

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

“*BE STRONG IN THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS*”

By Roger D. Campbell

When Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, the apostle knew that his earthly sojourn would soon come to an end (2 Tim. 4:6-8). He wanted Timothy, his dear fellow-servant in the Lord, to continue to be faithful in doing the Lord’s work, even after Paul’s departure.

Paul appealed to Timothy not to be ashamed of the Gospel which Paul proclaimed, nor his commitment to it and the Lord (2 Tim. 1:8). He exhorted him to hold fast to the pattern of “*sound words*” that he had heard from Paul (1:13), to be aware of those who turn away from the Lord’s Cause (1:15), and to appreciate those who have the heart of a servant (1:16-18).

In view of those matters, Paul’s next charge is, “*Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*” (2:1). That is a straightforward appeal, which if accepted and applied properly, would affect Timothy every single day for the rest of his life. Yes, it is that important.

In the statement, “*be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus,*” what do we see?

First, there is the Lord’s call to be strong. God does not want His children to be weak, ashamed, fearful, reluctant, or intimidated. “*Strong*” is the word! It ought to be the goal of every single servant of God to be strong for Him. Our Lord does not want to hear “excuses.” There are no “exemptions” to His expectation for us to be strong. There are no “free passes” granted to those who do not take the call to “*be strong*” seriously. Every member of the church in Corinth was charged to “*be strong*” (1 Cor. 16:13).

Don’t let us think that Timothy was the only one called upon to be a strong servant. Granted, we all have different levels of strength, and, yes, God’s people should strive to “*support the weak*” (1 Thess. 5:14); but, the goal for ourselves and others is not to remain weak, but to become strong and stay strong.

A second thing we notice in the charge of 2 Timothy 2:1 is where grace is available. God’s grace, which is His favor (lovingkindness, good will), is found in His Son and no other place. That is correct: the Bible says “*be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*” By God’s grace, we are justified through the redemption that is in the Christ (Rom. 3:24). All spiritual blessings, including the forgiveness of sins, are available by the good favor of God which is found only in Jesus (Eph. 1:3,7). No one can be strong in serving the Lord if he/she is not in the Lord Jesus, because that is the only location where grace can be obtained.

When we consider the exhortation to “*be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus,*” we also see the realm in which Timothy needed to be strong. It is not uncommon for us to describe a person or some aspect of his life as being “strong.” A child might possess a “strong” will. One person has a “strong” body due to the way he exercises. Another person has a “strong” personality. A student may be described as one who is “strong” in the sciences.

What was God’s desire for Timothy? It was for him to be strong in the grace–Jesus connection; that is, be strong in the spiritual realm. Do you recall what the Bible says about Christians putting on the whole armor of God? That section of scripture begins with these words: “*...Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*” (Eph. 6:10). If you and I are going to be strong “*for*” the Lord, then we need to be strong “*in*” Him: strong in His grace, strong in His word, and strong in our faith (like Abraham was, Rom. 4:20). We must not trust in our material blessings, educational or occupational accomplishments, genetic ancestry, or even other humans. Let us set our hearts to be strong in our Lord, His grace, and His way.

What else? Consider the reasons Timothy needed to be strong. Timothy needed to be strong because his work was so demanding: demanding on his time, demanding on his attitude, demanding on his commitment, and demanding on his voice. There was much work to do and being successful in it left no room for weakness. After Paul's appeal for Timothy to be strong, what instructions followed? In what activities would Timothy be involved?

In Timothy's efforts to help other Christians become effective teachers, he needed to commit what he had learned from Paul to faithful saints (2 Tim. 2:2). Such training required strength and persistence on Timothy's part. In addition, Timothy would face hardships in his personal life and in his efforts to proclaim the word of God. Paul called on him to endure such hardships (2:3). That would require spiritual stamina.

Reading further, Timothy was to be *"a good soldier of Jesus Christ"* (2 Tim. 2:3). The spiritual battles in which he would be engaged with the devil's servants would require notable strength.

The appeal to Timothy to be strong in the grace that is in the Lord Jesus was not just a philosophy. It was real, everyday life. May we learn to trust in the Lord, striving always to walk with Him and for Him. ■

"MORE LOVE TO THEE, O CHRIST"

By Richie Thetford

In 2 Corinthians 5:14, the inspired apostle Paul wrote *"For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died."* In 1856 Elizabeth Prentiss wrote the words *"More Love to Thee, O Christ"* during a period of illness, but kept them to herself. When she showed them to her husband 13 years later, he encouraged her to publish them. Howard Doane saw the resulting pamphlet, and wrote music for the words which has become a song that we sing in the church today.

What stands out to me are the words "more love" in the song title. There are various areas in which we should exhibit more love as we live our lives in service to God every day. Let's look at several ways in which we should show more love: We should have more love for God as we grow as a child of His daily. Loving God fully and completely! *"Jesus said to him, 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND'"* (Matt. 22:37). Jesus goes on to say, *"And the second is like it: 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF'"* (Matt. 22:39). What a wonderful world this would be if everyone would love their neighbor as yourself. We need to have more love for the truth, understanding that the *"truth"* given to us by God must be followed. *"but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—"* (Eph. 4:15).

Jesus taught His disciples how they were to love their fellow man. Jesus commands, shows by example, and then his disciples show what love is by their love for others. *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"* (Jn. 13:34-35). In addition, we need to show more love for Jesus our Lord and for His appearing. *"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him"* (Jas. 1:12). *"Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing"* (2 Tim. 4:8).

We are made in the very image of God and He instructs us how we should live and show our love for Him and others. May God help all of us have much more love in all aspects of our life. Elizabeth Prentiss penned a beautiful song *"More Love to Thee, O Christ!"* When I sing that song, I am reminded that Christ gave His all for me and as a result I should be willing to give more love to Him. May God continue to bless us as we strive to do all we can to be pleasing to Him every day! ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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