

I. Introduction:

- A. After Jesus' upper room supper with His disciples, they sang a hymn and went out toward the mount of Olives.
1. *"And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.*
  2. **But Peter said** unto him, *Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.*
  3. *And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.*
  4. *But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all."*
- B. Peter and the others were ready and willing to run the race which the Lord had set before them.
1. They professed to be ready to wrestle *"against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."*
  2. But when the bell rang and the match began, Peter couldn't even defend himself against the assault of a little girl. And as for the others, most of them had already left the arena.
  3. *"As Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest:*
    - a. *And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.*
    - b. *But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.*
    - c. *And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them.*
    - d. *And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaeen, and thy speech agreeth thereto.*
    - e. *But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak.*
    - f. *And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept."*
- C. The reason Peter was tossed to the mat by this maid, was that he was wrestling under his own power.
1. His cursing and swearing proved that he was in the flesh during this little altercation.
  2. And as such he was powerless against *"the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"* – even when they came in the form of an inoffensive little lady.
- D. Our spiritual enemies are very rarely dressed in maids' uniforms.
1. The principalities and powers against us are hidden in darkness and cloaked in the mist of the spirit world.
  2. And they come at us with a variety of wrestling techniques.
  3. One day they pounce on us through the **betrayal of a friend**, but the next day it's through some new **strain on our finances**.
  4. With the Lord's permission, Satan tests us with **painful boils** – from our head to our bad shoulder and down through our lungs.
  5. Then, in our weakness, **he leans** on the **thorn in our flesh**, intensifying the pain with suggestions that we are going to die from that pain.
  6. **Peter** was in **little personal danger** that night by the fire, but he began to worry about **imagined danger**.
  7. And he was so filled with his own flesh and so lacking in the strength of the Lord that he tripped and fell to the mat through his own clumsiness and general force of gravity.
- E. The inability to wrestle and to effectively run the race which Christ has set before us, is very common.
1. Paul could see it in young Timothy.
  2. And he addressed it – *"Thou therefore, my son, **BE STRONG** in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."*
  3. He used a very specific word to encourage Timothy – a word found eight times in the Bible – *"**be strong.**"*
  4. I thought that was a good number; just enough to provide us with a little Bible study for this evening.

- F. Paul said, *“Thou therefore, my son, **BE STRONG** (be **EMPOWERED**) in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”*
1. *“Be strong”* is the Greek word *“endunamoo” (en-doonam-o'-u)* – which I hope helps you to see why I paraphrased Paul to say *“be empowered.”*
  2. There are two very different kinds of power, and God possesses both absolutely.
    - a. *“Exousia”* is the first and most important – it refers to His authority – Jehovah is the sovereign God.
    - b. The second power is *“dunamis”* – and in God it speaks of His almighty ability – His miraculous ability to do anything He chooses.
- G. You and I have very little *“exousia”* – authority – and whatever we have comes from the Lord.
1. But we do have a little *“dunamis”* – some physical strength – fleshly strength.
  2. And that is a part of our problem when it comes to living the Christian life.
  3. We tend to rely on **our** strength rather than the Lord's, even when it is sapped away by sickness or injury.
  4. This *“dunamis”* is at the heart of the word Paul uses – *“endunamoo” (en-doonam-o'-u)*.
  5. *“Thou therefore, my son, be empowered in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”*
- H. As I have said, there are eight verses which use this word.
1. They are all either **about Paul** or are arguably **from his pen**.
  2. **Luke** and **Matthew** don't use this word.
  3. Once again, this may take us back to Paul's Hellenistic interest in sports – running and wrestling.
  4. *“Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with (the strength of God) the race that is set before us.”*
  5. I'd like to take our lesson for this evening from these eight scriptures.

## II. We begin with Acts 9:22, a verse which speaks of Paul as he was becoming an Apostle.

- A. *“Saul increased the more in **STRENGTH** – **“endunamoo” (en-DOONAM-o'-u)** – and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.”*
1. At an early point in his Christian life, Paul received **God's power** to do **God's work** – which was to testify that Jesus is the very Christ.
  2. And in **I Timothy 1:12** he says that from the very beginning of his Christian service, it was the Lord who enabled him. This strength to serve was God's gracious gift.
  3. *“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath **ENABLED** me **“endunamoo” (en-DOONAM-o'-u)**, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.”*
  4. Both these verses suggest that Paul's empowerment **came UPON him**. It came upon him from above.
  5. It was Heavenly or divine *“dunamis”* which was granted to him.
- B. And with these verses, I would like to believe that **there is no Christian** who **cannot** be similarly **empowered**.
1. As Paul, or whoever wrote **Hebrews 11**, said of those people of faith, they *“quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made **STRONG**, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.”*
  2. Paul mentions Abraham, Enoch, Noah, Joseph and the rest, to set them before us as examples.
  3. You, too, can be as victorious as these. You too can *“out of weakness”* be made **STRONG**.
  4. **But . . .**
- C. From time to time I have said that I like the young man Timothy.
1. I look forward to spending time with him. I think that we have much in common.
    - a. Unlike Timothy, **Paul**, from the very beginning of his Christian life, was head and shoulders above everyone else, and I have a hard time fully identifying with him.
    - b. Timothy, on the other hand, I picture as living more on my level.
  2. It appears to me that when Paul looked at Timothy he saw a young man who leaned on the flesh too much.
  3. We'll come back to our text later, but to Timothy Paul said, *“Thou therefore, my son, be **STRONG** in the **GRACE** that is in Christ Jesus.”*

4. Even though you and I, when we put on our minister's hats, like to quote **Philippians 4:13** to Christians who are struggling, rarely do we grasp the verse ourselves when the need arises.
5. Paul could say, and we tell our friends, "***I can do ALL things through Christ which STRENGTHENETH me.***" That is our word once again – the word we're studying.
6. We should all should **say** it with Paul, but more often than not, we are like Timothy **needing** the exhortation

D. Paul added to that in his **Second letter to Timothy**.

1. After referring to wicked Demas and Alexander, and implying that he was quite lonely after he sent Tychicus away on a missionary errand, Paul said,
2. "***Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and STRENGTHENED me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.***"
3. Paul – because he was empowered with God's "***dunamis***" – was able to wrestle "***against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places***" and he could win.
4. He could "***run with the strength of God the race that Christ had set before him.***"
5. What a blessing to know that it **CAN** be done, even if we are more like Timothy than like Paul.

III. Now let's tie together three of the eight verses in my list which use our word "***en-DUNAM-o-u.***"

A. In **Romans 4:20** when speaking about the centenarian Abraham – Paul said, ***He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was STRONG – in FAITH – giving glory to God.***"

1. In **Ephesians 6:10**, as Paul was bringing that epistle to a close, he exhorted the saints, "***finally, my brethren, be STRONG – in the LORD – and in the power of his might.***"
2. And then we have his exhortation to Timothy with which we began – "***Thou therefore, my son, be STRONG – in the GRACE – that is in Christ Jesus.***"
3. Through these verses, **WE** are exhorted to be strong **in faith**, strong **in the Lord** & strong **in God's grace**.

B. Think about our initial text in **II Timothy**.

1. Why did Paul address Timotheus in the way he did, "***Thou therefore, my son....***"
2. Wasn't it first of all to get Timothy's attention? "***THOU therefore, my son...?***"
3. But doesn't it also express Paul's special affection and concern for this young man?
4. The business of the Lord is important – and it is spiritually dangerous.
5. It is **important** that Timothy, as well as you and I, be strong in the Lord.

C. Now ask yourself, **What is grace?** What is the grace which is found in Christ Jesus?

1. Isn't it the free favor of God?
2. And, as such, isn't God's favor immutable? – it does not change.
3. So what does this exhortation mean – "***Be strong in God's unchangeable grace?***"
4. It essentially means the same thing as saying Abraham was "***strong in faith.***"

D. As saints living in human flesh, there is a **constant struggle** between that **flesh** and our **regenerated spirit**.

1. The **flesh** either **proudly wants to wrestle** against "***the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places***" in its fleshly strength and human wisdom.
2. Or when we see the enemy coming, perhaps feeling his fangs in our flesh, we want to run.
3. Timothy, "***be STRONG in the LORD, and in the power of his might.***"
4. Wearing each piece of your Christian armor, stand your ground.
5. Remember that you were saved by God's grace, and you are kept by God's grace.
6. Remember too "***that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his (grace and) purpose.***"
7. Therefore be **strong in the Lord**, be strong **in His grace**, be strong **in faith**.
8. Trust the Lord for victory over this latest assault.

- E. This week I started reusing a piece of gym equipment which I haven't employed in almost a year.
1. I stopped, first because Covid shut down the gym, and then because of the blood clot in my leg.
  2. So I haven't worked that specific set of muscles in quite a while.
  3. And now they are complaining – they are quite sore because of a lack of use.
- F. We can see the same thing spiritually.
1. How can we *“be **STRONG in the GRACE that is in Christ Jesus?**”*
  2. The simple answer is **exercise**.
  3. Grace is the free gift of God, but most Christians think about it very little, and they exercise it even less.
  4. They don't consider the thousand gifts of grace the Lord gives to them every day.
  5. And when the enemy attacks, wounding us and causing us pain, more often than not we don't consider God's grace at that time either – retreating, rather, into a fleshly response.
  6. Why can't we trust the grace of God that is in Christ Jesus?
  7. Because we aren't trained and exercised to do so.
- G. Over and over again, Paul encouraged his Christian friends to turn to God's grace for strength.
1. In **Colossians** when he heard Epaphras' report of them, Paul said, *“we do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;*
    - a. *That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;*
    - b. **STRENGTHENED** *with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:*
    - c. *Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”*
  2. In **Ephesians** he says, I heard about your tribulations and, *“for this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be **STRENGTHENED** with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.”*
  3. He tells Timothy – *“be **STRONG in the GRACE that is in Christ Jesus.**”*
  4. Perhaps he addresses him as *“his son”* in order for his **exhortation** to sound more like **encouragement**.
  5. God's *“dunamis”* is infinitely greater than your own, Timothy, grab it and use it.
  6. In running the Christian race or wrestling against the attack of our spiritual enemies, it is God's *“dunamis”* – strength that we need.
- H. There is a great deal of energy – strength – in the water of the Columbia River.
1. Most of that water is channeled through the Grand Coulee Dam with the purpose of drawing out its energy.
  2. It runs through turbines to create hydroelectricity – to empower a great many things throughout the Northwest.
  3. That electricity flows east and west – some of it reaching us – through miles and miles of electrical lines.
- I. Let's liken the grace of God to the Columbia River – it is the Lord's free gift to us.
1. That river is channeled through the turbines of Christ.
  2. Faith can be seen in the electrical lines which bring that strength into our homes and businesses.
  3. Now it is up to us to flip the switch and use that free gift of strength to empower us for the race which has been set before us.
  4. *“Be **STRONG – in the LORD – and in the power of his might.**”*
  5. *“Thou therefore, my son, be **STRONG – in the GRACE – that is in Christ Jesus.**”*
  6. And, finally, be **STRONG – in FAITH – giving glory to God.**