

“How To Be Spiritually Strong”

" You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything." (2 Timothy 2:1-7, ESV)

❖ Introduction

❖ How are we Strengthened

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

➤ 1) Know that we are weak on our own!

- **We first of all need to take inventory of our weaknesses...**
 - Strong in Theology, weak in compassion
 - Strong in Love, weak in knowledge
 - Strong in passion, weak in wisdom..
 - Through Prayer we can ask God to reveal to us where we fall short.
- On my own I am not strong, but I can be strong by the help of the Triune God
- **Problem : Relying on our own strengths**
 - Pride comes in
 - We think we have the strength on our own to accomplish certain tasks...
 - So we might leave behind
 - ◆ Prayer
 - ◆ The Word
 - ◆ Trust in Jesus
 - ◆ Or help from others...
- **And Satan will swoop right in and defeat us**
 - And we will fall from the lofty perch we thought we were seated.
 - Paul says, “Watch, you who stand lest you fall!”

➤ 2) Strength given by Grace

- **Grace is:** God’s favor on us. For no ability of our own, God has favor on us...Grace on us.
- **It is by Grace we are “saved through faith”**
- **It is through grace that we can even believe – Acts 18**
- **It is through grace we are “justified”** or made right with God
- **It is by grace that we are sustained** in our fellowship as John says “**he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us of all unrighteousness” 1 John 1**
- **It is by grace we are “sanctified”** or in the process of being made Holy.
- The Bible says God **has lavished His Grace on us!**
- **THEREFORE:**
 - We are strengthened by this grace and favor of God.
- **How does this strengthen us?**
 - I would say, that when we see our weaknesses, and realize them as such
 - That we do not measure up on our own.
 - We can quickly run to Christ and remember it is Jesus that sustains us

- It is his work that makes it possible for us to finish the task

❖ Our Role as Teachers

- **and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.**
- More on this Later

❖ Examples for the Spiritually Strong believer

➤ The Soldier (I do not have first hand knowledge of this)

▪ What is the Soldier Like

- He leaves His Family and Friends so very often
- He does Basic Training, He does Push ups and Pulls ups
- He runs. He takes orders, He helps out His Fellow Soldiers.
- He goes where He is told to go...And He is where He is supposed to be at the appropriate time.
- A Good soldier is never late....He is trustworthy
- He wears the proper clothing...
 - ◆ He has on His boots
 - ◆ His pants
 - ◆ His bullet proof vest
 - ◆ His helmet
 - ◆ Many other things...
 - ◆ And He is never without His weapon

▪ His Focus:

- It is not on civilian things.
- He is going without the everyday things that the common people have
- He is focused on the task at hand.
- He is not worried about anything that does not have to do with His mission

➤ The Athlete (Don't use self as example in sermon)

- Something More Familiar to Me

▪ What is the Athlete Like (The good athlete)

- The good athlete is very dedicated
- Whatever sport He plays He prepares Himself to be the best.

▪ In Basketball and Football.

- In basketball the point guard or shooting guard.
 - ◆ His job was to handle the basketball many time...
 - ◆ And then would move into a spot to shoot the basketball.
- In Football lets look at the Tailback and Middle Linebacker
 - ◆ So on offense he runs the ball or blocks
 - ◆ On defense he just Hits people as Hard as he can
- The First thing You have to do is learn the rules
- And then play by them
- **Then came practice and preparation**
 - ◆ You would shoot a basketball hundreds of times on most days.
 - ◆ As often as you could you would be practicing
- **For Football**

- ◆ You would practice learning the plays with your team.
- ◆ And you would lift weights everyday.
- ◆ Lift for your legs, shoulders, chest, arms and back.
- ◆ You would run to condition yourself
- **Would have to be very dedicated....**
- **All the Good athletes of our day take the Time and sacrifice to be the best at what they do**

➤ The Farmer

- **To be a good farmer you must be hard working**
 - Now Paul is not talking about the person that only plants a little garden.
 - No offense to those of us that may do that....
 - As a matter of fact...those of you in here that plant gardens, understand on a smaller scale what Paul is talking about.
- This is the Farmer **that did this for His lively hood**, and that of His family
- You are up before everyone else.
- You sweat from sun up until sun down.
- You toil when preparing the ground
- You toil when planting
- You toil as it grows to keep it free from weeds...
- You toil to fertilize the crops
- And He toils to bring in the harvest.

➤ PAUL's USE:

- He uses these three examples to give us a starting point into how we are to toil as Christians.

❖ 6 Marks of the Spiritually Strong

- **REMEMBER: If we are insufficient in these areas, We must trust in the Grace of Christ for our strength!**
 - Remember all the things we spoke of.

➤ 1) Share in Suffering

- **Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus**
- **What does this Mean?**
 - **"Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it" (2 Timothy 3:12-14, ESV)**
 - Christ's sufferings were great, and of a magnitude that can never be known to man.
 - Paul suffered greatly (**expound**)
 - The apostles were joyous that they could suffer.
- **How do you strengthen this area**
 - **Live a Holy Life!**
 - ◆ Do what it takes to be like Christ, and you will suffer here on this earth.
 - ◆ Deny yourself, your own desires, to be pleasing to Him...
 - And there will be suffering...
 - And suffering is a great thing, if done for Christ!

➤ **2) Do not get Entangled**

- **4 No soldier in active service gets entangled in civilian pursuits,**
- **What does this Mean?**
 - This entanglement is like that of being caught in a net.
 - **It means.....To weave together....**
 - **And sin does this does it not?**
 - ◆ Is not sin a deadly spider's web, weaved to trap us in its hold
 - **PAUL BUNYAN in Pilgrim's Progress**
 - ◆ **He writes of the Pilgrimage of Christian**
 - ◆ **And as Christian is on the Path to the celestial City, He and His companion Hopeful come upon a fork in the road.**
 - They did not know which way to go.
 - He forgot the map he was carrying with him
 - ◆ **But along came a man known as a Flatterer**
 - And He used flatteries with them
 - And told them to follow him on this trail, and that it would lead to the City.
 - ◆ **But as they went along they saw it was leading away from the city.**
 - So upon noticing this they stopped, but by then it was too late.
 - For the flatterer had led them under a net that came upon them and they could not escape it on their own.
 - ◆ **They were upset with themselves for listening to His flatteries**
 - But they were even more upset because they had a map.
 - So if they would have just used it, they would have know the correct path to take.
 - **We also have a map**
 - ◆ And it is the word of God.
 - ◆ And it gives us great direction in our life
 - ◆ But we must use it.
 - ◆ When we do not, and we listen to others, those that say nice things and build us up falsely
 - ◆ Or when we allow things to get in the way of the path we are supposed to be on.
 - **We will become entangled.**
- **What does this entanglement mean?**
 - We get involved in so many things, that may seem innocent, but they take us off course
 - ◆ were going along the road, someone said to Him, "I will follow You wherever You go." And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Permit me first to go and bury my father." But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God." And another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home." But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:57-62)
 - ◆ Expound – things quickly get in the way
 - **Also, the temptations of this world entangle us!**
 - ◆ In the parable of the soils, Jesus identifies false believers whose non-saving faith is short-lived by saying "the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful" (Matt. 13:22).
 - ◆ **Expound**

- This is speaking of non believers
 - Also the same entanglements are out there for the believer
 - **How do you strengthen this area?**
 - 1 Remember the map
 - 2 Remember the task.
 - 3 Remember that the cares and riches of this world are of no value
 - 4 Remember **“what does it profit a man if he gain the whole world yet loses his soul”**
 - **5 Remember that the pleasures of sin last for a season**
 - ◆ And they always leave us wanting...
 - ◆ They are empty of worth...
 - **I like to think of them in terms of nutrition.**
 - I love junk food...and I could eat it all day long...
 - But they are empty calories, they offer me very little nutritional value.
 - But vegetables, and whole wheat, and fruit, and healthy meats
 - Give my body the vitamins and nutrients it needs to perform the way it should.
 - **6 Deny ourselves:**
 - ◆ **“deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow [Christ]” (Matt. 16:24).**
- **3) Aim to Please Christ**
 - **4 since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.**
- **What does this Mean?**
 - **Aim is to Please**
 - ◆ The word brings with it the idea of :
 - Exciting an emotion
 - *To accommodate one’s self to the interests of someone else.*
 - **To Please:**
 - ◆ It means to bring pleasure to someone else.
 - ◆ This is what Herodias’ daughter did when she danced for Herod....She PLEASED him
 - **It is what Paul meant by saying...."but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts." (1 Thessalonians 2:4)**
 - **Illustration:**
 - ◆ **We all understand what it means to be pleasing or to please someone.**
 - It is very pleasing to us when our children or those close to us do things that make us proud...
 - ◆ **So the context here is doing things we know will make our Master proud.**
 - And our Master is Jesus Christ.
 - He is who we are to be serving with our whole Being.
 - **"For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ." (Galatians 1:10, ESV)**
 - **We are given MOTIVATION to Please Him.**
 - ◆ I like motivation...it helps get me going...Looking to the future and what I have to look forward to in any event I may be taking part in life....gives me motivation...
 - ◆ Winning motivated us in sports or games
 - ◆ Learning motivates us in school
 - ◆ Being in shape motivates us to eat right and exercise

- Paul says ""So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to **please him**. For we must **all appear before the judgment seat of Christ**, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." (2 Corinthians 5:9-10, ESV)
 - ◆ Appearing before Christ is certainly a great motivational tool for me
 - ◆ To know I will stand before the one who is Holy and has given Himself for me...is highly motivating...

▪ **How do you strengthen this area**

- **When a business wants to find out what they have in the store, what they may be short of, or what they have too much of...**
 - ◆ They will count inventory
- **Look at yourself and your life!**
- **Take a spiritual inventory of yourself**
 - ◆ You know the things that are pleasing to Jesus....
 - ◆ Are you doing them or not....?
- **First thing is: Paul says: Rom 8:8 those who are in the flesh can not please God**
 - ◆ A person must be saved, having a relationship with Jesus to be pleasing
 - ◆ And those who are Christians can't be feeding their flesh, by SIN.
- **Are you: Memorizing the Scriptures and taking them to heart**
 - ◆ Are you studying them
 - ◆ In prayer
 - ◆ Serving others
 - ◆ Encouraging others
 - ◆ Witnessing to the Lost... Helping the gospel spread across the world
 - ◆ Helping to grow those that are younger in the faith
- **Remember the Motivation: We will stand before Christ!**

➤ **4) Remember Who Enlisted you to Service**

- **4 since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.**
- **What does this Mean?**
 - **Jesus Christ....Remember Jesus Christ**
 - **Remember His**
 - ◆ sufferings
 - ◆ His devotion
 - ◆ His Holiness
 - ◆ His compassion
 - Came to seek the lost, the dying
 - **Enlisted:**
 - ◆ Who chose you to be a soldier, is what this means.
 - ◆ And we know that Jesus Himself says "**You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you**"
 - ◆ And it is a great HONOR
 - "**Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel,**" (2 Timothy 2:8, ESV)
 - **Hebrews 12:2-3** ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

- **How do you strengthen this area**
- I think mainly by starting every day by allowing your mind to run through all the ways in which Christ is precious to you!
- Whatever it takes to do this, do it.
- When a loved one dies
 - ◆ We always think back fondly on that person...we remember them often.
 - ◆ So we must bring Him to remembrance daily – Because Jesus is Alive!

➤ **5) Compete According to the Rules (Do not become disqualified)**

- **5 An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.**
- **What does this Mean?**
 - **Competes means: to struggle, wrestle, and contend....**
 - ◆ It is the idea of having great determination in what you are doing.
 - **Our competition is in :**
 - ◆ The Spiritual Realm...It is to grow stronger in Spirit...
 - ◆ 6 Marks to becoming spiritually strong....
 - **According to the rules. AS CHRISTIANS**
 - ◆ We must be truly born again;
 - ◆ we must be faithful in study and obedience of God's Word,
 - ◆ in self-denial,
 - ◆ and in prayer;
 - ◆ and we must live according to Christ's divine standards of discipleship.
 - **WE ARE TO BE DISCIPLINED**
 - ◆ **"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:24–27).**
 - ◆ Paul is saying He does things with a PURPOSE
- **How do you strengthen this area**
 - **Paul's words are the most helpful**
 - ◆ In 1 Cor.
 - ◆ He disciplines Himself.
 - ◆ He has a purpose
 - He has a system I guess we could say
 - ◆ This is a day by day job in which we get stronger as the years go by
 - **If you need to sit down and write out a detailed list of what it will take for you to compete in the spiritual realm...**
 - ◆ Do it....
 - ◆ And then follow it.

➤ **6) Work Hard**

- **6 It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.**
- **What does this Mean?**
 - ***It means to toil intensely, to sweat and strain to the point of exhaustion if necessary.***

- We have already spoken of the farmer and His Hard work.
- None of the Previous 5 steps will help us if we are lazy about them
 - ◆ If we do not put them into practice and work at growing Spiritually Stronger...we will be weak.
- **So MANY CHRISTIANS:**
 - ◆ They complain about their weaknesses and how little they know.
 - ◆ They say, Oh I could never do something like that...
- **BECAUSE THE DO NOT WORK.**
 - ◆ How much more could you be doing for God right now if you had put in the effort to do it.
 - ◆ It is sad that so many Christians are such hard workers for earthly things.
 - They toil on their farms
 - In their businesses
 - At their golf
 - Or other activities...
- **But they fail to strengthen their Spirituality.**
 - ◆ That is a great shame
- **Remember: This is GRUNT WORK**
 - ◆ It is not what you will be rewarded for by the praise of others...
 - ◆ These are things that people never see.
- **The Farmer does so much by Himself, that no one sees**
 - ◆ And it is the same of the Christian.
 - ◆ **“each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. If any man’s work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward” (1 Cor. 3:13–14).**
- **How do you strengthen this area**
 - Does anything else need to be said other than
 - ◆ **WORK HARD!**

❖ Remember the Grace!

- **We cannot do any of this without the Help of Jesus...**
 - So remember this
 - Fall down before God and beg for his strength in your weaknesses.

❖ Our Role as Teachers

- **and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.**
- **All Christians are to be teachers in some capacity**
 - Obviously we cannot teach if we have not been taught
 - We cannot teach if we have not listened
 - We cannot teach if we do not study
 - And we cannot teach if we are un-teachable people.
- **Expound on the importance of being taught from:**
 - The Word
 - Prayer
 - Relying on The Holy Spirit
- **Timothy was supposed to:**
 - Take what He heard and learned from Paul and teach others.

- Paul and the other apostles had learned from Jesus
- And the apostles taught others...

➤ **It is Written in the Bible**

- The believers **devoted themselves daily to the apostle's teachings**
- Before Jesus ascended He told us to go out...
 - **Make disciples**
 - **Teach them all that he had commanded.**
- **John in 1 John tells us that "which we have seen and heard we declare unto you"**

➤ **SO, Be teachers**

- **Learn from someone...**
 - We can all learn from each other...no matter how young or old the teacher may be.
 - My son teaches me little things...and I assume He will teach me many things as the years go on.
- **Find a Person and mentor them:**
 - EXPOUND
 - You must invest yourself in others.

❖ **Think it Over**

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

➤ **I Like this:**

- He wants the reader to think it over!
- That is what God is telling you to do today...
- Will you ignore Him, and go home and forget these things...

❖ **INVITATION.**