

Message: The Difference to Our *Strongholds*

Series: Relationships: *The Difference Jesus Makes!*

Text: Ephesians 6:10

Introduction: If *Jesus* is who He says He is, and if *we* have Jesus in our lives like we say we do, *then something should be different* about us that stands out *in* and *to* this world.

We've been looking at the change that happens within us, and the potential change that can happen through us. This has been a series about Identity- *our Identity in Jesus Christ*. This is where everything begins- you and me, as sons and daughters of God in Christ. That relationship overflows into every piece that our lives touch- from friendships and marriage, to family, and work.

This is how we participate in the Mission of Jesus- *to bring all of Jesus to all the world!*

How many know of the story of David facing off against the giant Goliath? (Raise hands) If Cornerstone Chapel is your home church, it's showed up in some sermons before!

Was David a natural born Giant killer? No more than those in Christ who you look up to as mentors and heroes of the faith. Remember, Goliath represented the best of the Philistine warriors; he became a stronghold of fear and anxiety for Israel. **God matured David through smaller battles (that seemed HUGE at the time) that slowly trained him for bigger ones.** Listen to David's response to the then king Saul and those who doubted David was a match for Goliath.

But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, 35 I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. 36 Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God." 37 And David said, "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with you!" -1 Samuel 17:34-37

To fight a good fight, we must understand our enemy and all the resources God provides us to see His victory in our lives. Our faith in Jesus makes us targets in this world and it is with great prudence the Apostle Paul reminds us that the battles will happen. Though Jesus defeated sin and death, this world is still awaiting judgment and thriving in wickedness. It is here we are called out of sin and destruction to make our journey toward the Eternal Kingdom of Christ. The way will be treacherous, and our enemies ruthless in trying to stop us.

Again, this is a series meant to encourage, strengthen, challenge, heal, and above all, see the intimacy of God break through into our lives and overflow into the world around us. *But, before God will do a work **through** us, He desires to do a work **within** us!*

I. **Jesus- The Source of our Strength** (Ephesians 6:10)

“Finally, be strong in the lord and in the strength of his might.” -Ephesians 6:10

As believers we must let go of the idea, *well, Jesus saved me from my sin, now it's up to me to do the rest!* We need Jesus to *finish* the journey to His Kingdom just as much as we needed Jesus to *begin* the journey! Everything Paul has been building into us to see depends on our relationship with God as His sons and daughters. Who we are in Christ will lead into all that Christ is doing through us into the lives of others.

To be **strong in the Lord** here is the active willingness to receive His strength. The Greek verb, *endynamoo*, implies a two-fold relationship and application.

- 1) The *source* or *provider* of strength
- 2) The *recipient* and *user* of strength

However, there is a growing or maturing aspect to this word in its application for our lives. As our experience gains, so does our strength. As we grow, His strength matures us. In this our faith in Him grows to wield His weapons in warfare for the glory of His Name.

*Remember though, **it is a growing process.*** God does not spare us from battle, but He sovereignly works through the battles with the purpose of maturing us. This is a precious truth for us to hold on to.

Here is a **Kingdom Truth** I want you to hold on to:

It means that Jesus does not fight our battles for us, He fights our battles through us. While there are times He may tell us to stand and behold His deliverance, most of the time He leads us to face little battles first, that progress into bigger battles.

Let's look at Israel in the Old Testament. After their incredible delivery from Egyptian Bondage, that same generation was led to the border of the land God had promised to their forefathers. It would be the place where their relationship with Him would be a beacon of hope and love for all peoples of all the earth. But, before God would do that work through them, He desired to do this work in them.

“Then you answered me, ‘We have sinned against the Lord. We ourselves will go up and fight, just as the Lord our God commanded us.’ And every one of you fastened on his weapons of war and thought it easy to go up into the hill country. And the Lord said to me, ‘Say to them, Do not go up or fight, for I am not in your midst, lest you be defeated before your enemies.’ So I spoke

to you, and you would not listen; but you rebelled against the command of the Lord and presumptuously went up into the hill country. Then the Amorites who lived in that hill country came out against you and chased you as bees do and beat you down in Seir as far as Hormah. And you returned and wept before the Lord, but the Lord did not listen to your voice or give ear to you. So you remained at Kadesh many days, the days that you remained there.” -[Deuteronomy 1:41-46](#)

And they failed; they could not see past the enemy and battles in front of them. *They trusted God to deliver them from Egypt; however, they felt the rest was up to them.* They didn’t realize they needed God for the whole journey. *Trying to do life without God and what He offers will always leave us empty and defeated.*

A New Testament example can be found here in [Matthew 12:43-45](#),

“When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation.”

My heart grieves in that this is the state of so many who start out following Jesus. There is a surrender to Him as Savior, celebrating His gift of salvation. However, there is not a discovery of Jesus as Lord for their lives and in their own strength they find themselves shackled to the things of the past. *Maybe some of us even here today know this defeat.*

Hear me: Jesus wants more than this for you. Jesus is offering more than this to you. But you must embrace Him and His strength by faith.

Before we can understand the need for the strength of Christ in our lives, we need to understand the victory Jesus accomplished and why it matters. What exactly has Jesus done for us?

II. Jesus: The Source of our Victory

“For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Therefore, as one trespass[a] led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness[b] leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” -[Romans 5:17-21](#)

Jesus’ death on the cross stood out among all others who have been crucified before and after Him. Death comes to all because of Adam; it is the result of sin. Sin is the enemy; sin is

everything God is not, and its presence is passed on to each of us from conception. We *carry* it, are *cursed* by it, and *separated* from God because of it.

Every act of disobedience to God is the fruit and validity of sin's presence within us.

For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, 10 as it is written:

"None is righteous, no, not one;

11 no one understands;

no one seeks for God.

12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;

no one does good,

not even one."

13 "Their throat is an open grave;

they use their tongues to deceive."

"The venom of asps is under their lips."

14 "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."

15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood;

16 in their paths are ruin and misery,

17 and the way of peace they have not known."

18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

*19 Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. 20 For by works of the law no human being[c] will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **-Romans 3:10-20; 23***

The Law was never meant to save us, but to open our eyes to see sin and turn to God for salvation. Without Jesus, there is no victory over sin. With Jesus, there is not only victory over sin, but continual victory over the curse of sin on our lives in this broken world.

*"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." **-1 Corinthians 15:57-58***

This brings us back to our verse in **Ephesians 6:10**. We are to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ***The victory Christ has brought into us is striving to break forth from us transforming the world around us!***

Though Satan's power over Christians is already broken and the war against sin won by Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, life for each of us in this world continues to face battles. These are battles of temptation that go on regularly. (More about Satan, demons, and their influence in our lives next week)

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, -2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Strongholds here, *ochyroma*, is translated as castle, stronghold, fortress- something we hold fast and tightly too. *Its existence depends solely on us. It is something that we empower to be a source of comfort and strength, or guilt and torment.* In our context, it is a place erected having a greater influence in our lives than Jesus.

Strongholds, both internally and externally, can be seen as both a friend and foe in our lives. Some strongholds have been erected and stand to remind us of the past, keeping us shackled to the rhythms that used to define us. We are constantly drawn back to them for identity. As much as we try to distance ourselves from them if they remain intact their power over us continues to bring defeat. (Example: ***Doubting Castle*** in *Pilgrims Progress*)

This appeals strongly to the mental, emotional, and spiritual strongholds in people's lives. They physical state is often the outcome of the strongholds in these inner areas of our lives.

As Jesus' victory was a complete victory, He works to bring this complete victory into our lives through His Spirit.

That is why Jesus has empowered us to destroy strongholds.

This is the ongoing Spiritual Warfare we will be engaged in as long as we are in this world and not of this world.

III. Jesus: The Source of our *Might*

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might." -Ephesians 6:10

Might here is the Greek, *ischys*, meaning *a developing ability, or strength*. It is here that we, as believers, come to understand how we are to be and continually grow in the strength of the Lord.

Going back to Israel who pulled their hand out of God's for fear of the occupants in the Promised Land. *Their fear turned those cities into strongholds and empowered their enslavement to them.* As a result, they missed out on so much that God desired to do *in and through* them.

But God is a God full of mercy, rich in grace.

A new generation arises, and God leads them to face some smaller battles in order to grow in their faith in God- that not only did God bring them from Egyptian bondage into freedom, but in His freedom they would be the means God's Kingdom freedom would flow out into all the world.

But Sihon the king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him, for the Lord your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, that he might give him into your hand, as he is this day. And the Lord said to me, 'Behold, I have begun to give Sihon and his land over to you. Begin to take possession, that you may occupy his land.' Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Jahaz. And the Lord our God gave him over to us, and we defeated him and his sons and all his people. And we captured all his cities at that time and devoted to destruction[a] every city, men, women, and children. We left no survivors. Only the livestock we took as spoil for ourselves, with the plunder of the cities that we captured. 3From Aroer, which is on the edge of the Valley of the Arnon, and from the city that is in the valley, as far as Gilead, there was not a city too high for us. The Lord our God gave all into our hands.

-Deuteronomy 2:30-37

God has never placed on His children an expectation for them to do anything in their own strength that He asks of us. He is the source of our strength- beginning, middle, and end. The entire journey with Him in this world to the next is a process meant to be done with our hand in His.

Paul captures this so beautifully in his letter to encourage Colossian believers,

"Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

*See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits[a] of the world, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. **-Colossians 2:6-10***

We must be in His Word, learning and growing in His Wisdom. We need to live out what He teaches us, seeing *in His strength* the strongholds of our lives crumble as more and more of who we are surrenders to Him as our stronghold alone.

If it seems so much has yet to be done in your life, if it seems like there are strongholds that no matter what you do, continue to remain and have influence over your life, run to Jesus!

IV. Conclusion and Exhortation

God's Word promises us that in Christ,

*no weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed,
and you shall refute every tongue that rises against you in judgment.
This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord
and their vindication[a] from me, declares the Lord." **-Isaiah 54:17***

*No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. **-1 Corinthians 10:13***

"I love you, O Lord, my strength.

*The Lord is my rock, in whom I take refuge,
My shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*

I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised,

And I am saved from my enemies." -[Psalm 18:1-2](#)

Today, stop fighting in your own strength. Face your strongholds and Declare God's Word over them. If they are not Jesus, they need to come down. Trust God in the battle in front of you. Take His strength, rest in His promises.

The Victory Jesus brought us over sin, will continue to be your victory one battle at a time.
Eventually, you will see all the Goliath strongholds fall!