

2 Timothy 2:1-7
Be Strengthened by Christ's Grace

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, ² and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. ³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. ⁵ An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶ It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. ⁷ Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

Enablement of Grace

Literary Context

Historical Context

Biblical Context

Melodic Line

Sermon Thesis

Textual Structure

Key Words

Sermon outline

Be strengthened in Christ's grace by:
 Entrusting the faith to faithful men
 Being a loyal soldier
 Keeping the rules of the game
 Working hard for the harvest.
 Thinking about your Christian service

Devotion
 determination- discipline
 diligence

Title: Be Strengthened

Key Verbs: imperatives underlined

Be strengthened
Entrust to faithful men

Share in suffering – as a soldier
 Gets entangled
 Is to please
 Is not crowned
 Competes according to the rules
 Ought to have first share
Think over
 Lord will give you understanding

Intro:

Timothy was a young man who had been chosen by the veteran soldier of the cross, the apostle Paul, to be his helper and disciple on the apostle's missionary journeys throughout the countries along the northeastern and northern borders of the Mediterranean Sea in the mid first century during the days of the rule of the Roman Empire.

The name "Timothy" actually means "honoring God." This would be an accurate description of this man, who even though he was beset with human frailties such as timidity, fear, and a physical ailment, was a faithful servant of the gospel of Jesus Christ and of his church.

Timothy was extremely blessed because a man of such high calling and devotion as the apostle Paul had taken him under his wings and poured his life and teaching and love into this young man. But being Paul's beloved son in the faith did not inhibit Paul from being frank and honest with Timothy about his spiritual weakness, nor from issuing him solemn commands regarding his duty and responsibility to protect and preserve the Gospel message of the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only hope of salvation from sin for all the peoples of the earth.

The proverbs say "faithful \ are the wounds of a friend" and "open rebuke is better than secret love." So Paul speaks the truth to Timothy about what he needs to do to be a faithful servant and minister of Christ.

In chapter 1 of this book Paul has described the Gospel message as "the pattern of sound words" and "the good deposit."

And in regards to the Gospel, he tells Timothy to "*guard it faithfully, spread it actively and suffer for it bravely.*"

(from John R. Stott in his wonderful commentary on the Book of 2 Timothy)

"Guard the gospel faithfully, spread the gospel actively, and suffer for the Gospel bravely."

In the last section of chapter 1 we saw the sad words where Paul says all his friend and companions in Asia had deserted him. They had been ashamed of the gospel of Jesus and of its servant, the apostle Paul.

But all had not deserted him: he talks about one Onesiphorus who had not been ashamed of Paul but had searched for him in Rome and found him as a prisoner in a dungeon and had “refreshed” him.

This is the setting as we continue this letter.
Paul, next writes these words in chapter 2, verse 1:

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,

This is really another command that follows hard upon the previous commands already given to Timothy in chapter 1.

Paul told him:

“Don’t be ashamed of the gospel or of me, his prisoner.”

“Share in suffering for the gospel.”

“Follow the pattern of sounds words that you have heard from me.”

“Guard the good deposit entrusted to you.”

How could a weak and timid young man obey these kind of commands? They are commands to loyalty and faithfulness, to suffering, to commitment, to dedication, to self-sacrifice, to service.

To be sure, Timothy cannot fulfill these commands in his own human strength and abilities. Paul knows this, Paul can relate to this himself, so Paul gives him a word of hope in verse 14, “By the Holy Spirit guard the good deposit entrusted to you.”

Here it is. Here is the secret of faithful service – it must be done and can only be done in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Thank God for the Holy Spirit! Where would we be without the Holy Spirit? We’d be knocked about by every criticizing word, every alluring temptation, every threat of persecution that comes our way. But the Holy Spirit will give us the strength to stand.

But that is not the only word of hope the apostle offers to a struggling Christian. Paul gives Timothy another great strengthening word:

... be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,

What I believe Paul is saying here is, “Timothy, you have the grace of Christ Jesus within you. His grace has been given to you. So take up and use it, capitalize on this grace that Jesus has given you.

What is grace? It is the undeserved favor of God given to sinners for their salvation from sin and for their spiritual growth.

Where does grace come from? It comes from Jesus Christ:

⁶ For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. John 1:16-17

Is grace only for special Christians, for apostles and people like that? No, it's for every believer. What does John 1:16 say? It says "from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." "So, we have all received this grace of Jesus Christ."

Paul did not have any more saving grace, that is, the grace that it takes to become a Christian, than you or I or Timothy had. The grace of God needed to save a sinner from their sin is the same for every person -it all is the result of God's purpose in rescuing a people for himself through the person and work of his Son who came from heaven and was incarnated as a full human who lived among us and bore the punishment that we deserve by his death on the cross, and then he rose from the dead on the third day and appeared for 40 days to his disciples in his physically resurrected body, and then he ascended back to heaven where he sits at the Father's right hand as King and Ruler over all things.

This redemptive work of the Son of God was mighty and powerful to provide all the grace needed to rescue God's people from their sins and bring them into Christ's eternal kingdom.

So every Christian has been granted this saving grace and this grace is totally sufficient to save every Christian from their sins and keep them saved and is totally sufficient to provide them the grace needed to live the Christian life. A saved person does not escape all the problems, temptations, and trials of life, but he or she does have the grace needed to live his or her life in a way that pleases God. We don't reach perfection by any means, but we are able, by Christ's imparted grace, to be faithful and growing in grace, to reflect more and more the image of Christ in our lives.

So, I believe what Paul is telling Timothy is that he has all the reserves of grace he needs for ministry and service, he just needs somehow to draw on that grace.

He tells Timothy in chapter 2, verse 1, to "be strengthened" by the grace that is in Christ Jesus." So, what is it that strengthens Timothy. It is the grace of God. It is a strength outside of himself. Timothy is the recipient of this grace.

Let me read you a few scriptures that talk about this powerful grace that is given to every believer:

Eph. 1:19 - ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, ^(A)according to the working of ^(B)his great might

Eph. 3:16 - ¹⁶ that according to ^(A)the riches of his glory ^(B)he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit ^(C)in your inner being,

Eph. 6:10

¹⁰ Finally, ^(A)be strong in the Lord and in ^(B)the strength of his might.

Col. 1:29

²⁹ For this ^(A)I toil, ^(B)struggling ^(C)with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

Now in this text we see two things happening, don't we? First of all, Paul is struggling, he is toiling in the cause of the gospel. Yet what is the secret of his great exertion for the gospel, he says it is "his energy that is powerfully working within him.

God works within us and this is what gives us the motivation and power and ability to work for him.

Phil. 2:12-13 captures clearly these twin truths where Paul says:

¹² Therefore, my beloved, ^(A)as you have always ^(B)obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for ^(C)it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for ^(D)his good pleasure.

So we work out, we flesh out, we implement, we put into practice our salvation and the reason we are doing this, the reason we are able to do this, is because the power of Christ, his grace, is working within us.

So Paul is laying another command on Timothy: "timothy, you need to be strengthened in the grace of Christ that is given you, that indwells you. Put into action the power that Christ has given you. Don't be lazy, don't be slack, but be diligent, work hard for the kingdom of God.

So, Timothy might think, "OK, Paul. I'm willing to do this. But how do I do this? Can you give me some help here, Paul?"

That's exactly what Paul does. He now tells him some practical ways he can implement, put into practice, the mighty grace of Christ within him.

The first thing is something we might not expect, but it is a command to implement a strategy. What kind of strategy? It is a strategy for preserving the Gospel for the next generation. This is just as important as anything else Timothy might do in his Christian life. Paul says:

² and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

Notice: Timothy has “heard “this gospel pattern of sound words, this good deposit, from Paul. This means, first of all, that he was in Paul’s presence. He heard these teachings orally – with his ears. So there was this oral transmission of these teachings. He didn’t just read about them, though of course, nothing is wrong with reading; we should read as much as possible. But my point here is that he heard these teachings with a group of people, as in a church service, or in a discipleship class with other men whom Paul may have been teaching, or when he was with Paul one on one. Paul no doubt spent much time teachings and grounding Timothy as much as he could in the fundamentals and doctrinal foundations of Christianity; he thoroughly trained him in Christian doctrine.

Now it was Timothy’s responsibility to entrust these great teachings, these great doctrines of the Christian faith, to other men, that is, to faithful men, reliable men, who would in turn be able to teach others also.

If we think about it, we see God’s plan for propagating the Christian faith from generation to generation: we can see four steps here:

- 1) Jesus Christ himself taught Paul.
- 2) Paul taught Timothy
- 3) Timothy in turn will now teach other men
- 4) These men must be men who would be able to teach others also.

So, here in chapter 2 we have seen two solid commands issued to Timothy:

- 1) Be strengthened by the grace that is in Jesus
- 2) Entrust the faith to other faithful men.

Now we come to third command:

³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

This idea of suffering in behalf of the cause of the gospel is a frequent idea in this 2nd letter of Paul to Timothy:

2 Tim. 1:8

⁸ Therefore ^(A)do not be ashamed of ^(B)the testimony about our Lord, nor of ^(C)me his prisoner, but ^(D)share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God,

2 Tim. 1:12

¹² ^(A)which is why I suffer as I do. But ^(B)I am not ashamed

2 Tim. 2:9

... ^(A)for which I am suffering, ^(B)bound with chains as a criminal. But ^(C)the word of God is not bound!

2 Tim. 4:5

⁸ Therefore ^(A)do not be ashamed of ^(B)the testimony about our Lord, nor of ^(C)me his prisoner, but ^(D)share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.

The way I first learned this verse was from the KJV, which states:

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

I can testify that there have been a number of times in my Christian life over the years when I was working hard and was very tired. Then I would think of this verse and it gave me the determination and endurance not to quit, not to give up. It gave me the “kick-start” to press forward and complete the task I was involved in. “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”

What Paul does next is to present three illustrations for Timothy to think about. He presents examples from three common occupations in that day and time in order to help Timothy strengthen himself in the grace of God, to help Timothy endure in the cause of Christ, to help Timothy share in the suffering that accompanies Gospel work. He writes in verse 4:

4 No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

What Paul is talking about here is commitment to one’s leader, to one’s military leader, to one’s commander-in-chief. He’s talking about loyalty and faithfulness.

A soldier in a wartime situation does not allow himself to get involved in civilian affairs. Suppose he is serving in a foreign country and is in combat. He does not slip away from the camp and go into town and go to the local bar and spend half the night drinking so that the next morning he has a hangover and is ineffective on the battlefield.

He doesn’t go into town and see how he could set up a business to export local goods back to his country and set up a profitable export-import business.

No, he keeps focused on his commander’s objective of fighting a war and winning. This soldier will not allow himself to get distracted by civilian affairs.

Throughout his Christian life, Paul’s default setting was on spiritual warfare. He was always in battle-mode. He was always seeking to please his commander -in-chief, the Lord Jesus Christ.

When he and his missionary band led that business woman named Lydia to Christ outside of Philippi and she invited them to stay at her house, Paul did not begin to talk

to her about how he could work with her on importing her purple dye back to his home city of Tarsus and sell it there at a handsome profit. No, he and his companions spent his time disciplining her in the Christian faith. He didn't get distracted by civilian affairs.

IL. –

1) When I was a runner in high school we would not drink carbonated drinks....

2) Uriah the Hittite was not sleep with his wife when his fellow soldiers were suffering hardship out in the field.

We don't get involved in the affairs of the world as they might be opposed to the gospel or harmful to us spiritually.

IL – Joseph told Potiphar's wife: How can I do this thing and sin against God? He would not consider committing adultery with her because he lived under the superintendence of Yahweh his God.

How does Paul summarize his life? "I have fought a good fight." We, too, need to fight the good fight of faith with loyalty and faithfulness to our Commander in Chief, the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵ An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

The picture of an athlete was used by Paul several times. The Greek games were well known in all of that area which had been influenced by Greek culture for a long time.

For example, Paul said in...

1 Cor. 9:25

²⁵ Every ^(A)athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we ^(B)an imperishable.

Acts 20:24 - ²⁴ But ^(A)I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only ^(B)I may finish my course and ^(C)the ministry ^(D)that I received from the Lord Jesus, ^(E)to testify to ^(F)the gospel of ^(G)the grace of God.

An athlete has to run the whole course. He cannot take short cuts.

A sprinter is not allowed to bound out of the starting blocks until the starting gun is fired.

The hurdlers in the 400 meter hurdles has to jump over all 10 hurdles. If he or she fails to jump over one he or she is disqualified.

The soccer player, the basketball player, the American football player all have to go by the rules. If a player hits another player he will be thrown out of the game.

IN addition, the athlete has to train properly. If he or she fails to train, they will be unprepared and out of shape and lose out in the race or game. They must be disciplined, both in their training and in their execution of their game.

Paul uses one more illustration besides the soldier and the athlete to describe the means by which a Christian can strengthen themselves in the grace of Christ Jesus.

⁶ It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. ⁷

Here we're talking about the proper and appropriate reward. It would be wrong for a neighbor to sneak in and harvest a just ripened grain field and carry over the grain to his own house before the hard working farmer could harvest his own crop.

But the proper procedure is that the farmer gets the share of the crop first. So the Christian who works hard for the cause of the gospel will be the first to reap the benefits:

He will be satisfied that his grateful labors for Christ have born benefits in the lives of people for Christ's glory and kingdom.

He he'll likely reap some kind of special awards in heaven when God judges all men's works.

The ones who hard in the work of the gospel will reap the greatest reward.

So, working hard and sharing in the harvest of the kingdom is another way that Timothy could strengthen himself by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Finally, Paul gives one last command to Timothy: a command to think, to meditate, to consider:

Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

Tim is told not to do anything specifically but only to think about what Paul has just told him, specifically these 3 illustrations.

Summary of these 3:

2 Tim. 4:7 - ⁷(A) I have fought the good fight, (B) I have finished the race, I have kept the faith

We see here reference to soldier, athlete and farmer, maybe.

How to be strengthened by the grace....

- 1) Entrust
- 2) Share in sufferings
- 3) Think over what Paul has said

AP

1. How do you entrust?
You teach, you evangelize.
You go to a church where doctrine.
You bring others to church.
You give sound books to people.
Are you propagating the faith?
2. Share in sufferings by:
 - Stay out of civilian affairs. Avoid entanglements or activities that would knock you out of service to your commander, the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - Compete in the Christian race according to the rules.
 - Work hard to share in the first share of the crops.
3. Think about all these things.

Be Strengthened by the Grace that is in Christ Jesus. Strengthen yourselves and God's grace and Holy Spirit will be working in you to enable you to move on in the Christian life. To God be glory in Christ Jesus and in the Church now and forever. Amen,