

2 Timothy 2:1-2

"Don't Quit"

"Don't be afraid, don't be ashamed, & don't deviate." That was the basic breakdown of 2nd Timothy Ch 1... We've been considering (in 1st, 2nd Timothy [& soon to be Titus]) the overarching theme of what God's Leader's Look Like... & Though we realize that leaders in the body of Christ may be called to a higher level of scrutiny we also understand that the standards of godliness apply to us *all*, (individually & collectively).

Paul tells Timothy (& by proxy you & me) that we're not to be *afraid* to serve God, we're not to be *ashamed* of the *men* of God & that we're to hold fast to the pattern of sound words (that is, we're not to *deviate* from or in any way alter the solid teaching of the *Word* of God). Timothy was to both *guard* and *give out* God's Word; "don't deviate" & (as for today) "*don't quit*."

Stay faithful, we're not looking to hear from Jesus the words "Well begun", we want to hear the words "Well *done*". How is that to happen, how can we ensure the fact that we will finish well? –

Paul has just given us a strong comparison & contrast in men who were unfaithful & one who remained faithful. He's urging Timothy to follow the pattern of faithfulness. But how are we to do that? How can I be sure that I won't falter & fall away, how can I *ensure* that I will follow through to the very end? Well, you've got to be strong; but in what context? ... Notice.

Vs 1

If you want to finish well it is absolutely imperative that you "be strong". Underline those words in your bible. If you're to faithfully fulfill the call of God upon your life you-need-strength... & Paul encourages Timothy over & over & over again to be strong, don't deviate, don't be ashamed, don't be afraid, don't quit, preach the word, wage the good warfare, fight the good fight of faith, flee worldliness, pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, gentleness...on & on it goes. However if you're to do these things, if you're to faithfully follow after righteousness & flee worldliness, if you're to fight the good fight & wage the good warfare you *need* strength...

But here's the deal, you can't do it in *your own* strength. You & me, we simply do not have the capacity in & of our own will, our own strength to follow faithfully after God's plan for our lives.

So when Paul says, "Be strong", what's literally being said is, "keep on being empowered".

Or “Keep in touch w/the power”, abide in that *place* where the power is located (or more literally in that *Person*, right?) in Christ Jesus. The power is of Christ; the means through which He *supplies* that power is by His *grace*. “Be strong in (or through the means of) the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

We are *saved by grace, we stand by grace, we serve by grace, we are sanctified by grace, we are sustained by grace, & we are strong by God’s grace*. “Be strong”, it’s a present *passive imperative*. What that means is that it’s to be a continual happening, yet being passive it’s not coming from you, but it’s being imposed upon (or placed w/in) you, the imperative means it’s a command. In other words, “Stay in that place whereby God is strengthening you.” Jesus said that like this, *“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”*¹

We’re to *abide in Christ*, He is the source of your strength. When Paul was writing to the Ephesians, he began to speak of his prayers for them. & He said, *“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,”*² Or another way to understand that? “Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus...” (Be being strengthened through the grace that is in Christ Jesus)

You cannot serve God in the efforts of your own flesh, your own strength, it can’t be done; you will (I would) fail...But we praise God that He is always there, ready & waiting to strengthen us that we might serve Him & bring glory to Him.

What does the bible say? *“He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength;”*³ Praise God? God is always there to strengthen you, however you need to *receive* that strength, that’s why Paul exhorted Timothy to “Be strong” to “stay in that place”.

Remember he told the Ephesians, *“be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.”*⁴ Seek *after* the Lord, rely fully *on* the Lord... “abide” in Christ.

Be strong in the grace... you guys it’s such a key; as I was seeking to point out a minute ago, our entire relationship w/God, from salvation, to sanctification, to seeing Him face to face is all about...grace.

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). (Jn 15:4-5). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² The New King James Version. (1982). (Eph 3:14-16). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ The New King James Version. (1982). (Is 40:29-31). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ The New King James Version. (1982). (Eph 6:10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

It has nothing to do w/us & everything to do w/Him... What is grace? Well, if mercy is not getting what we do deserve (judgment), than grace is getting what we don't deserve, salvation, the righteousness of Christ, His strength, His joy, His power, His presence. In it's simplest form we refer to is as "unmerited favor" right? We've done nothing to deserve God's goodness toward us, but out of love, out of *grace* His simply chooses to be good to us. It's who God is intrinsically, He is good, His love, He is light (yes, He is holy & He is just), however His also merciful, *gracious*, & full of compassion.

Every resource that we need to lead a life of godliness in this present world is distributed to us through the attribute of God's grace. It's no wonder then that Paul would say to you & to me that we are to be "strong" in the grace that's in Christ Jesus. Peter said it like this, "...grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."⁵ The author of Hebrews underscored this principle in *this* way, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."⁶

We need God's grace...in virtually every arena of our lives. As a matter of fact it's so critical that it's the context in which the last written words of scripture are uttered to the child of God. The very last words found in your bible are these, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."⁷

It's such a vital principle; that's why your enemy works overtime to subvert (or undermine & destabilize) the grace of God in/toward your life by spreading error & confusion about it's true nature.

Every false religion on the planet promotes salvation based either on human works totally, or a mixture of grace & works. But in adding works to God's grace, we *diminish* the work of Christ upon the cross. It's *never* about what we *do*, its always & *only* about what *He's done*.

You see on the one side you have those who are caught up (or are getting caught up) in trying to earn God's favor thru their own efforts. (I do this, don't do that) we call that legalism; religion.

On the other side you have those who God's grace is there to simply excuse the sin in their lives. They are in the place of what we call "abusing" God's grace, thinking that grace is a license for sin. They use grace as a cloak/covering for vice. "Hey man, we're under grace..."

⁵ The New King James Version. (1982). [2 Pe 3:18]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ The New King James Version. (1982). [Heb 4:16]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁷ The New King James Version. (1982). [Re 22:21]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Well then if where sin abounds grace abounds more, should we sin the more that more grace might abound? Paul said, “No way, how shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” God’s grace doesn’t mean that now He’s “soft” on sin. It means that through the death of Christ He’s made provision to forgive us of our sin & accredit us w/His righteousness. The person who persists in sin doesn’t truly understand the nature of grace.

Remember what Paul said to Titus? He said, *“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,”*⁸ So a proper understanding & implementation of grace in our lives will lead us to deny the flesh, to deny ungodliness & worldly lusts & will teach us to live soberly, righteously & godly in the present age.

So be strong in *the grace* that’s in Christ Jesus... Now there’s a catch to being made strong in God’s grace & that’s realizing, recognizing & acknowledging your own absolute weakness... You cannot lead the Christian life on your own, if you’ve ever tried you’ve suffered disappointment after disappointment. You can’t follow a few little gimmicks or guidelines & become a mature man or woman of God (again that’s legalism).

You can’t find strength in your schooling, your training, your experience or expertise, the time will come you will be over matched & under trained... If you want the strength of God’s grace in your life, it will only surface & shine in your weakness. That’s what Paul was seeking to get across when he shared his own story about the thorn, that affliction in his flesh of which he begged God again & again & again to remove it from him... Remember what the Lord said to him? He said, *“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”* (Paul 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.”*⁹ Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus...

Vs 2

To me this is a simple and straightforward definition of discipleship; & the key to establishing godly leadership. Paul says, “The things that you have heard from me...commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

⁸ The New King James Version. (1982). (Tit 2:11–12). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁹ The New King James Version. (1982). (2 Co 12:9–10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

It's called "the ministry of multiplication" it's how God gets His good news from one generation to the next. We read it, we heed it & we deed it, right? We take it in, tend to it, then transfer it.

Paul says, "The things that you have heard from me..." This goes back to holding fast the pattern of sound words. Remember how the book of Acts explains the activities of the early church? *"And they continued steadfastly (resolutely) in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers."*¹⁰

It seems as though in our educational system, there are few sins greater than that of plagiarism. They want you to be "innovative, creative & original"--& that's great—for schoolwork, but not for ministry... Plagiarism is a must for ministry. We could even go so far as to call it a "ministry mandate". We are to take the very things that Paul has taught us, word for word, & pass them on to others.

Even Paul himself says that he wasn't seeking to always come up w/some new angle, some new take, some new revelation. The message was always the same. *The things that you have heard from me among "many" witnesses... "Timothy, you've heard me preach these things again & again & again, to all kinds of people in all kinds of places... now you do the same."* To the Corinthians Paul said, *"And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."*¹¹ It's always the same message. To the Philippians he said, *"For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe."*¹² Leave 2nd Timothy & head to the right making your ways to 2nd Peter (Ch 1:12-15)

You see, the message is always the same. It's J.C. & Him crucified, it's that we're sinners & He's the Savior, that's it's not about what we do, but what He's done, it's not our works, it's His grace.

But here's the deal, it's not enough for us to know it, to read it & heed it. We've got to deed it as well. We've got to transfer it to the next generation. The ministry isn't something get for ourselves & keep to ourselves. We guard God's Word & give out God's Word, we invest the treasure of God's Word into the lives of others who in turn invest it into the lives of others (the ministry of multiplication).

¹⁰ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ac 2:42). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Co 2:1-2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹² *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Php 3:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But check it out, when I'm looking for that person, those people to invest the truth, the treasure of God's Word into, there is a characteristic, a quality in that person or those people that is paramount. There is an attribute that should be present in that person or in those people's lives. Did you catch that?

"The things that you have heard from me...commit these to *faithful* men, who will be able to teach others also." We are to look for *faithfulness*. Now in some translations it seems that Paul is saying that these men also need to be able to teach. & Of course we realize that it's nice to have people who are good teachers. But the fact of the matter is that it doesn't matter how good you can teach if you're not faithful... If there's no faithfulness in a man's life than being a good teacher is worthless.

Another way you could understand the Greek rendering is, "Commit these things to faithful men, such will be competent to teach others also." Timothy needed to find men he could depend on. Listen, I've known good teachers, I just never know when they're going to show up, or if they're ever going to be committed to ministry, or serve... So guess what, they don't teach; Paul says the 1st & foremost quality to look for in a man's life when it comes to ministry is faithfulness.

Once you find that faithful fella, pour into him w/everything you've got. There is no duty that a pastor has that's so holy or secret that he should keep it to himself. We should be looking to spread ministry around to others, teaching them, training them. Now we're not train you in our own theories or philosophies, but simple Apostolic doctrine & example/practice (the things you heard from me.)

Now this is such a good thing for you & for me. Because as I've mentioned before the quality of faithfulness is completely autonomous; you don't have to go to college & earn a degree in faithfulness, you don't have to be smart to be faithful, or popular, you don't have to know the right people, you don't have to be strong, or good-looking (for which I for one am thankful ☺). But faithfulness is w/in the grasp of us all.

It's what we wanna hear isn't it? We began our time today talking about the words we want to hear from the Lord on that day. It wasn't "Well begun" it was "Well done", but I didn't quote the next section of that scripture. But I'm certain that many of you can recite it by heart. Jesus will say on that day, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord." ¹³

So we don't back down, we don't tap out, & we don't quit...

¹³ The New King James Version. (1982). (Mt 25:21). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

We hold fast the pattern of sound words, we abide in Christ, being strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; & we have a mission. We're to *be* faithful & we're to find others who *are* faithful in whom we can invest the precious treasures of the truth of God's Word that they in turn might continue to pass the torch to the succeeding generation. It's the ministry of multiplication...

Prayer Points:

God as always we thank You for Your Word, we're thankful for Your grace & for Your mercy. May we never deviate to the left or to the right, but may we maintain the balance of Your grace in our lives. & May we be *strong* in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Lord, strengthen us w/all might by the power of Your spirit in our inner man. We realize we can't run this course in our own efforts, God we are weak (at best), so may *Your strength* abide upon us, & may *Your will* be done *in* us, & we'll give You praise...

The ministry of multiplication begins w/new birth. Jesus said that unless a man is born again, He shall by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. We've all been born once of the flesh (that is physically), but we're dead in trespasses & sins, we must be "born again" of the Spirit (that is spiritually) made alive in Christ by the Spirit of God. Maybe you've never made that initial step of surrendering your life completely to J.C. I want to invite you to do that today. So if you will hear His voice & turn from your sin, today is the day of salvation from you. Call upon the name of the Lord & He will forgive you of your sin & make you new; not because of anything you do, but because of what He's done in the Person of J.C. in shedding His blood dying upon the cross for you.