

# OUR STRENGTH IS IN THE LORD

**Grace Communion International**  
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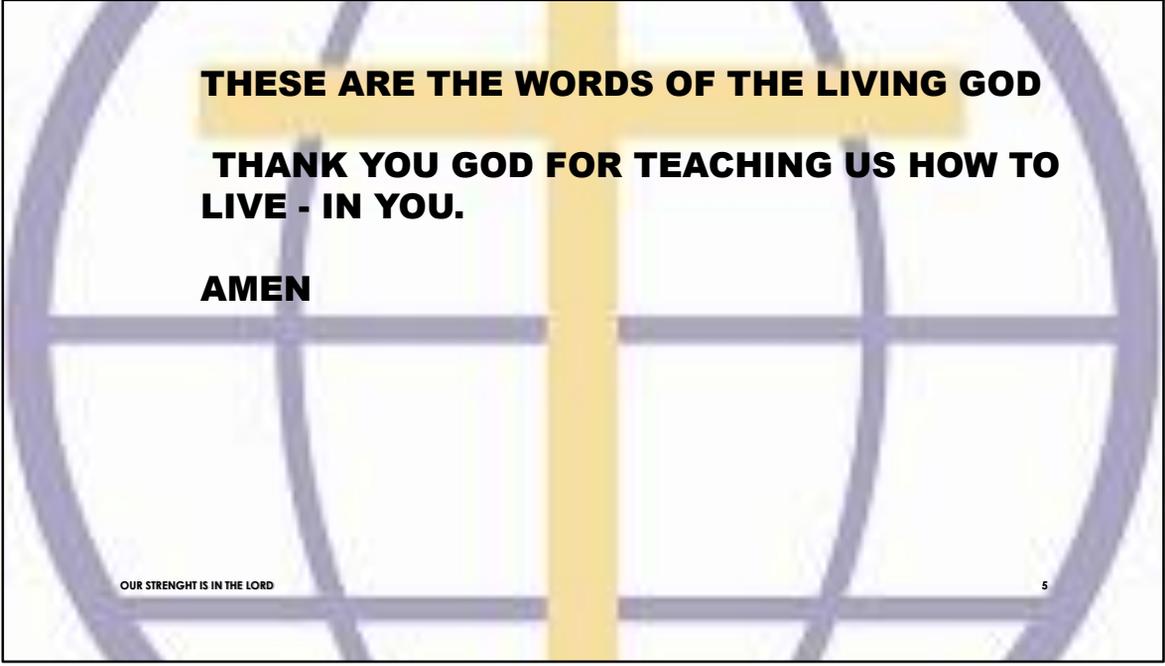
**Date: July 21, 2019**

**SCRIPTURE  
READING:  
Ephesians  
6:1-20 (ESV)**

**“10 ¶ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.**

**13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. 14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. 16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;**

**17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, 18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, 19 ¶ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.” (Eph 6:10-20 ESV)**



**THESE ARE THE WORDS OF THE LIVING GOD**

**THANK YOU GOD FOR TEACHING US HOW TO  
LIVE - IN YOU.**

**AMEN**

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During today's sermon, we are going to consider the teachings of the saint Paul about to live in the Lord, about how to live in Jesus.

As we read the Scriptures, we have to consider the context of the whole epistle or letter written to the Ephesians. Paul is clearly addressing the church in Ephesus as he writes in the opening statement, **"To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (1:1-2).**

In his epistles, the apostle Paul goes on to praise God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and how he has blessed us in Jesus in the heavenly places. He tells the Ephesians about their adoption and how they were chosen before the foundation of the world. Those Christians living in Ephesians as well as us who have placed our faith in Jesus Christ are blessed in the Beloved—that is in Jesus Christ.

The word of God is a living word because the Word, Jesus, is living, always active and working. These words are inspired for the Ephesians and for all believers who come after in future generations, including us. As a church and individually, we can and we should personalize the words that the apostle Paul put to pen.

He tells the first century Christians about their inheritance in Christ and how God has revealed his will in Christ Jesus. God will unite all things to himself in Jesus, both things in heaven and things on earth.

He tells them how they were redeemed through the blood of Jesus and how they were forgiven of all their trespasses according to the riches of his grace.

He has made known the mystery of his will and his plan which he set forth in Jesus Christ.

He also tells them the wonderful promise that they received when they heard the gospel and believed in Jesus. They receive the promised Holy Spirit, who is a guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of God's glory.

He basically tells them and us that we now presently live in his kingdom of God but that its future is yet to come. Consequently, we live in hope.

Paul offers prayers of thankfulness for them and pray that God will give them a spirit of wisdom and of revelation as they grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul prays that they will have their eyes open to the great hope to which they have been called. He reminds them of their great calling and about the immeasurable greatness of God's power towards us who believe. Through his great power, he raised Jesus Christ from the dead and gave him all authority in the heavenly places. Everything has been placed under the power of Jesus Christ. He has made him head of everything for the good of the church. (paraphrase of 1:16-23).



In these verses, the apostle Paul is addressing the whole congregation. We lose this in the English language but the words “be strong” are plural. (**Example in French: Au reste, fortifiez-vous dans le Seigneur and Revêtez-vous de toutes les armes de Dieu**), The apostle Paul is addressing the whole congregation in Ephesus. When these letters of the apostles were read, they were addressed to the whole congregation. Being the body of Christ, the church, Christianity is very communal and not individualistic. This is taught throughout the New Testament.

The picture above is worth a thousand words, as they say. It shows that through faith in Christ, our humanity is included in the humanity of the Son, in Jesus Christ who is the perfect mediator between God and man. (**“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,” [1 Ti 2:5 ESV].**) Jesus in in perfect union with the Father and the Holy Spirit. In Jesus, we are given to participate in this perfect relationship. This is a gift of grace!

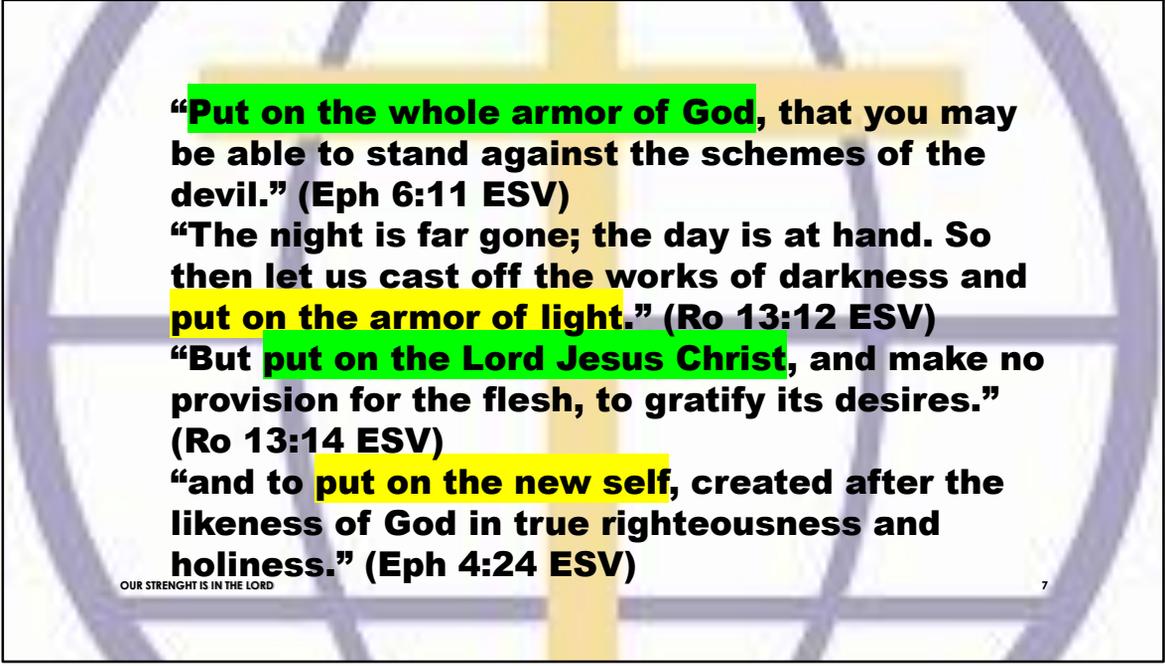
The words **“in Christ”** are found 12 times in Ephesians and 82 times in the writings of the apostle Paul and twice in the epistle of Peter. Therefore the truth about our inclusion in Christ is a very important concept in the New Testament writings. Being in Christ becomes reality through faith in him. In his prayer before he died, Jesus

described what eternal life is. **“And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (Joh 17:3 ESV)**

It's very important to highlight that our strength does not come from ourselves but from the Lord, from Jesus who is the head of the church. Paul then goes on to tell us how to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might, in the strength of his power.

In the epistle to the Ephesians, Paul writes of our standing in the Lord and what that means for everyday life as God's people. He tells us to live in grace. In versus 10–20, he encapsulates the teaching of how to live in Jesus – a normal flow as he concludes his letter. He tells us how to respond to God's grace and how to be strong in the Lord and in his strength.

Let us look at what he tells us (next slide).



**“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.” (Eph 6:11 ESV)**

**“The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.” (Ro 13:12 ESV)**

**“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” (Ro 13:14 ESV)**

**“and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” (Eph 4:24 ESV)**

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Paul uses a military image as he tells us to put on the whole armour of God. The apostle Paul tells us in other places to put on the armour of light, to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and to put on the new self.

In Ephesians 6:11, he tells us why it is important. It is to be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. “Schemes” mean, “**cunning arts, deceit, craft, trickery**” (Strong’s Concordance).

The devil is a liar and a murderer from the beginning, Jesus said. He presents himself as an angel of light. He is able to distort the truth in very subtle ways which leads humans away from Christ.

The book of Revelation tells us Satan has deceived the whole world. God is presently calling his people, the church.

Satan is at work everywhere - in various religions, in human institutions. He also influences the mind of unbelieving people to have faith in all kinds of lies. The apostle Paul wrote that **“the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image**

**of God”** (2 Corinthians 4:4-5).

This is the reason we see in this world all kinds of false religions. Many openly professed that Jesus is a created being and not God. Among the religions who deny the deity of Jesus is the Mormons, Islam, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Bahá’í, Buddhism, Christian Science, Unitarian Universalism and others.

The world’s religions throw people back on themselves and subtly undermined the fact that we are saved **by grace alone, by faith alone and by Christ alone.**

Any religion or teaching that communicates the denial of Jesus’ divinity and that salvation is by grace alone, faith alone and Jesus alone is false. The devil has a way of twisting the truth in sometimes in evident ways and other times in subtle ways.

Putting on the whole armour of God, putting on Jesus Christ is our participation in the finished work of God on the cross.

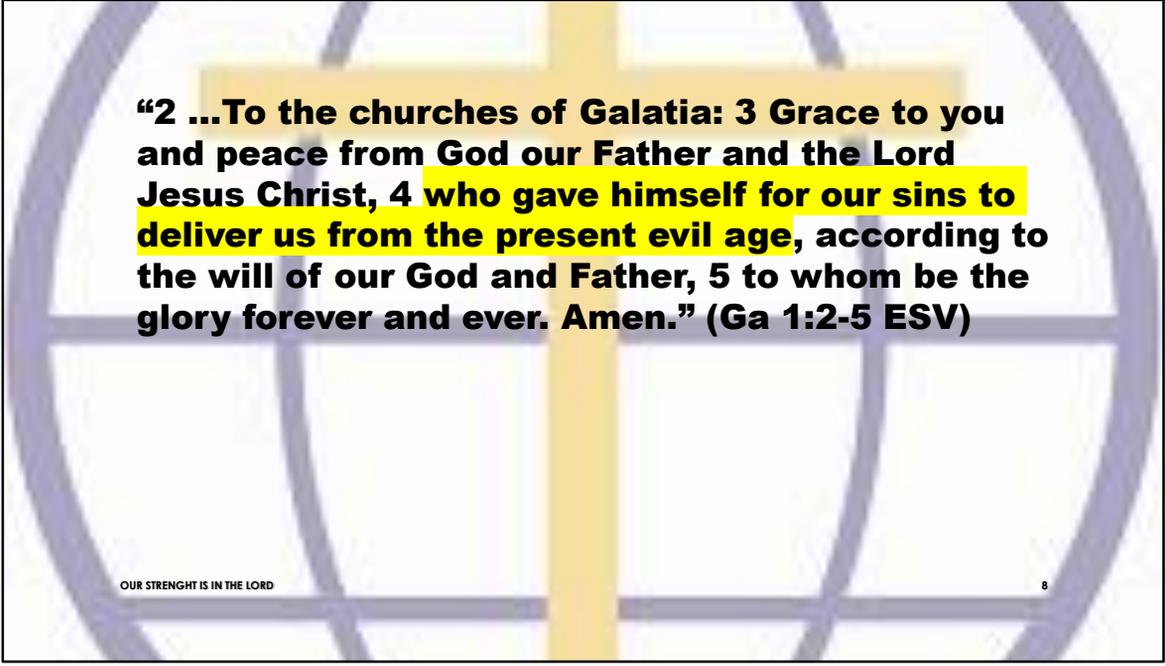
Consequently, living in grace is not passive but very active.

The apostle Paul goes on to tell us that our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, not against humans but against the invisible forces of evil in the heavenly places.

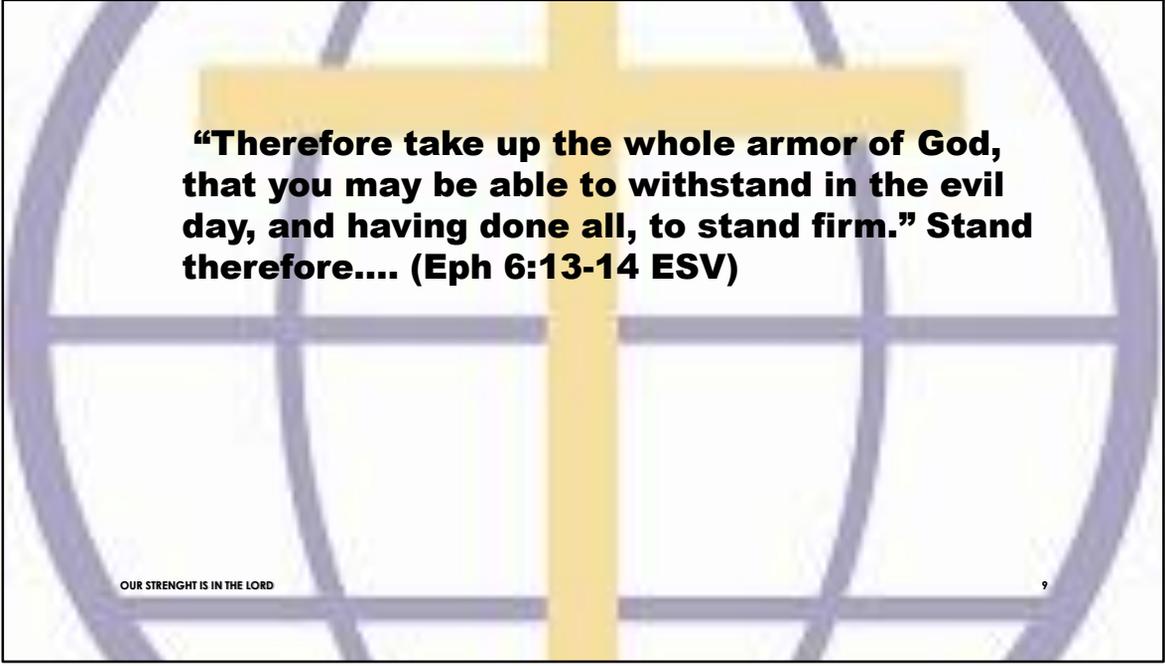
Paul uses synonyms to refer to Satan and his minions by using the words rulers, authorities, cosmic powers, spiritual forces of evil.

These are our real enemies. They are the ones who have blinded the minds of those who do not understand or don’t know who Jesus is. Consequently, they cannot know what is the gospel, this good news.

When Paul talks about the evil day, he is writing to the Ephesians. The evil day for them was every day. It is also every day for us. We need to put on the armour of God every day. The following is what Paul wrote to the Galatians (next slide).



**“2 ...To the churches of Galatia: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Ga 1:2-5 ESV)**



**“Therefore take up the whole armor of God,  
that you may be able to withstand in the evil  
day, and having done all, to stand firm.” Stand  
therefore.... (Eph 6:13-14 ESV)**

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Being strong in the Lord and relying on his strength, we are to stand firm. He then goes on to tell us how to stand firm.

**Instructions to the Ephesians which does apply to us as a church and individually:**

**Having fastened on the belt of truth;**

**Having put on the breastplate of righteousness, as shoes for our feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.**

**In all circumstances, taking up the shield of faith which can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;**

**Taking the helmet of salvation**

**and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplications.**

**Keeping alert with all perseverance, making supplication, praying for all the saints and for our leaders to proclaim boldly the mystery of the gospel.**

Paul was asking the congregation to pray for boldness and audaciousness as he proclaimed the gospel.

The apostle Paul was not trusting in himself. He was relying on God to be inspired to preach and to use the right words when declaring Jesus Christ and the good news of the gospel.

**The belt of truth** is a metaphor for putting on Christ and his word of truth. Jesus is the truth. The truth is a person. He is Jesus and his word is truth. Jesus, being God, cannot and will not lie. His words are the truth. (**"1 ¶ Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, 2 in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began"** [Tit 1:1-2 ESV].

As we participate in Christ and put on Christ, it's important that we spend private time with God and in his word to know the teaching of Jesus. We need to remember that God the Father, in these last days has spoken to us by his Son, Jesus. He is the ultimate revelation because he is God come down to the earth incarnate in our flesh.

**The breastplate of righteousness** is not our righteousness but the righteousness of Jesus Christ which he gives to us in grace through faith in him. It is always very important to remember that our own righteousness apart from Jesus Christ is not acceptable to God. In Jesus our high priest, our representative, we can approach God's throne with assurance being accepted in him at the throne of the universe. What an encouragement that is! Deep down, every human being knows that our own righteousness does not meet God's standards. It is so important to understand the truth of God's word. Otherwise, there is an unhealthy fear of God, a fear of being rejected. With that attitude and false thinking, as Adam and Eve, humans try to hide from God.

Only the righteousness of Jesus meets God's standard because he is perfect. He was completely sinless while on the earth. As we said before, he lived, was condemned, died, was resurrected and ascended to heaven for us.

**And as shoes for your feet**—we can go forward with the readiness given to us by the gospel of peace. Again this peace is not our peace. It is the peace given to us by Jesus Christ. He gives us a peace that the world cannot give. **["Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." [Joh 14:27 ESV]]**

Such is the peace of Jesus. We can rest in him. We do not have to fret. We can go forward every day of our life, living in this world, confident in him. The gospel of peace is the gospel that the church has been called to live and proclaim to others. It is the source of the only truly good news in this world.

**The shield of faith**—is our protection against the darts of the devil. As human beings, we realize that we are made of dirt and water. On our own, we come and go.

We die physically. Yet we know that we have tremendous worth in God's eyes and in God's heart because he gives us worth in Jesus. In Christ, we can recognize the lies of the accuser because, as God's people, we know we have been forgiven. Every day, we live in his grace as we put on Christ. With the shield of faith, we can recognize the lies about Jesus, about the oneness and unity of God Who Is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We can recognize the other lies that tell us we are worthless, have no future, etc.

**The helmet of salvation**—gives us the confidence to know that we are saved because of the faithfulness of the Faithful One, Jesus.

**The sword of the Spirit = the word of God**—the word of God is the truth. The word of God teaches us who God is, what our purpose on this earth is and the hope of the

resurrection, among many other.

The word of God also teaches us how to live practically in our everyday life.

God's word teaches how to see other people. The apostle Paul tells us to pray for all people and to be thankful for them.

He tells us the attitude that we are to have toward human governments and of the need to pray to live peaceable lives.

He tells us how to be in our marriage, the attitude that we are to have towards her children, towards our enemies, towards strangers, towards the hungry and the list goes on.

Most importantly, through the word of God, we can know who God is. We know our status before him that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

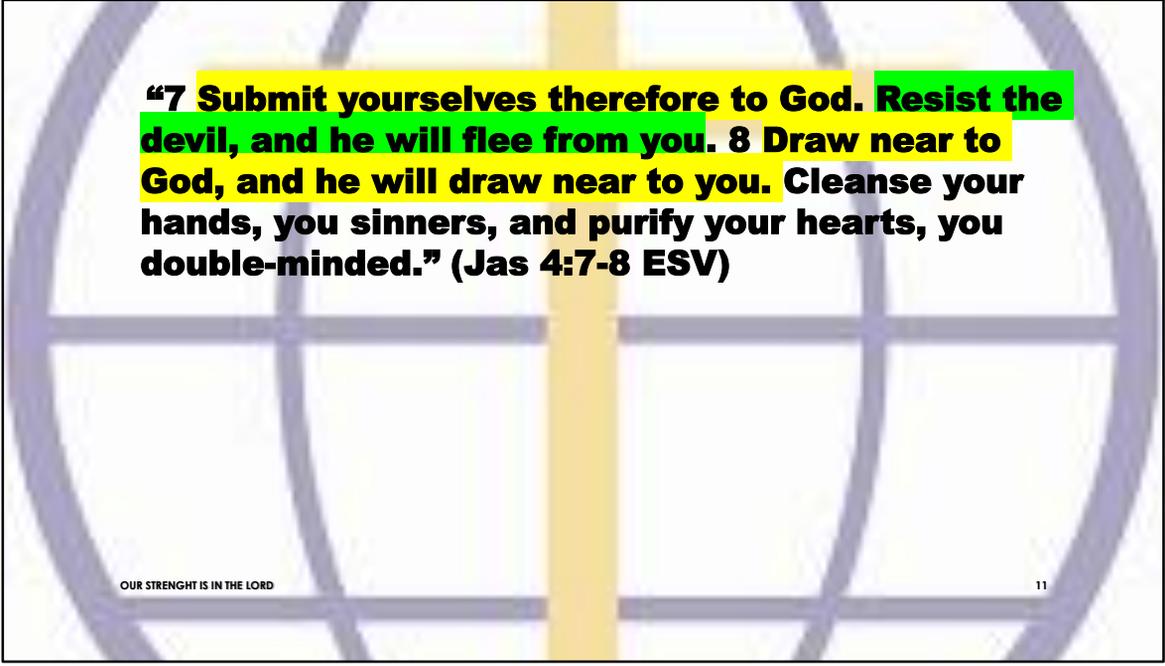
When we accept to be reconciled to him, we begin to live in the reality of his forgiveness which was assured for us at the cross.

Through the word of God, we know our purpose. God gives us a glimpse of the future when God's throne will descend to the earth to be with men, when evil will be completely destroyed. There is so much more. Suffice it to say that the word of God is very rich. The words of God tell us about the assurance we have in him. The words of God tell us to live in a world trapped in darkness.

**Praying at all times in the Spirit**— We are to pray for all the saints, for our brothers and sisters wherever they may be. Paul prayed that he be given the words to preach boldly the gospel of Jesus Christ. That prayer has been answered as we see in the writings of Paul preserved for every generation.

We can and should pray that the church today will accurately proclaim the gospel and be faithful to God and his inspired word, given to us through his precious apostles who part of the foundation of the church, Jesus Christ being the cornerstone.

I am reminded of the words of James which speaks of our Christian participation in Jesus. James, the physical brother of Jesus said the following [next slide]



**“7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” (Jas 4:7-8 ESV)**

Let us pray.