

Subject: *Be a Strong Christian*

Scripture: *2 Timothy 2:1-7*

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul was concerned about his son in the ministry. He felt like Timothy was slipping and in need of courage. He challenged Timothy to stir up the gift and fan the flame within him (1:6). He reminded Timothy that God had not given him the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind (1:7). He cautioned Timothy not to be ashamed of the Gospel or of those like Paul who preached the Gospel (1:8). He inspired him to follow the example of courage and commitment found in Onesiphorus (1:16-18). As we begin chapter 2, Paul continues to challenge Timothy to be a strong Christian. There was no reason for him not to be strong. We find in this text what it means to be a strong Christian.

1. UNDERSTAND THE SOURCE OF YOUR STRENGTH (vs. 1)

This was a command (be strong), but it was given with love (my son). Timothy would find his strength in the grace of God. **Ephesians 6:10** *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.* The grace of God is:

- **Sovereign grace – 2 Timothy 1:9** *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*
- **Saving grace – Ephesians 2:8-9**⁸ *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*⁹ *Not of works, lest any man should boast.*
- **Serving grace – 1 Corinthians 15:10** *But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*
- **Strengthening grace – Ephesians 3:16** *That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.*

In salvation God gives us one kind of grace after another. **John 1:16** *And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.*

2. BE STRONG LIKE A FAITHFUL TEACHER (vs. 2)

Paul refers to a series of four generations of believers passing on the truth to one another. First, Paul had the truth. Then he taught Timothy. Next, Timothy was to teach other faithful men. Then those faithful men would teach others. And on the process would go. The key is that this must be a continuing process that calls for faithful people. Every person is important.

Passing on the Christian faith is like a relay race. One runner carries the baton and then hands it off to another runner, and on it goes until the last runner crosses the finish line. Every believer is involved in this great relay race. We run the race, carry the baton, and pass on the truth to somebody else who will do the same. One commentator told of his personal experience running track in college. He was part of a fine relay team and during an important track meet, one of the best runners on the team stopped running, walked onto the infield, and sat down. The first thought was that he pulled a hamstring or twisted his ankle. The team ran to check on him and when they asked what happened, he said: "I don't know. I just didn't

feel like running any more.” As you can imagine all his teammates were disgusted and they said, “Don’t you know you’re not just running for yourself, but you represent the team and the whole school?”

In this process there is no place for innovation or altering the truth. There is a premium on preservation and faithfulness to the truth. The word “commit” (vs. 2) means to deposit something valuable. It is the same word used in 1:12 and 1:14. Paul is not only referring to the basic message of salvation, but the essential truths of Christian doctrine. The Christian faith is a hand-me-down faith. This is the whole purpose of churches, Bible schools and seminaries. It began with Christ, and He taught the apostles including Paul, then it passed down to Timothy and others and now it is our turn. This calls for a believer to be strong in determination and strong in character.

3. BE STRONG LIKE A DEVOTED SOLDIER (vs. 3-4)

The life of a soldier is demanding and difficult. It is not an easy life. As a soldier must separate himself from the civilian world, a soldier of the Lord must separate himself from the things of this world. Soldiers live in the real world, but they don’t live like civilians. They live under special orders. Every soldier of the Lord has one goal: to please his commander. When we leave home every morning we ought to pray, “Lord, I’m reporting for duty.” Being a Christian soldier is not a 9 to 5 job. It is a 24 hour a day, seven day a week job.

4. BE STRONG LIKE A DISCIPLINED ATHLETE (vs. 5)

Paul and Timothy were familiar with the Olympic Games. The athletes had to train and discipline themselves, and they put forth incredible effort to be the best. But they also had to compete by the rules. **1 Corinthians 9:24-27** ²⁴ *Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.* ²⁵ *And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.* ²⁶ *I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:* ²⁷ *But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.* Every Christian must obey God’s Word in the pursuit of victory. We can’t afford to cheat or take shortcuts or we will be disqualified.

5. BE STRONG LIKE A HARD-WORKING FARMER (vs. 6)

The word “labor” means work hard to the point of being exhausted. In that day farmers worked long hours in all kinds of weather in hopes of a good harvest. Paul reminds Timothy to be diligent and work hard because it would eventually pay off. In some ways the life of the farmer is harder than the life of a teacher, soldier, or athlete. John MacArthur explains: “The teacher often finds exhilaration in the aspiring minds of his students, the soldier often has the excitement of battle, and the athlete the thrill of competing. But most of a farmer’s working hours are tedious, humdrum, and unexciting. And, unlike the teacher, the soldier, and the athlete, a farmer often works alone. He has no students to stimulate him, no fellow soldiers to fight with him, no teammates or crowd to cheer him. Many Christians’ lives are like the farmer’s. We may be underpaid, treated unfairly by our boss or fellow employees, and misunderstood or unappreciated by fellow Christians. But Christ’s reward to His faithful disciples is never deficient, never unfair, never late, and never omitted.”

Our good works have nothing to do with earning salvation or keeping salvation, but they have everything to do with working out our salvation as Paul states (Phil. 2:12).

Paul finishes this section by reminding Timothy to consider carefully what he told him. To consider means to think clearly, seriously, and deeply about it. Paul also prays that the Lord would give him understanding in all these things. This was too important for Timothy or any believer to take lightly. This is our time in history. This is not a dress rehearsal. It's the real thing. We don't get a do-over or a mulligan.

If we are a Christian we need to be a strong one, not a weak one. The difficulty and demands of the Christian life require us to be strong. We can only be strong if we draw upon the grace that we have in Christ. We actually don't need something more from the Lord. We just need to draw upon the resource of His grace that we already have.