

2nd Timothy Ch 2 Vs 1-14

“Strengthened in Grace”

The Christian life is by no means an easy life to live; you often become the object of ridicule and mockery. People become hostile at times in their opinions and intentions toward you because their works are evil, and you being the light of the world (reflecting the light of Jesus Christ) expose them in their wickedness and sin and that makes them uncomfortable. Jesus said, *“If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.”* John 15:19-20 We find that with Jesus when His earthly ministry was coming to a close, His physical life ended alone being (as it were) abandoned by His own. The Shepherd was struck, and the sheep were scattered, Paul the apostle was probably the most Christ-like missionary who ever lived, and as he pens this final letter to his protégé, his son in the faith, the end of his earthly ministry is also in view as he sits there on death row under the charge of Caesar Nero for the gospel’s sake. His walk of faith has been by no means easy, (something that we today glamorize and almost idolize wanting to emulate to the glory of God) and yet how does the apostle find himself? Abandoned and alone, all who were with him have turned away with the exception of Luke, no servant is above his Master, do you want to be like Jesus? Then count the cost and strive to enter by the narrow gate, because broad is the way and easy is the path that leads to destruction, it’s full of fleshly indulgence and many go that way, because narrow is the way and difficult is the path that leads to life and there are few who find it.

Because it’s not easy to go against the grain, against the sway of popular opinion, and as Paul was writing to Timothy, Timothy had found himself being swayed by the pressures about him to sort of shrink back in timidity and fear. He was struggling in the ministry that had been committed to his trust being (almost seemingly) ashamed of the testimony of our Lord. and Paul is writing him to encourage him and to help gird him up and strengthen him that he might remain faithful to Jesus Christ and the call that He’s placed on his life. and He reminds Timothy there at the end of ch 1 to hold fast to the pattern of sound words, the good doctrine that he had learned and heard from Paul in faith and in love which are in Christ Jesus. To keep the Word of God that had been committed to his trust through the means of the work of the Holy Spirit in his life. and Paul begins to inform him of the results of shame and timidity and folding to the pressures of this world as he exposes Phygellus and Hermogenes in their double minded ways having been tossed to and fro. He tells them that they had compromised in their commitment to Jesus Christ and they flaked out having turned away from him being ashamed of the testimony of our Lord and of Paul His prisoner. Then Paul shows the contrast in Onesiphorus, how he was unashamed of Paul’s chains, but was openly behind the work of God in his life and he admonishes Timothy to take encouragement from the latter example, rather than be persuaded through pressure and timidity into the former.

In Ch 2 Paul encourages Timothy yet again in what we're going to view as a 3-fold manner. (Now we could be meticulous and gather much more, but there's 3 basic exhortations and then several details that each of them encompass). and The overarching exhortation of vs 1-14 is #1 "Be Strong", and therein he encourages him in what manner he's to take strength and he lists several examples of what it means to endure, and the rewards that follow.

The 2nd is found in vs 15-23 #2 we'll say, "Be Scrupulous" that is be diligent and painstakingly detailed in your study and upholding of the word of God. Don't get caught up idle babble and words that simply lead to more *ungodliness*, but rather focus on the Word of God and strive toward those things that make for godliness, being as it were "prepared" for every good work. and Then finally #3 Vs 24-26 We'll say, "Be Sensitive" as Paul here lists the qualities of the servant of the Lord, and he/she should be sensitive to what's happening around him, tactful in dealing issues of discipline knowing that the hope isn't to display your own brilliance or how right you are and wrong they are but rather that the Lord might grant them repentance. So be sensitive to the circumstances that confront you and keep people's eternal well being in mind.

So having shown the contrast of those who are ashamed and unashamed, those whom God wants to use, vs those who find themselves disqualified, Paul (in light of the example found in Onesiphorus) says to Timothy.

Vs 1

Why would Paul exhort Timothy to "Be strong"? Well, the implication, or connotation, or even the insinuation behind an exhortation to "Be strong" is the indication that Timothy is struggling and vacillating in *weakness*. We've already established the fact that Timothy was a rather timid fella, possibly had the tendency to fall prey to the pressures about him. But there are a number of things that can make for weakness in one's life, spiritual or otherwise be it distress, or discouragement, fatigue and frustration, or what seems to be insurmountable obstacles that are confronting you day in and day out. and I imagine that Timothy was confronted with all those things, and the result was that he was just really down, feeling weak and in a position of real vulnerability, maybe you can relate. But what I want you to realize is that even as God loves to take broken things (we've spoken of that in the past) and use them for His glory, and make something valuable of them even so God's heart goes out to the weak. God loves to take the weak and feeble things of this world in order to show Himself strong on their behalf, why? So that as people see God use a life like mine, or a life like yours to necessary conclusion is, "To God alone be the glory."

You're familiar with the scripture, "*For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen*

the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God -- and righteousness and sanctification and redemption -- that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD." 1 Cor 1:26-31

When Paul came into the revelation that Christ's strength was made perfect in our weakness, that was when he said, *"Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."* 2 Cor 12:9-10 That's why I love this exhortation to *be strong*, and the phrase "Be strong" here is imperative meaning it's a command, not an option. It's in the present tense which means that we're to be *continually* strong, but notice not in ourselves. Why, because there's nothing in and of ourselves that makes us strong.

The reason that many people are often hindered from becoming strong is because they're never convinced of their own weakness. Yet over and over again God warned the nation of Israel that they take heed regarding pride, and believing that they had what they had as the result of their own strength and ingenuity.

Leave 2nd Timothy and turn back to Deut. ch 8, I recommend you read the whole ch, but we'll pick up in vs 11. (Vs 11-20)

The point being that we're to be careful to give God the glory for every good thing that comes into our lives, every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of lights. If you're a brain surgeon, it's not because of who you are but because God has given you the intellect and the steady hand that's needed for such a task. If you're a million dollar business individual, it's because God has given you the business ethic and understanding to be wise in your dealings. Anything about your life that's of benefit to you is the result of the grace of God being poured out upon your life, the NT counterpart to Deut ch 8 is found in 1 Cor 10:12 *"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."*

So "Be strong" not in yourself, but "in the grace that's in Christ Jesus", be strengthened through grace, by the Lord. and I love that because it takes the pressure off of me to have to be something I'm not, what if Paul would've said, "Be strong emotionally" or "Be strong and quit belly aching about everything!" Man, that would've said to me that it takes a certain caliber of an individual suited for pressures and problems to be in the ministry and I just might not fit the mold. But Paul didn't say that, the Holy Spirit didn't exhort us in such an arena, the exhortation isn't to strengthen yourself by yourself, but take strength by means of the grace of God which is in Christ Jesus.

Grace, it's truly an "Amazing" thing, it's grace that saves us, it's grace that sanctifies us, it's by grace that we stand, and by grace we're made strong, the resource of the grace of God, the unmerited favor of God is inexhaustible. Grace, God's riches at Christ's expense, as we

quoted last week, “*And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*” John 1:16-17 and Grace upon grace is lavished upon you, saving you, forgiving you, and giving you strength for today in Jesus Christ To the Eph Paul put it like this, “*Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.*” Eph 6:10

Again the emphasis is placed upon the Lord, and His might, God doesn't expect that you should be strong in your own right because all that does is hinder God's ability to use your life. So whatever's going on in your life during this Christmas season, for many it's a time of joy, and for many it's a time of pain, as they're reminded of maybe their being alone, or the loss of a loved one. Take strength from the word of the Lord today, allow God's grace to gird you up and strengthen you in your time of need.

David, the man after God's own heart experienced a time of weakness and distress, here he was innocent in his integrity, seeking to serve the Lord, some things had gone awry in his life and we read in 1 Sam 30:6, “*Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.*” Where did David find his strength, in the grace of God. Isa 40:29 Tells us, “*He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength.*” God is looking for those whom He can show Himself strong on the behalf of, but He needs those who know who they're not. and For those of us who maybe aren't always together emotionally, or altogether sharp intellectually, that's ok, we're to be strong in the grace that's in Christ Jesus. We can expect God to move and to bless not *because* of us, but *in spite* of us. It's about the *grace* that's in Christ Jesus, remember that everything God has for you is in Christ, and outside of Christ God has nothing for anyone. In Christ is forgiveness, apart from Christ no forgiveness, in Christ is eternal life, apart from Christ you'll never experience life, in Christ is wholeness, apart from Christ is emptiness, in Christ is grace, apart from Christ is justice. God has so much for you, but it's all *in Christ*, outside of Christ God has nothing for you.

You recall last week we examined the inclination towards legalism that the church here in Ephesus was leaning towards, Paul says, “Be strong in grace” it's not about relating to God on the basis of what we do and don't do, but rather what He's already done upon the cross in the person of His Son. There's nothing we can do in order to merit God's favor, God gives us unmerited favor in Christ. and We're to be strong in that grace that's in Christ Jesus. Now Paul goes on to give 4 key elements concerning a strong, obedient spiritual life, and he uses the vivid analogies of the steward, the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer. 1st of all, the steward.

Vs2

What is a steward? A steward is an individual who has been entrusted with something that is not their own, and they are to safeguard and tend to that which has been entrusted to

them. Joseph (in the OT) is probably one of the best examples of what a steward is. Potiphar entrusted Joseph with all that he had so much so that he didn't even know what was his, he just trusted Joseph, he kept all his books, did all of his business transactions, he was a steward over his possessions. Ultimately Joseph became a steward over all of Egypt right under the Pharaoh as the Lord lifted him up in order (ultimately) to save Israel alive. But the quality that's to characterize the steward is "faithfulness" 1 Cor 4:2 Tells us, "*Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.*" and Paul is exhorting Timothy unto faithfulness to that which has been committed to his trust, namely the gospel message. He's saying, "Timothy, don't back down and shrink away in timidity regarding who Jesus is, the claims that, He made, the hope that He is to the dying world around you, be faithful in proclaiming these same truth's that you've heard me proclaim." Notice he doesn't say, "Timothy, make sure that you're always coming up with something exciting, fresh and new to keep the people's interest. and When you're sharing the word of God, always try and come up with cute little anecdotes, and stories, using 3 points and closing with a poem so that people keep coming back. and Most of all don't use what I've shared because that's mine." You've heard me say before that if it's new it's not true, and if it's true it's not new, and the pressure that pastor's so often feel to keep things exciting and new can be a dangerous thing. Now sure we're to be plumbing the depth of the riches of the Word of God looking for those precious jewels to draw out of the treasure chest of God's Word, but this idea of plagiarism regarding things shared from the word of God is an absolute misnomer.

I often joke about being the world's biggest plagiarist when it comes to sharing things with you that I've heard before from other men of God, but please don't misunderstand me. In the arena of Christian growth and understanding what the world calls plagiarism the church calls discipleship. We're to take those things that have helped us, brought us into a richer understanding of the heart and mind of God, drawn us nearer to Him and helped us out in our walk with Him, and we're to pass those things on to others. If you ever hear anything from me that helps you in your walk with Christ, please pass it on, use it, take it, write a book on it, I don't care. and The things I hear from others that aid me, whether I read it in a book or hear it in a study, or whatever, I'll do my best to commit those things to you. It's required that we be faithful with the things that we've heard, and part of being faithful with the truth of the word of God isn't only taking heed to it and doing it (which we know is absolutely critical) but also sharing it with others that they might be challenged and brought along in their love relationship with Jesus Christ as well.

We talked last week about Jesus being able to keep that which we commit to His trust, and that word "commit" literally means deposit, like a bank deposit, we deposit our lives into Christ.

What Paul is saying here is that when you find a faithful person who loves the Lord, begin to deposit the precious truth's of the word of God into their lives that they in turn might pass those things still on to others.

Vs 3-4

Notice the flow of thought, we move from faithfulness to endurance, be strong in God's grace, be faithful to God's Word, and don't give up when the pressure is on but rather persevere through the afflictions of this life. Paul's not pulling punches, he's very open and candid about the hardship of the Christian life. and The reason that he uses a soldier as an analogy is because the Christian life is a war, oh maybe not against flesh and blood, but against powers and principalities, against the rulers of the darkness of this age and the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. That's why Paul told the Ephesian believers to, "*Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*" Eph 6:11 and As you read through Eph ch 6 you see there the various aspects of the spiritual armor that we're to utilize in the spiritual war that we've been called to wage. The belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, having shod our feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace, the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith that quenches the enemy's fiery darts, and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God by which we wage the good warfare. "*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.*" 2 Cor 10:4-5

If you want to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ then you're going to need to endure the hardship that comes your way, you see the operative word here is "good." If you want to be a lousy soldier than when the going gets tough, then you can get going, just like Phygellus and Hermogenes. But if you're to be strong in the grace that's in Christ Jesus then by the grace of God be faithful to the word of God and endure the hardships, the light afflictions which are but for a moment in the eternal scope of things. Warfare is not an easy thing, it's incredibly demanding, and when is engaged in warfare and they're out there on the frontlines in the heat of battle, they don't say to their commanding officer. "Hey, I need to be excused from the fight because the 49er's are playing today and it's going to be a great game." Or "I'd like to stay and fight but there's this incredible business deal that has the propensity to be phenomenally lucrative and if I don't get to it now, then I might miss out." He's not concerned for the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and the desires of worldly things, things that take his focus from the moment. Because if he starts thinking about all those opportunities of life, he'll take a bullet to the head, now Jesus Christ has "enlisted" you, He's your commanding officer. The question is, are the things of this world, the lusts of the world, the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life going to send you A.W.O.L. in the heat of the battle, or since we live in the Spirit are you going to also walk in the Spirit, crucifying the flesh that we might be pleasing to Him who has called us to fight the good fight of faith? Paul said in 2 Cor 5:9, "*Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.*"

Vs 5

The Christian life is a marathon, and we're to press toward the mark, we're to, "*Lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.*" Heb 12:1 Now we need to point out that we're not talking about

running for salvation, as though it's a works oriented thing, to read that into this would be to completely miss the point and contradict the very premise Paul has sought so diligently to establish regarding grace. You don't run in the Olympics to gain citizenship, you run representing the citizenship you already have, but if you don't compete according to the rules it doesn't matter what place you take, you're disqualified. and To keep this to the point what's in view here is obedience to the Word of God, we've seen faithfulness, endurance, and now obedience. (I know we're running out of time but turn quickly to 1st Sam ch 15 Vs 17-28) Set up briefly the story

Vs 28

Disqualified, he wasn't obedient to the Word of God and it cost him dearly.

Vs 6

What are we looking at here, primarily patience, it's a lot of hard work and often times a thankless task to be a farmer, busting up fallow ground, tilling soil, sowing seed, watering, keeping weed out of the growth, and long periods time before the harvest comes in, no immediate results in farming, it takes time and patience.

Vs7

This is a vs worthy of underlining in your bibles. Paul says, "Consider what I say", "Think about these things", "Meditate on my word" and understanding will come to your heart, but what I want you to notice is what it is that links consideration and meditation to understanding, it's the Lord. If when you read God's Word, you just read it as your daily duty and then grow frustrated because you're just not getting anything out of it, you never will. You have to think about it, consider it, ponder it for a while, sit in silence and think about what you're reading and allow the Lord to bring understanding to your heart and mind.

When I think of a soldier I think of Discipline, I think of Order, I think of Diligence, I think of submission and being able to submit to those over you, I think the propensity of being cast into the midst of Dangerous circumstance with out saying my lot in life is unfair, and I think of the fact that soldiers give their lives away for others, and being on duty not from 9 to 5 but 24/7.

Meditate on these things and the Lord grant you understanding, the athlete doesn't leave things to chance, he/she trains for months and years for a single moment in time, so that they might be ready when the time comes to be at peak performance. They're able to take direction, and live in obedience to their coach or their trainer, they're careful to observe the rules and train and participate accordingly.

The hardworking farmer, often does tedious and unappreciated work, much of the time he works alone, he's up before dawn and works long hours into the day and even after sundown. Most of the time he never sees the fruit of his labor until a lot of time passes, and then even

though there may be a plentiful harvest, those who will labor with him are few. Everyone likes to enter into the fruits of his labor, but no one likes to bust up the fallow grounds, it's back breaking, sweat filled work, and intense toil.

and Paul is saying think about these things, according to these standards, ask yourself if you're tapping into the resources of God's grace so as to be a strong, stable, mature Christian, are you guarding the word of God, being faithful to the Lord, trusting God in the midst of hardship and all of these things we've listed? Do you understand self-denial, and self-sacrifice? Am I willing to pay the price that He demands? (Lets finish this section and we'll comment on them next time)

Vs8

Just so you know, that word "That" isn't in the original, Paul is saying consider all these things and remember Jesus Christ He's the ultimate soldier, having fought the greatest battle, the greatest athlete having obtained the greatest prize, He sowed perfect seed, and reaped the perfect harvest, and we're to remember Him. Keep Him in the forefront of our hearts and minds, staying true to His gospel and preaching the resurrection.

Vs9-14

We'll pick up here next time.

Maybe you're here today and you're hearing some of these things for the first time. I'm glad you're able to count the cost and consider the life of Christ. It's not easy, but if you're willing to come to Jesus Christ, He's able to give you the strength by His Grace to endure. Jesus Christ hung on a cross and absorbed the penalty of your sin so that you won't have to, and if you'll just open your heart to Jesus Christ you can be forgiven of everything you've ever done, said, or even thought that's wrong. If you're willing He can make you clean, but you have to say Yes to Jesus. Are you willing to do that?