

# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, August 2, 2023 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



Standing Strong in Grace  
*2 Timothy 2:1-7*

***<sup>1</sup>You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. <sup>3</sup>You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. <sup>5</sup>And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. <sup>6</sup>The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. <sup>7</sup>Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.*** -2 Timothy 2:1-7 (NKJV)

**This passage (especially verse 1) begs some questions:**

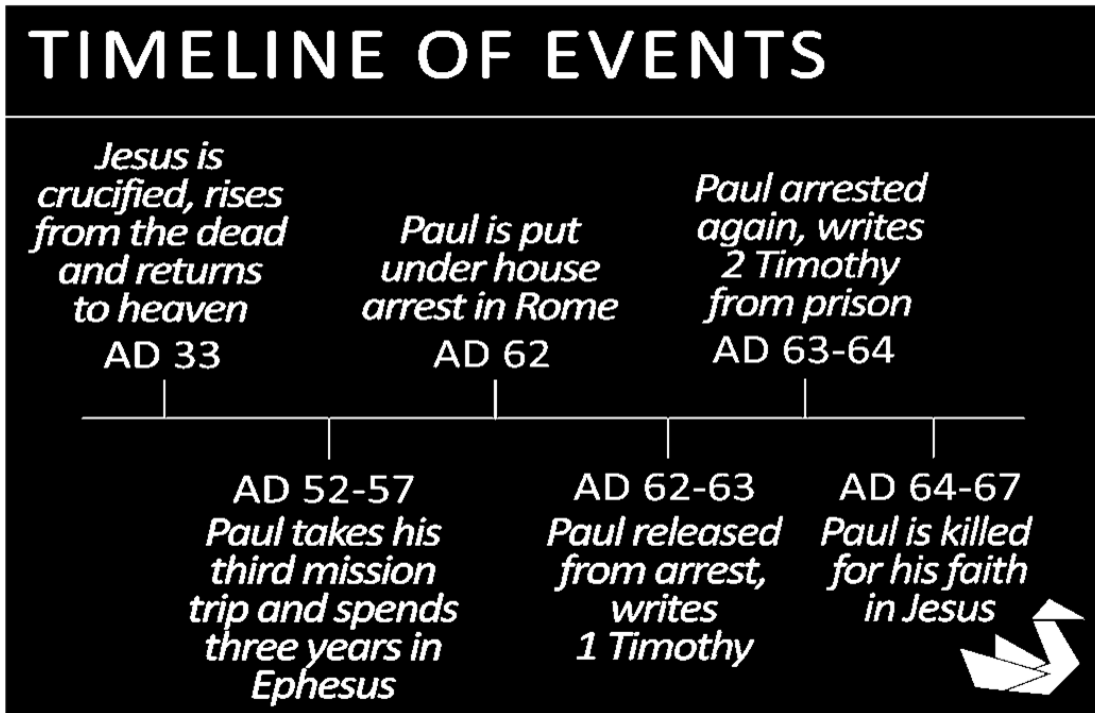
- *What is the “grace” that is in Christ Jesus?*
- *How may I be “strong” in it?*

**2 Timothy Quiz:** *Test your knowledge of 2 Timothy. Answer each of the following to see how much you know of about the New Testament book of 2 Timothy.*

1. Who wrote the book of 2 Timothy? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Who was the book of 2 Timothy written to? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What was the occupation of the recipient of 2 Timothy? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Where was the recipient of 2 Timothy practicing his occupation? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What city was the writer in when he wrote 2 Timothy? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Where in that city was the writer at the time? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Why was the writer of 2 Timothy in this place? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Who was the ruler of that city and the ancient world at the time? \_\_\_\_\_

9. What had this ruler brought against the church and its leaders at the time?  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. The writer of this book wrote many books in the New Testament, and 2 Timothy ranks in what order of those books? \_\_\_\_\_
11. True or False (*circle one*) - The book of 2 Timothy was known as the “last will and testament” of the writer.
12. True or False (*circle one*) – The recipient of 2 Timothy was discouraged because he had been fired from his church.
13. True or False (*circle one*) – The book of 2 Timothy is actually a sequel to the New Testament book of Ephesians by the same author.
14. True or False (*circle one*) – The writer of 2 Timothy was killed as a martyr soon after writing the book.
15. True or False (*circle one*) – 2 Timothy was written to the recipient to ensure that upon the writer's death his wife and children would receive their inheritance.
16. Which best describes the possible state of mind of the recipient according to 2 Timothy? (*multiple choice/check one*)
- a. Strong, confident and assured of his role in the early church
  - b. Young, fearful and insecure about the future
  - c. Joyful and filled with excitement for what lies ahead
  - d. Both a and c
17. The relationship of the writer of 2 Timothy to the recipient of 2 Timothy may best be described by which of the following? (*multiple choice/check one*)
- a. The one who led him to the Lord
  - b. His apprentice in the ministry
  - c. His father figure especially in the faith
  - d. All of the above
18. The faith of the recipient was heavily influenced by and first lived in who according to 2 Timothy? (*multiple choice/check one*)
- a. His father, Onesiphorus (2 Timothy 1:16)
  - b. His dear friends, Phygellus and Hermogenes (2 Timothy 1:15)
  - c. His grandmother, Lois, and mother, Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5)
  - d. His father, Paul (2 Timothy 1:2)
19. Which of the following best describes which type of writing the book of 2 Timothy is? (*multiple choice/check one*)
- a. A Pastoral Epistle (or letter) because the writer was pastoring the recipient who was himself a pastor
  - b. A Circular Letter because the letter was meant to be shared with others
  - c. A Prison Letter because the writer was in prison when he wrote it
  - d. A last will and testament of the writer and example of a legal document of the early church
20. What statement best describes the theme of the book of 2 Timothy?
- a. Exposing false teachers in the church

- [ ] b. Staying faithful to the good fight of faith
- [ ] c. Explaining the doctrines of the Christian faith
- [ ] d. Teaching on warfare against those who persecute the church and Christians



### Some Key Date in Paul's Challenging Life:

- [c. A.D. 52-57]- Paul takes his third mission trip and spends three years in Ephesus
- [c. A.D. 58]—Paul was apparently arrested in Jerusalem
- [c. A.D. 61]—This is the approximate time that Paul arrived in Rome. He had spent these three years in prison, going from one trial to another before different Roman rulers
- [c. A.D. 61–62]—Paul underwent his first Roman imprisonment. We do not have this recorded in the Book of Acts, which breaks off at the very beginning of Paul's first Roman imprisonment
- [c. A.D. 62–63]—Paul was released from prison, and during this period he covered a great deal of territory. It was during this time that he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus from Macedonia
- [c. A.D. 63-64]—Paul was arrested again. Before his death he wrote 2 Timothy
- [c. A.D. 64-67]—Paul was beheaded in Rome.

For some 2 Timothy may nothing more than a continuation where 1 Timothy leaves off. But as you can see, it is so much more. The book is the Apostle Paul's "Swan Song," his warning shot, his encouragement in the face of great opposition and obstacle. It is so practical and relevant for 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians and the church... a needed word for what we face in our day.

## **Some Background for 2 Timothy**

- (1) **2 Timothy is a letter written by the Apostle Paul** - By the time Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, the young pastor had been ministering to the church at Ephesus for four years, and it had been almost that long since he had received his first letter from Paul. Timothy had been a faithful servant to Paul since he had left home with the apostle more than a decade earlier. Since then, Timothy had ministered alongside Paul for the duration of both the second and third missionary journeys, in places such as Troas, Philippi, and Corinth. Timothy was not unfamiliar to the Ephesians when he settled in Ephesus to minister, having served there alongside Paul for a period of close to three years on Paul's third missionary journey. Paul wrote again to this young leader in the church at Ephesus to provide him encouragement and fortitude in the face of difficulties and trials.
- (2) **Paul wrote 2 Timothy from a prison in Rome** - Paul wrote 2 Timothy from a dark and damp Roman prison cell, just before his death in AD 67. The Roman emperor Nero had been slowly descending into madness since his ascent to the throne in AD 54, a process exacerbated by the great fire of Rome in AD 64 that burned half the city. With the residents of Rome in an uproar, Christians became a convenient target for Nero, who used believers as scapegoats for his city's own lack of preparedness. Paul was one of those caught up in this persecution and was beheaded by Roman officials soon after writing this letter.
- (3) **2 Timothy was the last letter Paul wrote (in our New Testament)** - The second letter to Timothy offers a picture of Paul at the end of his ministry, just before his death. Certain personal details in the letter reveal a man settling his accounts and preparing for the inevitable. At the close of the letter, Paul mentioned a significant number of people—some who had wronged him and others who had served faithfully alongside him (2 Timothy 4:9–21). It is as if Paul were giving Timothy a “state of the church” address, updating Timothy on the current state of their acquaintances and friends so that the young pastor could carry on after Paul's departure.
- (4) **The theme of 2 Timothy is to stay faithful to the good fight of faith** - Paul understood that the ministry would only become more difficult for Timothy with the apostle's impending death. (Indeed, at some point after this letter from Paul, Timothy was imprisoned for his faith [Hebrews 13:23]). Paul knew that Timothy's task of keeping the church within the bounds of sound doctrine while encouraging believers to live their lives well for the sake of Christ would be an often thankless and difficult task. Though hardship would come, Paul wanted Timothy to continue in those things he had learned, drawing on the rich heritage of faith that had been passed down to the young pastor, not just from Paul but also from his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5–6; 3:14–15). The most striking feature of Paul's encouragement comes when the aging apostle used a phrase that showed up prominently in his letter to Timothy four years prior. In that earlier letter, Paul exhorted Timothy to “fight the good fight” (1 Timothy 1:18; 6:12). But in this letter, Paul turned that phrase on himself, writing that he had “fought the good fight . . . finished the course . . . [and] kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7). What a great encouragement it must

have been to the young pastor of the church at Ephesus to know that his mentor boldly modeled his perseverance in the faith, even to the point of death.

### **Some Key Characteristics of 2 Timothy:**

- (1) **2 Timothy is Paul's last will and testimony** – In our study we are referring to it as Paul's "Swan Song." The deathbed statement of any individual has an importance which is not attached to other remarks. This is what lends significance to 2 Timothy. It is the final communication of Paul. It has a note of sadness which is not detected in his other epistles. Nevertheless, there is the overtone of triumph... *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,"* written by Paul as his own epitaph (2 Tim. 4:7). Also, because this was his last letter, Paul was very personal. In these four short chapters, there are approximately twenty-five references to individuals.
- (2) **2 Timothy is Paul's warning of coming times of apostasy** - In this little book of 2 Timothy an ominous dark cloud is seen on the horizon. It is the coming apostasy. Today apostasy has broken like a storm, like a Texas tornado, on the world and in the church. What do we mean by apostasy? Webster defines apostasy as "total desertion of the principles of faith." So apostasy is not due to ignorance; it is a heresy. Apostasy is deliberate error. It is intentional departure from the faith. An apostate is one who knows the truths of the gospel and the doctrines of the faith, but has repudiated them.
- (3) **2 Timothy speaks of the ultimate outcome of gospel preaching** - The final fruition will not be the total conversion of mankind, nor will it usher in the Millennium. On the contrary, some will believe and for some there will come about a great turning away, not unlike what we are seeing today... even a watering down, compromise, and total perversion of the gospel. Don't think that what we see going on today has caught God off guard. God wrote about it and warned us about in 2 Timothy.

**Of all the concepts in the Bible, one of the most important for you to understand and apply daily to your life is that of God's grace.** If you do not understand God's grace, you do not understand the gospel, because grace is at the core of the gospel. Paul recognized this himself, as he spoke these words in his farewell to the Ephesian Christians in Acts 20:24, *"<sup>24</sup> But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God."*

### **The Role of Grace for the Christian: (according to Scripture)**

1. **We are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)** – *"<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not of works, lest anyone should boast."*
2. **We are to grow in grace (2 Peter 3:18)** – *"<sup>18</sup> But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen."*
3. **God's grace motivates us to serve Him (1 Corinthians 15:10; 2 Corinthians 9:8)** – *"<sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward 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.” -1 Corinthians 15:10*

*“<sup>8</sup> And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.” -2 Corinthians 9:8*

4. **His grace sustains us in our trials (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)** – *“<sup>9</sup> And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup> 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.”*
5. **When we are needy, we are invited to come to God’s throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace to help in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16)** – *“<sup>16</sup> Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” -Hebrews 4:16*
6. **We are told to fix our hope completely on the grace to be brought to us when Jesus Christ returns (1 Peter 1:13) (The very last verse of the Bible reads (Revelation 22:21), “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.”)** – *“<sup>13</sup> Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” -1 Peter 1:13*

## STANDING IN GRACE

**READ: Romans 5:1-11,** *“<sup>1</sup>Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> and perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup> Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. <sup>6</sup> For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. <sup>10</sup> For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. <sup>11</sup> And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”*

This beautiful passage, written by the Apostle Paul is a wonderful description of grace really is. It explains what grace looks like and does in the life of a Christian/believer.

1. **Where does the Christian (true believer) stand with God?** – (see Romans 5:1-2a) A genuine Christian (true believer) stands in God’s unmerited/undeserved favor... GRACE.

2. **What is grace?** –

(1) **Write your own definition of grace** – Grace is the free, underserved and unearned “just because I love you” gift of God

(2) **Listen as the following verses of Scripture are read and answer the corresponding question** –

- **Ephesians 2:8-9** – *“For by grace you are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast.”*  
 -Who is grace from? God  
 -What is grace? A free gift (Greek word for grace is “charis” or “karis” and can be translated either as the word “grace” or “gift.”
- **Romans 6:23** – *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*  
 -What is the free gift of God or the grace of God? Eternal life (grace = eternal life/salvation)
- **True or False (circle one)** – **Christians are constantly moving in and out of a state of God’s grace.** \*Answer: *False, Christians are “standing in grace and not constantly moving in and out of a state of grace according to Romans 5:1-2a.*

(3) **Understanding grace** – Some good definition of grace for our own understanding.

- **Webster’s Dictionary** – *“Grace is the unmerited divine assistance given man for his regeneration and sanctification.”*
- **Dr. John MacArthur** – *“Grace is God’s unmerited favor by which he saves us and makes us righteous. It is based solely on His sovereign love, which is manifested in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sin. It is not the result of any worthiness on our part. Once we are saved we stand in grace.”*
- **Grace Acrostic** – Each letter of the word “GRACE” stands for a part of the definition and understanding of what grace is.

G - God’s

R - Righteousness

A - At

C - Christ’s

E - Expense

3. **Why grace? Why is grace necessary at all?** – A very apparent answer to that question would be that apart from grace man could not be saved, but a thorough investigation of the question (Why grace?) reveals an even deeper understanding of grace itself and a believers eternal security.
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Because God's grace is such a vital concept, it is not surprising that the enemy of our souls works overtime to subvert God's grace by spreading error and confusion about its true nature. Think of this...

- Every false religion on earth promotes salvation either totally by human works or by some mixture of God's grace with human works. *What is the danger of this?*
- Among God's people who have been saved by His grace, the enemy promotes confusion about how to live the Christian life apart from God's grace. *What do we mean by this? What is the danger of this?*
- Some promote holiness through legalism, which only fosters the most pervasive of sins, namely, pride. *What is the danger of this?*
- Others turn the grace of God into licentiousness, thus denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ (Jude 4). What does this mean? What is the danger of this?
- Still others struggle all their Christian life with doubts, unsure of their salvation because of a lack of understanding of God's grace and what saves them. *What is the danger of this?*

Because God's grace is such an important concept and because I frequently encounter those who do not understand it or live by it, I thought that it would be profitable to devote an entire message to 2 Timothy 2:1, "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." The entire paragraph runs through verse 7. The theme of these verses is fruitful Christian service. Remember...

- Timothy, as we saw in chapter 1, was prone to shrink back from exercising his spiritual gifts because of shyness or fear of controversy.
- Three times Paul exhorts Timothy, either directly or indirectly by example, not to be ashamed of the gospel or of Paul, who was in prison because of the gospel (1:8, 12, 16).

Now, in 2:1-7, he encourages Timothy to exercise his gifts so as to be a fruitful Christian.

- ★ **He is saying three things: To be a fruitful Christian, there is a person that you must be (strong in grace; 2:1); there is a task that you must do (entrust the gospel to faithful men, who will teach others also; 2:2); and, there is a price that you must pay (suffer hardship; 2:3-7).**



★ **3 Things 2 Peter 2:1-7 is Saying to Be a Fruitful Christian:**

- (1) There is a person you must be = **strong in grace**
- (2) There is a task that you must do = **entrust the gospel** to faithful men
- (3) There is a price you must pay = **suffer hardship**

Paul actually uses three examples of those who suffer hardship for a greater goal: (we will get more into these next week...

**3 Examples of Those Who Suffer Hardship for the Gospel:**

- (1) The soldier (2:3, 4)
- (2) The athlete (2:5)
- (3) The farmer (2:7)

Then (2:8-13), he gives three more examples of how present suffering leads to future glory:

**3 Examples of How Present Suffering Leads to Future Glory:**

- (1) Jesus Christ, risen from the dead (2:8)
- (2) Paul, suffering so that God's elect will obtain eternal glory (2:9-10)
- (3) An ancient Christian hymn, which teaches that endurance results in reward (2:11-13)

With that overview, today we will focus on **verse 1** this evening... notice it there, ***"You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."*** Be strong in the grace! Again, what does that mean? And how does that help us when we are going through real challenges and struggles, times of suffering and hardship?

In the context it is saying this... a key concept for this study...

***To be a fruitful Christian, you must be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.***

The "you" is emphatic. The idea is that in contrast to the prevailing mood of those in Asia who are turning away from Paul (1:15), Timothy must stand firm. **John Stott** (*Guard the Gospel* [IVP1973], p. 49) paraphrases, ***"Never mind what other people may be thinking of or saying or doing. Never mind how weak and shy you yourself may feel. As for you, Timothy, be strong!"***

"Therefore" links these verses back to the exhortations and examples of endurance and falling away from chapter 1. Paul's flow of thought is, ***"Therefore, in light of the great gospel message deposited with us and in light of the examples that you have in Onesiphorus and in me, if you want to endure and use your gifts for God's purpose and glory, you must be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."***

Paul addresses Timothy tenderly as "my son" or "my child." This reminds Timothy that he owes his salvation, humanly speaking, to the apostle Paul. It also reminds him that Paul's

exhortations flowed out of his fatherly heart of love. Perhaps also there is the thought that as a child, Timothy was prone to be led astray by the crowd mentality that was turning away from Paul and the gospel of God's grace. To be strong in grace we must stand firm against the enemy's relentless attempts to pollute God's grace with human merit (Gal. 2:4-5). Flowing out of the situation in Ephesus that Paul was seeking to correct and out of Paul's entire ministry, there are four requirements if we want to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus:

#### **4 Requirements to be Strong in the Grace of Christ Jesus:**

- (1) To be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, you must be clear and stand firmly on the gospel of God's grace**
- (2) To be strong in the grace that in in Christ Jesus, you must be clear on your standing in Christ**
- (3) To be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, you must avoid appeals to become godly through legalism**
- (4) To be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, you must be weak in yourself, but strong in His sufficiency**

Let's examine each of these a little deeper...

### **TO BE STRONG IN THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS, YOU MUST BE CLEAR AND STAND FIRMLY ON THE GOSPEL OF GOD'S GRACE**

**GALATIANS:** As you know, Paul was constantly plagued by the Judaizers, who perverted the gospel of God's grace by teaching that to be saved, you must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses (Acts 15:1, 5). He wrote Galatians to correct this error. He said that it is a different gospel, which is not a gospel at all and that all who teach such a false gospel are to be accursed or damned (Gal. 1:6-9).

**1 TIMOTHY:** In 1 Timothy 1, Paul repeatedly emphasizes the gospel.

- He was an apostle **"according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus,"** which is the gospel.
- He reminds Timothy of his own conversion (1:5).
- He exhorts Timothy not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, but to join Paul **"in suffering for the gospel"** (1:8).
- He mentions how Christ **"brought life and immortality to light through the gospel"** (1:10).
- In the context, the deposit which Timothy is to guard is the gospel (1:14).

Thus when Paul exhorts Timothy to **"be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus"** (2:1) in our passage, at least in part Paul was thinking of the message of the gospel of God's grace.

- Every attack on the gospel is an attack on the grace of God.

- Some false religions blatantly teach a system of human works to earn salvation.
- Others are more subtle, mixing God's grace with human works.
- But any teaching that adds works to God's grace diminishes Christ's work on the cross.
- It would mean that His substitutionary death is not sufficient to save us so that we must add something from ourselves to supplement His death.
- But that pollutes the pure stream of God's grace.

**REMEMBER:** Grace is properly defined, as we saw earlier, *God's unmerited favor*.

- It is *not* "the desire and power to do God's will," as Bill Gothard teaches.
- I agree that God gives us the desire and power to do His will (Phil. 2:13), but that is not grace.
- Grace means that God freely gives us eternal life completely apart from anything we are or anything we do.
- In fact, He gives it *in spite of* who we are and what we do (Rom. 5:6-10).
- God's grace stems solely from His character and His sovereign will, not from anything in us.
- God did not bestow His grace on us because He foresaw that we would believe in Him.
- That would take glory from God alone, and share it with us as the cause of our salvation.
- He did not give us His grace because He saw great potential in us or because we are basically good people or because we have done good works in His name.

**QUESTION:** (to ponder) **1 Peter 5:5, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."** You may wonder, "If grace comes to us totally apart from anything that we do, then why does the Bible say that God gives grace to the humble (1 Pet. 5:5)? Doesn't that imply that we must do something to merit or earn His grace?"

- How would you answer that?
- The answer is that by its very nature, grace can only be received by the humble, because the proud person does not see or acknowledge his need for grace.
- The proud person wants to help pay his own way.
- But the humble person recognizes, "I deserve only God's wrath and judgment. If salvation depends on me, I'm doomed."
- So he cries out to God for mercy, and thus God gets all the glory when He saves him.

*Do you think that in some ways "grace" is under attack today? In what ways would say "grace" may be under attack? What is it so important that we stand strong on the "gospel" of/by grace?*

**TO BE STRONG IN THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS, YOU MUST BE CLEAR ON YOUR STANDING IN CHRIST**

Notice **verse 1** again, "<sup>1</sup>You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

The Greek here may be translated either, “be strong *by* the grace that is in Christ Jesus” or “be strong *in* the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” Either concept is biblically valid, since it is by God’s grace that we are strong and we are strong *in* God’s grace. But in the context here, it seems preferable to take it as, “be strong in the sphere of grace that is in Christ Jesus.

- As you may be aware, Paul used the phrase “in Christ” dozens of times.
- It refers to the amazing truth that when you trust Christ as your Savior, God views you as totally identified with Jesus Christ.
- If God accepts Jesus Christ, then He accepts you, because you are in His Son.
- Paul puts it this way in Ephesians 1:3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”
- All of the riches of Christ are ours because we are “in Him”!

**Every once in a while, you read a bizarre story of a person who had a fortune in the bank, but he lived and died like a pauper because he did not draw on his vast resources. Many Christians are like that. Everything that God has to give us is in Christ and we are in Christ. But either through ignorance or unbelief, we do not lay hold of these riches in our daily lives.**

Our text says that there is grace to be found in Christ Jesus. We need that grace daily because we fall short daily.

- Go to God’s Word and by faith lay hold of the promises of God that are yours in Christ.
- If the enemy accuses you because you have sinned, confess your sins to God and lay hold of the grace that is in Christ Jesus.
- If you need victory over some stubborn sin, lay hold of the truth that you died with Christ and that you are raised up with Him, so that sin no longer has dominion (Rom. 6:1-11).

To be strong in grace, you must understand your new position in Christ through God’s abundant grace.

### **TO BE STRONG IN THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS, YOU MUST AVOID APPEALS TO BECOME GODLY THROUGH LEGALISM**

What is “legalism?” How would you define it?

**Legalism** = *The attempt to be holy by keeping certain standards (usually manmade) without dealing with your heart before God.*

The Pharisees in Christ’s day were concerned about ceremonial purity, carefully observing their rules about washing their hands and pots and pans. But they ignored obeying God on the heart level (Mark 7:1-23). They practiced their supposed righteousness to look good to

other men, but they did not live to please God, who examines the heart (Matt. 6:1-18). Legalists always boast in the flesh, but the Christian is to boast in the cross (Gal. 6:13-14).

Paul dealt with this perpetual problem in many places in his letters. But note especially Colossians 2:20-23 (READ: Colossians 2:20-23) *“<sup>20</sup> Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—<sup>21</sup> ‘Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,’<sup>22</sup> which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men?<sup>23</sup> These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.”*

Then (in 3:1-4) he goes on to talk about our new position in Christ, how we have been raised up with Him and must, therefore, keep seeking the things above. In other words, legalism never produces genuine godliness because it only deals with the flesh, not with the heart. Through grace, we have died to the flesh and we are made alive in Him. Living in view of these glorious truths is the key to holiness.

I should also mention that some react against legalism and go into licentiousness, claiming to be under grace. I have heard Bible teachers say that legalism and licentiousness are two opposite extremes, with grace being the balance point in the middle. I have also often heard of grace being portrayed as sloppy, hang-loose living. But that is to misunderstand these terms. In reality, legalism and licentiousness are flip sides of the same coin, because they both appeal to the flesh. The legalist takes pride in his outward observance of certain rules. The licentious person indulges the flesh, saying that it doesn't matter because he is under grace. But both are simply living in accordance with the flesh. Living under grace does not mean that we are free to be sloppy about obeying God's moral commandments.

To live under the true grace of God in Christ always leads to a desire to please God in thought and deed. Note Titus 2:11-12, *“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.”* God's true grace always leads to holiness. Or, as Paul put it in 1 Corinthians 15:10, *“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them [the apostles], yet not I, but the grace of God with me.”* God's grace motivated Paul to labor for the Lord, not to kick back and take it easy.

Thus to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, you must be clear and stand firmly on the gospel of God's grace. You also must be clear on your standing in Christ by grace. You must avoid appeals to become godly through legalism, as well as the other danger of thinking that God's grace allows you to tolerate sin.

## **TO BE STRONG IN THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS, YOU MUST BE WEAK IN YOURSELF, BUT STRONG IN HIS SUFFICIENCY**

*Why is it important for Christians to be “weak in yourself” but “strong in His sufficiency?”*

Implicit in the phrase in our passage (in verse 1) *“be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus”* is also the statement, “Recognize your own weakness so that you rely completely on His strength.”

- To the extent that we think that we are strong, we will not rely on God’s sufficiency and power.
- In 2 Corinthians 1, Paul tells how he was burdened excessively beyond his strength, so that he despaired even of life. He adds (2 Cor. 1:9), *“indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead.”*
- We will only be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus to the extent that we are weak in ourselves and cast ourselves on the all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ.

**READ: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10** *“<sup>7</sup> And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to <sup>[b]</sup>buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. <sup>8</sup> Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. <sup>9</sup> And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup> 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.”*

- The apostle Paul had an amazing revelation of the glory of heaven, which may have happened when he was stoned and left for dead (2 Cor. 12:1-4; Acts 14:19-20).
- But God knew that having such a vision of heaven could easily lead Paul to exalt himself (to brag or feel self-important).
- Thus God sent Paul a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to keep him from exalting himself.
- This may have been a physical ailment or it may refer to the Judaizers, who dogged his every step.
- But whatever it was, Paul cried out to God to remove it.
- In that context, God said to Paul (2 Cor. 12:9), *“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.”*
- Paul goes on to add (12:10), “when I am weak, then I am strong.”

The well-known British preacher, Charles Spurgeon, was riding home after a heavy day’s work. He felt weary and depressed, when suddenly the text came to him, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” It came home to him with the emphasis on two words, “My grace is

sufficient for *thee*.” Spurgeon said, “Doubtless it is. Surely the grace of the infinite God is more than sufficient for such a mere insect as I am,” and he burst out laughing as he thought on how far the supply exceeded all his needs.

To be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, you must be weak in yourself, but strong in Christ’s sufficiency.

## CONCLUSION

As I said, the context of Paul’s exhortation to Timothy is that of being fruitful as a Christian. To be a fruitful Christian, you must be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

### **3 Things Standing Strong in the Grace of Christ Jesus Will Do For You:**

- (1) It will cause you to revel often in His amazing grace that saved you**
- (2) It will sustain you as you serve Him**
- (3) It will flow through you to others and attract them to Christ - Because His grace is supremely attractive**

I pray that we all will be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus!