

Be Strengthened in the Grace That is in Christ Jesus

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[0:00] No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs.! He wants to please his commanding officer.! Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete,! he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules.

The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.

Have you said any of the following things in the last week? I'm tired. I can't do it. I can't handle it. You don't understand. This is out of control. I need help. There's no way that's getting done. How many unexpected expenses can there be in one week?

What's the matter with me? This has not been a good week. My children are driving me crazy. I hope I have a job tomorrow. I hope I can find a job soon.

[1:13] I'll never find a job. There just aren't enough hours in the day. Why do I even bother trying? I'm so frustrated right now.

You said any of those things in the last week. My guess is that everyone here, if you haven't used those exact words, you've used something like them. And if you haven't, you've managed to control your tongue and not say it.

You were thinking it. And of course, all of these things reflect a lack of strength or ability on our part. They reflect our frustration with that lack of strength or ability to do what we want to do or to do what we need to do.

To do what God has called us to do. So if you've said any of those things in the last week, then God, through the Apostle Paul, has something to say to you tonight. And what he has to say is right there in verse 1, You then, my son, be strong.

Be strong is what he has to say to you. Thankfully, that's not all he has to say. If it was, it would be something of a cruel message. Be strong. Come on, man. Suck it up. Deal with it.

[2:21] Be a man. And sometimes we need that sort of exhortation if we're just being lazy or whiny. We need a kick in the pants sometimes. But this is something more than that. For the sincere child of God seeking to honor God in every part of life and feeling your inadequacy for that calling, it's more than just be strong.

Just be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And he tells us more about that in this passage. We'll be looking at the first seven verses tonight. But just to tell someone to be strong, if they have no resources for that strength, is cruel.

Like we talked about Wednesday night, to say don't worry, be happy. If somebody has no foundation for that happiness, that's cruel. To tell them to be happy. And if you have no source of strength to tell you, be strong is cruel.

But the apostles' command, God's command here is not a cruel one. And we want to see how the exhortation can actually be a great encouragement to us tonight. And so we want to see three things.

One, the kind of strength you need. What kind of strength are we looking for here? Paul describes it for us. And we want to see why we need it. What are you going to need that strength for?

[3:31] What do you use that strength for in your daily life? And then thirdly, and most importantly, where do you get it? Where does that strength come from? So first, the kind of strength that you need.

And with three vivid illustrations, Paul explains to us the kind of strength that we need. Last time he gave us the illustration of some real live people like Onesiphorus.

This time he gives us three representative people. A soldier, a farmer, and an athlete. Or a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer. And he uses these pictures to show what kind of strength that we need. And in this passage, he's especially got Timothy in mind. And Timothy is a minister of the Gospel. And there's things that are peculiar to ministers here, but there are principles that apply to all of us. And so the illustration isn't just about someone who's a minister of the Gospel. But the kind of strength that all of God's people need. So what kind of strength do you need? You need strength like a soldier. In verse 4. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs. [4 : 33] He wants to please his commanding officer. A soldier who is unentangled with the affairs of everyday life. He is focused on being a soldier.

That is his full-time job. And so he's not distracted by other employment or concerns. And the implication for a minister like Timothy is that he doesn't have to concern himself with other employment.

He can focus on working in the ministry. It's why we seek to have supported ministers whenever it's possible so that they don't have to be distracted with worldly employment and gain.

Paul wants Timothy to be a single-minded minister of the Gospel. But there's... And he gets really radical when he writes to the Corinthians. If you want to really be single-minded, if you want to really be focused, for some who have the gift of celibacy, to not have to worry about pleasing a spouse here and pleasing the Lord here, then he can be really single-minded and focused.

Like a soldier would be focused on his duty without anything else. Now, it's just for a certain few.

Maybe Timothy was one of those. I don't think we ever find out if Timothy was married or not.

Maybe he's one of those that was able to give all of his attention to the ministry of the Word.

[5 : 46] But a soldier should be focused, single-minded in his service. But the principle carries over more broadly than to just ministers and to just employment.

There are other things that hinder, other things that entangle us, that turn us aside from our purpose which should be service to Christ. Luke 8 and verse 14, Jesus explaining the parable of the sower.

He says, The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way, they are choked by life's worries, riches, and pleasures, and they do not mature. It becomes easy for us as Christians, instead of focusing our strength on God-honoring living, to waste our energy on useless and vain pursuits that will not profit our souls and that do not honor God, and that eventually so entangle us that we can be turned away from the path that we should be on.

If we're to be good soldiers of Christ, then we must be focused on one thing, and that is pleasing God. One commentator says, Timothy, by implication us as well, Timothy should not let anything in this life distract him.

Christ's soldier from pleasing and following in Christ his commander. Even though such a course involves suffering hardship. See, that's one of the reasons we need strength. It's because we're going to suffer hardship. That shouldn't turn us aside.

[7 : 07] Our focus is honoring God. Is it your single most important goal to please the God who's called you into service? You see that about the soldier? He wants to please his commanding officer.

He wants to please the one who has enlisted him. His loyalty is to his country for whom he fights, and his goal is to please that master, that commander who is over him.

Is that your goal? We are to be ever and always making it our aim to make our God glad. Are you doing that? Is that your aim? Is that your single focus?

Is your strength and energy poured in to honoring God? Are you that focused? How do you do that? By living according to his word, but you say there's too many things that are entangling me, too many things holding me back.

I'm too busy to give all of my attention to honoring God. Well, that's the problem. Let's talk about some things that can entangle us, some things that can hold us back, that can turn our focus aside from honoring God.

[8 : 05] There's sin. And of course, if there's sin in your life, that must be put aside. It must be put to death. Peter talks in 2 Peter 2 and verse 20, if they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and are again entangled in it, and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.

Sin wastes our strength. We're not using it on the things that we should be. We're not using our strength to honor God. We're using it to please ourselves. And that, of course, has to be put aside. Sin is entangling you. That's going to turn you aside from your single purpose, focused, of honoring

God.

That's obvious. We've got to lay aside those things that hinder us. But what of other things? Those things may be legitimate. Pleasures that we enjoy. Things that we like to do.

If they become the most important thing, if we become obsessed with them, if they become idols to us, then those must be put aside because they're hindering our focus on worshiping God.

Hebrews 12 and verse 1. Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

[9 : 12] It implies that there's something more than just sin that entangles us. There are other things. Maybe things that are legitimate in and of themselves. I like to play golf. I'm not very good at it. But I enjoy it.

But if golf became so important to me that that's all I did and it turned me aside and I wasn't spending any more time in the study and not preparing to preach God's Word and I wasn't seeking to honor God, then golf has become something that needs to be put aside so that I'm not hindered by that everyday affair of life.

It's taking away my focus. So those are some things that need to be laid aside if they become more important than God. Things that may be legitimate in and of themselves.

Nothing wrong with playing golf until it becomes an idol. But then there are the necessary duties of everyday life. There is work. There is caring for our families. There is raising our children.

Those things shouldn't be viewed as hindrances to honoring God. They are the sphere in which God has called you to live for Him and to honor Him. We view these things rather as opportunities to please God.

[10 : 16] Everything must be oriented in this direction. Pleasing our Master. And we do that in the way we work, in the way we watch a football game, in the way we raise our children. In the way we enjoy recreation.

We honor God. And so Paul is able to say to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 10.31, So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Those things aren't hindrances to serving God. They are the avenues in which we serve God. In which we bring glory to His name. Now, for the minister, the more things that he can lay aside, the more focused he can be.

For all Christians, our single-minded focus is to honor and worship God in the areas that He's called us to live. So the soldier shows us that we must be focused in service to Christ.

Christ is the one who's enlisted us. And we give our energy and strength to pleasing Him. And shouldn't that be the desire of our hearts? Do you love Christ tonight? Has Christ been faithful to you?

[11 : 19] Has He called you out of this world? Out of darkness into light? Has He blessed you? Has He given you everything? Has He shown you that tenderness that we sang of? That we focused our worship around?

Has He done that? Then how could you not long to give all of your energy to Him? Your focus. Your strength. That's the kind of strength you need. Strength that is focused on serving the King and the Kingdom that He has established.

Let us press on to that end. It's going to require sacrifice on our part. We're going to have to lay aside some things that may be dear to us. And so Spurgeon says, the Christian is a self-sacrificing man as the soldier must be.

To protect his country, the soldier must expose his own bosom. To serve as king, he must be ready to lay down his life. Surely he is not Christian who never felt the spirit of self-sacrifice.

Do you focus your strength on honoring God in all that you do? That's what the soldier shows us. What about the athlete? Well, the athlete teaches us that we must compete according to the rules.

[12 : 23] According to law, if we would receive the crown. He's in verse 5. Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules.

Our strength must be according to law. We can't go through life expecting to receive a crown of glory if we are not living by faith and seeking to honor God and obeying His commands in all that we do.

That's where our energy must be placed. Keeping His Word. Now, an athlete has opportunities to break the rules. We see in professional sports, athletes using steroids and other performance

enhancing drugs and for a time they may enjoy success in the praise of men even.

But if they are caught, or even sometimes if they are suspected of such a thing, their reputation is tarnished. And it's looking like many baseball players who are suspected of these things won't make the Hall of Fame even though they have Hall of Fame careers.

Hall of Fame numbers. They've not played according to the rules and so they don't get the crown of glory. They don't receive the reward. Now, some cheating athletes might get the crown on earth because earthly judges are not infallible.

[13 : 41] They don't know everything. But no cheating man will be able to deceive the just judge of all the earth who always does what is right, who knows all things, even the thoughts and intents of your heart.

He knows. And so, for you, if you bend the rules, if you cheat, you break the rules, you cut the corners, there's no crown of glory.

The athlete teaches us that we must play by the rules if we want the reward. What's one of the, you know, there's all sorts of rules God gives us in His Word, but Paul tells us something interesting here in this letter.

2 Timothy 3 and verse 12, he says, in fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Everyone. Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

A lot of people don't like persecution. Nobody likes persecution. And so they'll do whatever they can to avoid it. That's cutting the corners. It's not playing by the rules. If you're hiding your light so that somebody won't persecute you, if you're living in such a way so that nobody will know that you're a Christian, to avoid that, you're not playing by the rules and there's no crown of glory if you are ashamed of Christ.

[14 : 54] If you're ashamed of Him, He'll be ashamed of you. Now that takes strength. It takes strength to live for Christ and according to His rules. But then the athlete's life was never one of ease, was it?

It's a life of dedication. It's a life of hard work and when done by the rules it pays great dividends. There might be a conference championship or a state championship or a medal to be won or a varsity letter to be earned, a hall of fame to make.

Those are all neat and they're exciting. You work hard for them but better by far is the reward that is held out by God for His people. The crown of righteousness. The crown of glory.

2 Timothy 4, verse 8. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day. Paul can say that with confidence because he knows he's played according to the rules.

He is trusted in Christ and he has demonstrated that trust and faith by the way he lives. But if you get to that day and you stand before the judge and you say, oh, I have faith in Christ. But there has been no rule keeping to back it up.

[15 : 59] Nothing to demonstrate that faith. You have it played according to the rules. Then you won't receive the crown of glory in that day. And so it takes strength then to work. Focusing your energy on obeying God's law.

Living according to the rules that He has set down for us in His Word. If you have fought the good fight though, lived by God's Word, demonstrated your faith by your deeds, then there's a crown, an eternity of joy waiting for you.

And that can be a great encouragement. A great blessing when you're not feeling so strong. When you feel like you can't handle the situation. You press on in the strength of the Lord knowing that eternity is coming.

An eternity where there won't be any more persecution. There won't be any more suffering. There won't be any more pain. And so don't abandon the rules. Don't take the shortcut.

Don't cheat. No sneaking in a little worrying. A little hiding of your light. No half-hearted obedience. No lazy service. No disobedience to the rules. That's not the way to the prize.

[16 : 59] Try to make it easier on yourself. Live by the rules. There's a crown awaiting you. The athlete teaches us that we need strength to serve God according to His law. And that there's a reward waiting for us.

So you've got the soldier. He teaches us to be single-minded and focused in our service. The athlete, he teaches us to play according to the rules and there's a reward coming. But what about

the farmer? What kind of strength do we need?

Well, verse 6, the hard-working farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. You find a farmer and you're going to find a hard-working man with strong hands.

My grandpa was a farmer. My mom's dad. And he's kind of, he was a fairly tall guy. He was taller than me. And, but not, he wasn't a real big guy.

But man, was he strong. And did he have hands like you wouldn't believe. And even into his 70s when he wasn't on the farm anymore, he would go down to the sale barn corralling animals.

[17:58] And they didn't have any bits in the mouths of those animals. They're running through there and he's corralling those. He's a strong guy. He's a hard-working man. When we were able to visit him up in Wisconsin, he'd be up before any of us because it was a dairy farm.

And so he had done more work by the time we got out of bed than most of us do in a day. He's a hard-working man. He was a strong man. I was with one of my uncles over Christmas and he said, and this is an uncle on my dad's side, okay?

I'm talking about my mom's dad, but this is an uncle on my dad's side. And he said, I got one memory of your grandpa, Aaron. And it was when my dad and mom got married and my dad's family packed up and they all went to Wisconsin for the wedding.

And so my dad and his two brothers are there and his little brother is on the farm. He's never been on a farm a day in his life that I know of besides when he went to Wisconsin. And Grandpa Fritz pulled him aside and said, hey, I need some help.

We've got to get some pigs up in the back of the truck. I've got two pigs. I've got to take them into town. He said, I don't know what he needed the pigs for. I figured it was probably to pay for the wedding. But anyway, so he gets my uncle and he says, I need you to hold this board and you just guide that pig right up into the truck.

[19:07] He'll just go right along the board. The first pig comes out. My uncle's standing there holding the board and goes right up in the truck. The second pig came out of the barn. That pig wasn't going anywhere.

And he said, you know what I remember about your grandpa? And I can't tell you because you might be slightly offended, but my grandpa demonstrated his strength, his agility, and he subdued that pig and that pig then calmly walked up into the thing because my grandpa was a strong man and he was a hard-working man.

And if you want to know what he did to the pig, I'll tell you later. But he was a strong man. And that's what a farmer is.

He's strong and he works hard. And that's the kind of strength you need if you're going to be a servant of God. If you're going to be a follower of Christ, you've got to be strong. You've got to be willing to get up early in the morning before anybody else is up like that farmer.

And you've got to work hard. This is no walk in the park. It's not easy. It's not a cakewalk. It's difficult. And it'll take work. That's obviously true for the minister of the Gospel, for Timothy, but for every Christian.

[20:17] You're going to serve Christ full-time in the ministry, in the church. That's hard work. Even harder, perhaps, in some ways, is serving Christ full-time while you're working in the world. And so you're going to need strength.

You're going to have to work hard. And here, too, we see that there's a reward. Your work is not in vain. Don't be put off by the thoughts of hard work. It's worth it. And the farmer enjoys the reward. He sees that first fruit.

He sees those first seedlings pushing up through the dirt. He rejoices. He's been watching. And then he sees them. And then when the full crop comes and it's harvested, he receives what he needs before it goes to market.

He gets that first fruit, but he rejoices. He enjoys the fruit of his labor. And for Timothy, the hard-working minister, delights to see his labors bearing fruit in the lives of his congregation. And that hard-working Christian delights to see growth and grace, progress being made. Another sin put to death. This temptation, instead of giving in this time, conquered. He sees that fruit by God's grace.

[21:18] And he's encouraged that all of the energy and strength that he has expended is reaping benefits. That's the kind of strength you need if you're going to live the Christian life.

You need strength to work hard. So the farmer teaches us that. That we labor in the strength of the Lord and our work won't be in vain.

You sum it up, what we learn from these three pictures. 1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you.

Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. It takes worry. That's the kind of strength that we need, Paul says.

The kind that a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer has. But why do you need this strength? Secondly, or why did Timothy need this kind of loyal, focused, lawful, hardworking, rewarded, fruitful strength? [22:22] Well, Timothy's been worked over here pretty hard so far. Paul's been exhorting him. And he's just giving him this example of Onesiphorus. He said, you need to be like that, Timothy.

That's going to take strength. That's going to take strength for Timothy to suffer for the Gospel. To hold on to that Gospel. To proclaim that Gospel. To not be ashamed of that Gospel. Or the servants of the Gospel. All of those things are going to require strength.

And now Paul narrows it down to two particular areas where his strength will need to be demonstrated in his life. One is more peculiar, particular to the ministry. The other is broader, and more general.

Why does he need the strength? Why do you need the strength? It's verses 2 and 3. The first thing you need the strength for is to be a faithful proclaimer of the truth as a minister of the Gospel.

Verse 2, And the things you have heard from me say in the presence of many witnesses Excuse me, the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

[23:23] Timothy, as a minister of the Gospel, received special training from Paul. Special instruction in the presence of other witnesses, sometimes in private. But he had received the teaching from Paul.

Paul is a messenger from God. Paul's teaching wasn't just like Joe's teaching down the street. When Paul spoke, this is God's Word. Paul seems to recognize that about himself as an apostle. You see it in his writing.

And so he had taught Timothy the Word of God. And now Timothy must take that good deposit and deposit it with trustworthy men so that they might be faithful ministers of the Gospel as well.

I think this is talking specifically about ministers training other ministers of the Gospel. Paul, a minister, had trained Timothy and now Timothy was to take that training, that truth, and to pass it on to other ministers.

He's to give it to them and expect them to be good stewards of it. As one carefully lays out a meal before the guest. And that's how this word entrust is used in the New Testament. It's setting food before someone.

[24:25] Carefully, ladies, you're going to have some company over and you carefully prepare everything you want your table to be set nicely and you fix the food you want to be a certain way. You set it out so that it's appealing, so that your guests enjoy it, and so on.

Well, Timothy is to take the truth and he is to carefully set it before other people, other men who will proclaim that truth. Men who are faithful, they're worthy of receiving that message and Timothy knows that they won't mishandle it because they're faithful and they're fit or they are qualified, they're worthy.

They're, as Paul said back in the first letter he wrote to Timothy, they are able to teach. Their responsibility would be great and so they must be faithful and fit men. This is not just the proclamation of the Word in the church.

It's training the next generation of ministers of the Gospel who could then pass that truth on to others. Ministerial candidates need particular focused training in the Scriptures and that requires strength.

I hope you pray for Dr. Renahan at the Institute of Reformed Baptist Studies in California because it takes strength to do what he's doing there. I hope you pray for and support the work of faithful seminaries if you're able to do that.

[25:44] These are not superfluous or unimportant institutions. They're doing a vital work. If you want a generation coming behind us that doesn't have any ministers of the Gospel then you can not bother about training men for the ministry and say that's not important, I don't care.

But if we don't worry about it or if we don't concern ourselves with it, if we don't take up that task of training men for the ministry, if we don't support it, if we don't pray for it, if somebody doesn't give themselves to that work, then it won't take long before we've got a generation of churches with no pastors.

Nobody that's been carefully trained in the truth. So it's an important work. It's what our brother, Pastor Dave from Grand Rapids is doing in the Far East at this very moment.

So it's a vital part of missions is training men once you're there that they might be able to proclaim that truth to others and that takes work. Timothy. So let's be about the business of praying for those who do it.

Supporting those who do it. But you can take the principle of passing the truth on and you can apply it at different levels. You parents need to be passing the truth on to your children so that they can take it.

[26:52] They might not end up being ministers of the Gospel. That's fine, but they're going to have to be able to proclaim it to their children. And so you take that truth and you carefully set it before your children and you say, you're going to have to entrust this to your children.

And so we've got Sunday school classes where we're entrusting the truth and we preach. We're entrusting you with truth so that you can use it and proclaim it to others. Whether it's your children or your neighbor.

Others that you come into contact with. I think especially important is passing it on within our own families. I know that it takes great diligence and perseverance and strength to continue in the work of family worship.

Instructing your family in the truth. Gathering them around the Word of God. And worshiping together as a family. That's why you need focused, hard-working strength. But we've got to be doing that work of passing the truth on.

You say, you begin to see something of the importance of the soldier's single-minded focus. Do you think it's going to be honoring to God if there's another generation that comes behind that knows the truth?

[27:54] Another generation to worship Him? Yes! So what's one of the ways you can pour your energy into honoring God? By training that next generation. By preparing them so that they will worship God too so that more glory will be brought to His name.

Maybe it's not the more formal family worship you struggle with. Maybe you need strength. And of course we do for each moment that arises. Wisdom to take advantage of prime teaching opportunities that come out of nowhere or discipline situations with your children.

And you're too tired to even want to think about how to address the particular problem. And so you don't. We need strength like Timothy needed it. It might be exercised in a different context than Timothy needed it for.

But we need strength to be proclaiming the truth of God's Word to our children. That's one thing. One reason we need strength to pass it on to others. The truth on to others.

But secondly, verse 3, we need strength to endure hardship. Paul says, endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Paul already told Timothy to do this back in chapter 1 and verse 8.

[29:00] Join with me in suffering for the Gospel. Same word. Suffer with me. Endure hardship with me. Endure evil or difficulty. The young son in the faith was already suffering in Ephesus when Paul writes this.

He says, you're going to suffer some more. And that's why I told him back in the first verse, be strong. Be strong, my son, that you might endure hardship like a good soldier.

A good soldier is not going to complain about it when he doesn't have a soft bed to lie in or a warm shower or whatever. He's out and there's all sorts of difficulty on the battlefield.

A good soldier is not going to complain about it. He's going to stand firm. He's going to endure that for the cause of his country to serve as commanding officer. So we do it as a good soldier, unafraid, willing to fight against the trouble that comes, not ashamed to stand for the cause of Christ.

You're going to need the strength of a soldier. Not a wicked soldier of the Roman Empire, which might be the image that popped immediately to mind if a soldier was mentioned in those days, but rather a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

[30:13] And when he said it back in verse 8 of chapter 1, he said, do so by the power of God. And he understood that strength's not going to come from Timothy himself, but by God's power.

And here it's be strong. We'll see in a moment in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. It's not in your own strength. You're not called to suffer alone. Always with you is the God who called you to service.

He knows that serving Him will bring you suffering. God knows that. He's the one that tells us that in His Word. And so He's not going to abandon you in the midst of it.

Don't despair. Don't bury your head in the sand and pretend like there's no problem. Go to Christ for strength when you suffer. Or whatever your hardship is. And there's all sorts of ways hardship will turn up.

It may come in and just clear-cut persecution for the sake of Christ. At school or at work or in your neighborhood, on your team.

[31:11] It's going to take strength to stand up and do the hard right when everybody else is doing the easy wrong. And that will bring mocking and persecution. Be strong like a good soldier.

Hardship may take other forms. It might come as economic hardship. Your dollars don't go as far as they used to. There aren't as many dollars as there used to be.

Maybe there's no dollars at all. It's hardship that you must suffer and it will require great strength.

But the beauty is you're not alone in the fight. You go find the strength of Christ.

Don't cower away ashamed of the situation. Be a good soldier. Stand firm. Maybe it takes the form of physical difficulty. Pain. Suffering. Sickness.

If you've ever suffered temporarily. You had the flu. Oh man, I hate the flu. It's not fun. It takes strength to get through it. But you take that and then you think about the people in our congregation that suffer every day.

[32:11] Not with the flu, but with something worse. And it doesn't go away. You know then that it takes strength to endure chronic sickness or pain or weakness. Or to care for someone that is enduring chronic sickness or disease.

Requires strength. Strength that you don't have. And you said things like, I can't. I'm too tired. I don't know how I'm going to make it. Paul says, be strong. Go back to the fountain of grace and power for refreshment.

Caring for children. Raising children. Requires special strength. And sometimes that can be a hardship. Caring for children with special needs.

If you've done it, you know that it's beyond your strength. And when you've pressed through impossible times, you know that it's been by the power of God and the grace of Christ. And so when the next impossible hurdle comes, may Christ strengthen you.

It may be the demonstration of strength you need. The reason you need strength isn't one of these things. Although I think these touch all of us. We all need to be passing the truth on.

[33:16] We're all going to endure hardship. Maybe it's other things. It's more ordinary things. Things that Paul doesn't mention here. But what do you need strength for every day? Seeing the kind of strength we're talking about what you need it for.

The minister, Timothy's need for strength is unique, but the need itself is universal to God's people. We need strength simply to carry out our everyday duties. You'll need strength to do your job and do it well for God's glory.

You need strength to be a faithful mom and wife. Why do you need strength? You need strength to be a good dad and husband. You need strength to do the ordinary chores that are needed to keep your household running smoothly.

You need strength to do your schoolwork and to take tests. You need strength to stand up to temptation and peer pressure. You need strength to perform on the athletic field or court. You need strength to exercise your body and your mind.

You need strength to be disciplined in your daily devotions. You need strength to stick to your diet.

You need strength to be a model of God-honoring obedience to your children and others around you. You need strength to be a good steward of your finances that God has given you.

[34:24] You need strength to get along well with your siblings and your parents. You need strength to have patience in everything. You need strength to not worry about anything.

You need strength to control your tongue. Timothy needed, you need, I need strength so that we can do all these things that God has called us to do.

So is that it? You need strength for these things? Be strong? That's not where Paul leaves us, is it? Thirdly and lastly tonight, where do you get the strength? I've seen what kind of strength you need.

I've seen what you need it for. But where do you get it? Where can you tap into that source of strength and power? Well, we come back to verse 1.

You then, my son, you therefore, because of all of these things that Paul's already heaped on Timothy and more that's coming, you're going to need strength. You therefore, and my son, he gets a word of encouragement.

[35 : 30] He's been really working Timothy over, but he's still his son. And as a father who truly loves his son, we'll give him hard truth and discipline, but he still loves him. So Paul still loves Timothy.

So God still loves us, even though sometimes he has hard work for us to do, hard words for us to hear. He still calls us his children. My children, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

A hint that Paul isn't just being cruel. Be strong. Come on. Pull yourself up by your bootstraps and be strong. It's imperative.

It's a command. Be strong. But it's in the passive. It's be strengthened. Be made strong. And there's a glimmer of hope in that passive imperative.

That we're not the ones who make ourselves strong. That there's someone else who's doing the strengthening. Now we need to seek it out. We're going to talk about that. But somebody else is the one who strengthens us.

[36 : 32] Be made strong. And the passive always implies a subject. Be made strong by... And Paul doesn't spell it out for us exactly right away.

Be made strong. Oh, it's by Christ, isn't it? See that? But he really does spell it out for us. In the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Now it's still a command.

It's still on us to go to the source and to seek that strength. But Christ is the one who strengthens us. And we see that in His grace. The grace of Christ Jesus.

What a blessing that our strength comes from His grace in our lives. The very nature of grace is that it is undeserved. And so, be strong.

It doesn't involve looking to ourselves, but rather looking in faith to Christ, who has done for us far more than we could ask or think. He's shown us grace first in forgiving us of our sins.

[37 : 29] Right? He's shown us the grace. We deserve judgment and punishment. And instead, we receive forgiveness. That's grace. He's shown us grace there in forgiving our sins.

But He also continues to show us grace each day in sustaining and helping us through every situation. Did you hear what Pastor John said this morning? He said, grace is the power to live as God wants you to.

And that's exactly what Paul is talking about here. Be strengthened in the grace, the power to live as God wants you to. The grace that is in Christ Jesus. Grace to forgive and grace to enable us to live for Him.

We don't deserve grace. We don't deserve the forgiveness of sins that God has given to us. And we don't deserve this ongoing grace to live for God, but that's the beauty of grace. We get the opposite of what we deserve.

Thank God. We receive grace instead of justice and punishment. And so, the grace is in Christ.

[38 : 32] Christ is the active one doing the strengthening here. And isn't that Paul's testimony elsewhere? He wrote in 1 Timothy 1, verse 12, I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has given me strength.

And now he's saying to Timothy, you need that same strength from Christ. And what's the verse that we all know? Philippians 4-13, I can do everything.

How? In my own strength. No, through Him who gives me strength. Through the One who strengthens me. When Paul says, Timothy, be strengthened in the grace of Christ, he's saying it's Christ who strengthens you.

And if you can do everything through Him who gives you strength, you know what that means? It means you can do nothing without the One who gives you strength. Do you know that strength? Have you experienced it?

You've seen what you need it for and you didn't need me tonight to tell you what you need strength for. You came in here knowing. You know what exhausted you this week. You know what wore you out. You know what you struggled with. You don't need me to tell you.

[39 : 32] You know what you need it for, but do you know the strength that comes from Christ? You can. Every day, you can have the full measure of grace and power you need for that day.

You won't find it in some inner store of strength. You won't find it in the cup of coffee or even in the extra hour of sleep. Helpful as those things may be. True strength to face the day comes from Christ.

So ask Him for it. When the impossible situation arises, don't despair. Go to the throne of grace.

Right. To find the strength that you need. Find Christ in His Word. Find that strength of Christ flowing to you through the fellowship of the saints, through the preaching of His Word.

When we come to worship, you know what we call the preaching of the Word in prayer and fellowship? Reading of His Word? Or when we do it in private, you know what we call that? We call it the means of grace.

[40 : 35] Right. And so if you need grace, if you need power, then you need to hear the preaching of the Word. You need to read the Word. You need to pray and ask God for it. You need to be with your brothers and sisters in Christ and receive that encouragement.

Receive that stimulation, that fellowship, that blessed strength. You find strength in being with your brothers and sisters in Christ. I do. You need the means of grace if you would be strong in the Lord. The means of grace are the ways in which God administers that grace to us. And so let us come with faith, believing that He will. And come to this church saying, I'm not going to get anything out of it today.

I don't know why I bother coming. No, this is where you come to get what you need. And God will give you what you need. We come with faith, not despairing, but trusting. We need help. We need strength and we can have it for the taking.

Be strengthened. It's up to you to come and ask, to seek it, to find it in the means of grace. But Christ is the one who gives you the strength. And if you've ever gotten through one of those impossible weeks, one of those impossible situations, you look back at it and you go, I know that wasn't me.

[41 : 44] I know that I don't have that kind of strength. That was Christ working in me. There's grace to be had. Do you know that grace?

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Are you experiencing it right now? Are you in despair? You throw up your hands. I can't do it. You can by God's grace.

There's grace in Christ for the life that He's called you to live. There's grace for salvation as well.

Some tonight haven't experienced that first demonstration of grace and the forgiveness of sins.

You know that you're unable to save yourself. You know that you're a sinner. Maybe your pride won't let you admit it, but you need help. You need salvation. And there's grace for you in Christ. And then He will give you grace upon grace to go and live for Him.

But you need to come to Him tonight and find that grace that is in Christ Jesus for forgiveness of sins. Come and get it. He won't turn you away for that. Just like He's not going to turn His children away from increasing measures of grace for the strength that they need for each day, whatever comes.

[42 : 53] He won't turn you away if you come in genuine repentance and faith seeking His strength. So be strong.

Or better, be strengthened. Be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. In a closing exhortation He gives us in verse 7.

Reflect on what I'm saying. For the Lord will give you insight into all this. And He gave them those three illustrations. Go home, Timothy. And you think about what it means to be a soldier or an athlete or a farmer.

You get some meat out of those illustrations. You go home and you think on these things and you know what? God will give you insight. He will give you understanding. We, dear people, are to be strengthened through Christ.

We're to be focused and faithful in our hard-working service that will be rewarded, that will bear fruit. And so, take the illustrations. You think on them more.

[43 : 55] You might have the understanding that only God can give. And if you want to profit from them one of those means of grace, one of the way God gives us strength through His Word, then you're going to need Him to give you understanding.

You're going to need Him to give you insight. And so, if you want strength, you go home and read the Word, but you don't even do that in your own strength. You're dependent on God for that too. To give you understanding. To give you insight.

And so, may God help each of us to reflect, to think, to give our minds to what He's saying. And God will give us insight. You see that it's God that gives us everything that we need. He's the one that gives us the grace for forgiveness of sins. He's the one that gives us grace that we might have strength. He's the one that gives us insight that we might understand His Word. All of it comes from God.

It doesn't come from me. What comes out of my heart is wicked, it's ugly, it's sinful. But God has come and He's changed our hearts and He's given us everything that we need. Everything that we need.

[44:52] I love that promise. He has given us everything we need for life and godliness. Nothing's missing. And so, you've said some of the things like I've said this week.

I can't do it. I can't handle it. I'm tired. I need help. You're right. You can't. But by God's grace, working in you, you can.

What a blessing that God gives us all that we need. He gives us the insight that we need and the strength that we need. It's in Christ that we find it. You need it tonight? God will give it. Ask Him. And let's praise Him tonight that He would give us everything that we need.

That He hasn't left us to walk through this very difficult, yes, very difficult life. But He hasn't given us to walk through it alone. He's given us Christ to walk through it with us. And so, let's praise Him and continue to ask Him that He would give us increasing measures of strength and wisdom for the facing of these days that we are in.

Pray together. Father, grant us wisdom, insight, and grant us courage and strength for the facing of each moment of each day.

[46:02] You have called us to live in this world. You have called us to a difficult life in many ways. And yet, You have called us to a blessed life because You have given us every grace and strength that we need for it.

We pray that we might live in that strength, that we might go from strength to strength, seeking Your face for each moment. Lord, give us the strength we need. We have it not in ourselves.

We thank You for the grace of Christ. And we pray that You would pour out fresh measures of that grace upon us tonight, that we might have the power to live for You. The strength to face the difficult things that come unique to each one of us.

Different difficulties for this one and for that one. But, the need for Your grace and strength is the same. And so, we bow ourselves humbly before You. We don't have what it takes in and of ourselves.

only in Christ. And so, we pray that He would pour out His power in us by His Spirit that dwells in us. Give us all that we need. We thank You that You do, that You've promised to.

[47:09] Give us then the wisdom to go back time and again to the throne of grace for new strength. Give us insight into these things.

Help us to understand Your truth as we read it, as it is proclaimed to us. May we receive it as the very Word of God. So come and strengthen us by Your Word tonight, we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.