**2017 12 10 2017 THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK**

***“Brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”* Ephesians. (6:10-11)**

St. Paul in this most important Epistle is warning us to wake up out of our sleep and be aware that we have an enemy that wishes to destroy us. This enemy, who is in the last stages of his defeat can never be victorious, for he has already lost all. But he does wish for us to share in his defeat. The battle is for (Gk.-not simply in) the heavenly places, which is our inheritance. The Lord has already restored us to heaven and no one can take this away from us. The evil one, beloved, has no power over us unless we give him that power. He cannot take away the heavenly places from us unless we willingly give them up.

And yet we must be aware that the battle exists and the enemy is very wily. When St. Paul says that we must “stand against the wiles of the devil, he is saying that the evil one is clever and his attacks are not openly evil. Externally, they can even appear quite beautiful, but internally they contain poison. The devil clothes unrighteousness in “virtue.” There are many in our world today who think that openness to all of the unrighteousness and filth of this world is “compassion.” That if we truly love our brother or sister, we will “support” them in their desires. Beloved in Christ Jesus, this is nonsense. Would we support our children in their desire to jump off a cliff? Would we go out and buy heroin for our children who wanted to try it? Why then would we “support” our loved ones in the filth and confusion of this world?

And more important let us be aware of the wiles of the devil in our own lives. Let us ask ourselves, are we flustered and frustrated with someone? Do we begin to despise and have rancor toward this person? Do we begin to judge them as bad and evil? If we are aware of the “wiles” of the evil one, we will recognize immediately where these sorts of feelings are coming from. We will then go and confess. We will dismiss the “feelings” and pray to the Lord for strength. If we are “strong in the Lord” we will turn our resentment not on our weak, and perhaps sick, brother, but on the evil one. We will hate not the one who was made in the image and likeness of God, but on the one who wishes to destroy our souls. We should immediately humble ourselves, and ask forgiveness from the one who has offended us. In this humility we will demonstrate that we belong to Christ and the evil will disappear like a soap bubble in the air. Evil cannot have any real power over those who belong to Christ.

And finally my dearest ones, if we are to stand against the wiles of the devil, we must be “strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.” The strength of His might is His love!  That is, if we belong to Christ, this means not that we simply belong to Him in name, but that we love Him. Nothing can separate us from this love. But if we truly love Him, we will desire, more than anything, to please Him. It is this desire to please Him that will destroy every wile of our enemy. It is this desire to please Him that will unmask every deception and every evil and bring them to nothing.

Beloved in Christ Jesus, we must only be aware of who we are and what we have been given and the evil one becomes, simply, a paper tiger. This is our inheritance as those who love Christ- who belong to Him. We must never let any anger, any lust, any material idol (attachment), or any judgement take us away from Him. For He is the One who loves us more than we can ever truly know. Amen.