearts, so too the Holy Spirit will not *control* us until we yield to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and surrender our will, emotions and actions to the control of the Holy Spirit over our lives.

I think that this is one of the great problems facing the church in America—too many Christians trying to control the Holy Spirit instead of allowing themselves to be controlled by the Holy Spirit.

B. Outer application for being strong

Joshua 1:5–9 (NKJV)

⁵ No man shall *be able to* stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, *so* I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. ⁶ Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷ Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. ⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. ⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God *is* with you wherever you go."

In these verses God lays out to Joshua (and all of us) 4 *conditions* for victory (verses 7-8a), sandwiched between two *promises* of victory (verses 6, 8b-9).

These are conditional promises—if we are faithful in doing our part then God will be faithful in doing what He has promised. So here are the four things God commands us to do if we want to be strong in our Christian lives and experience victory on a daily basis:

1) Joshua was to know God's Word—verse 7a

Joshua 1:7 (NKJV)

⁷ Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do [obey] according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you...

If Joshua was going to be strong and courageous and obey the Law (God's Word)—then Joshua would obviously have to know what the Law said.

There is no such thing as a victorious (or mature) Christian who is ignorant of God's Word. (Hebrews 5:12-14)

The Word of God is '*living and powerful*' (Hebrews 4:12)—but only if you believe it comes from God (and therefore has the power to change your life)—and then you 'step out of the boat' (your comfort zone) and seek to obey.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 (NKJV)

¹³For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

Joshua could only be strong and very courageous through the power of the Holy Spirit—“*not by might, nor by power, but by God’s Spirit*” (Zechariah 4:6)—but it all comes from *knowing* the Word of God.

And so, if Joshua was going to be strong and courageous and obey all the Law (God’s Word)— then Joshua would have to know what that Law said.

The obvious implication was that he would have to be a man of the Word (read it, know it, and memorize it).

This is without a doubt the greatest principle in victorious Christian living—reading and studying and memorizing God’s Word.

2) Joshua was to talk about God’s Word—verse 8a

Joshua 1:8 (NKJV)

⁸This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth...

God’s Word was not to depart from his mouth—he was to talk about it. God is telling Joshua that a victorious life involves talking to others about the Word of God—Why?

First of all, it will keep reminding us about the truths, promises and character of God.

Secondly, there is something powerful about sharing God’s Word with the people in your life— family, friends, and with those you come in contact with. It has a way of stoking the spiritual fire in your heart and giving you strength

One pastor suggested that the reason so many Christians don’t talk about the Bible more in public is perhaps because they are embarrassed to do so (“*I don’t want people thinking I’m one of those ‘born-again’, Bible thumping ‘nut-jobs’*”).

Or simply because they haven’t been reading and studying it, so they don’t know it well enough to talk about it! Listen, it is good to use our mouths to be channels for the Word of God to flow through because when we do, they won’t be used as channels for gossip or murmuring and complaining to flow through.

3) Joshua was to meditate on God’s Word—verse 8b

Joshua 1:8 (NKJV)

⁸This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night...

When the Bible talks about meditating on the Word it isn’t talking about the practice of eastern meditation where a mantra or breathing techniques is used to completely empty the mind of all thought, to enter what is known as the ‘silence’.

The Hebrew word translated ‘**meditates**’ literally means to ‘*chew the cud.*’

In other words, *meditating* on the Word of God is to extract every ounce of nourishment you can from it by going over and over the Word in your mind till it becomes a part of you—

Psalm 1:2 (NKJV)

² But his delight is in the law of the Lord [His Word], And in His law he meditates day and night.

Psalm 119:97 (NKJV)

⁹⁷ Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.

One author said,

“Unfortunately, this is a discipline far too few Christians today know anything about. We live in an age of superficiality and spoon-feeding. Consequently, many of today’s Christians think that all a person has to do to be successful in the Christian life is go to church, pay passing attention to the sermon, have a few Christian friends, and go on about their business as one would without these other elements. That is why Christians make so little difference in our society. They think like the world, and as a result, they act like the world. Their conduct and the conduct of pagans, (apart from the grosser sins), is indistinguishable. What is missing? The missing element is deep, genuine, and persistent meditation on the Word of God. It is only as the Word of God gets into our minds and begins to become part of our normal, day-to-day reasoning and thinking that we begin to act differently and thereby make a difference”.

4) Joshua was to obey God’s Word—verses 7b, 8c

Joshua 1:8 (NKJV)

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to **all** that is written in it...

Jesus said, *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”* (Matthew 4:4)

Look, it’s all or nothing; we can’t *‘pick and choose’* what we’re going to obey and what we’re not going to obey from God’s Word. The problem with far too many Christians is that they approach God’s Word like one of those *‘all you can eat buffets’* where they get to pick and choose what they like and reject what they don’t like. (For example, the kids usually pick dessert over broccoli).

The result—

Joshua 1:8-9 (NKJV)

⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success [a conditional promise]. ⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God *is* with you wherever you go."

If we walk with God in obedience He will be with us in blessing—He will give us strength, courage and success in all He is calling us to do.

J. Vernon McGee—

“If you do not have victory through Christ Jesus, I can tell you why. It is because you are neglecting reading and obeying your Bible. Read your Bible as you ought to and obey it, and you will be able to live a life of victory.

John Bunyan (author of 'Pilgrim's Progress') had written in the front of his Bible, on the flyleaf, "This Book will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from this Book."

There are no short cuts to being strong and victorious in the Christian life—there are no ‘magic’ formulas for spiritual success—you can’t become more than conquerors through a weekend seminar on spiritual warfare.

All too often we look for formulas and short cuts that will bring us overnight victory—but God said that He has purposely designed victory to be a gradual process—which corresponds to our spiritual growth as Christians:

Exodus 23:29-30 (NKJV)

²⁹ I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beast of the field become too numerous for you. ³⁰ Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land.

There are no shortcuts to spiritual power and victory you must read, study, listen to, meditate and memorize your Bible—and then look to the Spirit for the strength you need to live for God.

“Be strong” (1 Corinthians 16:13)—then he qualifies that statement:

Ephesians 6:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

Catch this weeks’ audio, video, study and sermon notes [HERE](#).