

Strong in Grace

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[0:00] 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 1. Paul is talking to Timothy.

! Thou therefore my son be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Paul tells Timothy to be strong, to be invigorated by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

That's the sense of it. There's an invigoration, there's an enlivening from His grace. And I want to talk along the theme of grace and we're going to look at a few verses.

I'm told there's over 150 verses in the Bible about grace. Now we're only going to cover half of them this morning. No, not really. But we would take too long to cover.

[1:04] We can only just scratch the surface. But I want to cover this theme of grace, this important theme. God's grace, it's extravagant. It's transforming grace. It's amazing grace as the song goes.

The grace that is in Christ Jesus. That is the grace that we're talking about. The Bible is a story of God's grace. It's God's grace from Genesis to Revelation.

Every letter that Paul wrote, I'm told apart from Hebrews, starts and ends with grace. Grace is there from beginning to end. From each of Paul's letters.

And it's one of the keys to understanding God's working, God's power, God's touching of humanity.

Grace. What does it mean? Someone's described it as the giving of that which we do not deserve.

Grace is the giving of that which we do not deserve. And the Lord Jesus Himself is our model of grace. As we know it says we should walk in His footsteps, in His footprints.

[2:09] He is full of grace and truth. John 1.14 John 1.14 It says that the Word was with God.

The Word was God. It says the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. And John 1.14 And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

It's got the sense of overflowing with grace. The Lord Jesus was overflowing with grace. Full and overflowing. He couldn't keep it to Himself. And He is our model.

He is your model if you're a Christian this morning. The Lord Jesus is your model. And we want to be like Him, don't we? To be like Him. And one day we will be like Him.

Firstly, something we can know. Grace is something we can know. You can know the grace of God.

[3:11] It's been variously divine grace, someone said. It's expressed in God's action in Jesus Christ, His divine intervention. He was full of grace and truth.

What is the activity of Christ? He came to save us. To sanctify us. To secure us. His work of grace is evident in all of those aspects. His saving is sanctifying, His securing.

And grace is something you can know. You can know that you know the grace of God. There's a story told of an unbeliever.

And a believer was sat in a train. And the Christian was trying to witness to this man about how God saved somebody.

And this man, he was thinking. The unbeliever was thinking. He had his mind all caught up in, oh, it's about character. It's about good works. These are the things that saved by living a good life.

[4:10] By doing good works. By trying really hard. That is how a person can be saved. But no, the Christian tried to explain to him.

And then as the conductor came along, he said, tickets please. Tickets please. And everybody was fishing around trying to find, where's the ticket? Quick. Look. Oh, thank goodness.

I found it. I found it. I got the ticket. And they gave it to the conductor. I'm like, have you ever been on a train? And you're bombing around trying to find that ticket? Yeah. Where did I put that ticket?

And the man just had to show his ticket.

And the Christian explained to the unbeliever, salvation is like that. God's given you a ticket. Grace is his ticket. And you don't have to buy it.

You don't have to earn it. God has given it to you. Grace comes from his giving of that ticket, as it were, salvation. He has given you the ticket. You don't have to earn it or work for it.

[5:09] It's God's ticket, so to speak. It's his grace. It's his doing. His undertaking. And the Gospel itself is called, in Acts 20, 24, it's called the Gospel of the Grace of God.

The Gospel is the Grace of God. It's his saving power. It's God's operation. It's God's working. God's life-changing power. And Grace is the shepherd seeking the lost sheep.

Grace. Grace. We can't fathom it, can we? Of the shepherd seeking the lost sheep. You know, sometimes we think about that we're inviting Jesus into our heart and it's our work.

But really and truly, we're just surrendering to the work that he has done. Amen. So he's seeking after us that shepherd who goes searching high and low and everywhere and finds us stuck in that bramble bush or that danger or peril.

And he comes as the shepherd and rescues us. That is grace. Grace. Someone said, love that goes upward is worship. Love that goes outward is affection.

[6:14] Love that stoops is grace. Love that stoops is God's grace to us. He bends down from glory to earth and he reaches to the gutter most, to the uttermost to us to save us.

Grace. Just fathom that concept this morning. Grace. It's overwhelming. It's so huge. It's through the Old and New Testament. Grace.

Grace. Grace. You know, there's a song in our book, grace that is greater than all our sin. Grace. Turn to Romans 5 if you'd like to follow me there.

Grace is God's love, his affection, his acceptance, freely, faithfully and unconditionally given to us, his wayward children. He gives it freely, faithfully and unconditionally.

Grace. No wonder John Newton called it amazing grace. Amazing grace that saved a wretch like me. No matter how wretched you are today.

[7:24] The more wretched, the more gracious God can be to you. Amen. As Paul said, the greatest of sinners he called himself. Where grace abounds God, God's, sorry where sin abounds.

God's grace can so much more abound as it says. Romans 5 20 it says, moreover the law entered that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

Yeah. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. Have you experienced that? Amen. Amen.

That wherever you've gone in your wretched wayward state that God's grace was so much more.

It's got the sense of super exceeding. It's got the sense of going beyond and above and exceeding. Grace has exceeded sin. Grace has exceeded our sin.

[8:30] It's an amazing thought, isn't it? And then it goes on, that second verse there, 21, that as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life.

So that that grace is something that is going to reign in you. It's going to rule. It's going to control your life. It's going to rule as king. And as a Christian you can know that grace. That grace that rules as king.

That controls your life in a wonderful way. In a beautiful way. A theologian called Packer said, In the New Testament, grace is a word of central importance.

The key word. The key word, in fact, of Christianity is grace. The thought of grace is the key that unlocks the New Testament. And it's the only key that does so.

However well we may know the New Testament, we can't understand its meaning until we know something of what grace is. Martin Luther said this, he said, These two words, grace and peace, do contain in them the whole sum of Christianity.

[9:41] Grace and peace. Grace, God's grace gives us peace, doesn't it? We have peace because of his grace. Grace is something you can know. You can know that personally, individually, each one of you today can know that grace.

The grace that makes us new, brand new, born again. And the grace that's at work all through our journey of faith. In the Greek, the word grace is related to the word gift.

God's grace is given. Grace is given. It's not merited. It's not earned. It's not deserved. As that familiar passage goes, that it's not of works lest any man should boast. It's the grace of God. For by grace are ye saved through faith. Faith, and that not of yourself. It is the gift of God. It's not of works lest any man should boast.

And you can know it. It goes on there in that context that Ephesians 2, that you are his workmanship in Christ Jesus. You could put it, you are his achievement.

[10:41] I read that as a way of describing that word workmanship. You are his achievement. So don't big note yourself and think you're some fond and dandy Christian. You are his achievement.

His achievement. He has done it all for you. Everything comes from him. Christ in you. He has made unto you wisdom, righteousness, holiness. He is everything.

Everything that is good about me is Christ. Christ in you. And you can know it. You are his achievement in Christ Jesus. His workmanship in Christ Jesus.

You can know it. Have you received it? Do you know it today? Do you know the grace of God? You can come to church as we said earlier about, you can spend a lifetime in church and you can hear a sermon every day of your life and still miss it.

If you don't know grace, if you don't know the grace personally, have you received it? Grace. It's grace that brings forgiveness. It's grace that takes our guilt.

[11:41] It's grace that gives us freedom. It's grace that gives us victory. It's something you can know. Secondly, it's something that you can grow. Once you've received it, grace is something that's a happening thing.

It's not a static thing. It's a living, breathing dynamic. You can grow in grace. It tells you there in 2 Peter 3 verse 18. To grow in grace.

2 Peter 3 verse 18. It's active. It's dynamic. It's an ongoing growing process. As a Christian, the Christian life is an expanding thing.

It's a maturing thing. It's an increasing thing. Day by day. As we get closer and closer to that perfect day. The Christian life is a growing dynamic.

And at God's throne it says there's grace there too for you. And you can find grace to help. It's got the sense of be finding grace to help. It's present tense.

[12:40] You can be finding that grace to help. In that time of need. Whatever may come across your pathway. That's Hebrews 4 verse 16. Grace is a place. A throne you can come to.

Grace is a relationship that you can grow in. The very last verse of the Bible says that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. The grace of Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Romans 6 verse 14 it says the apostle talks about being under grace. Under grace. It says that we live under grace.

Or in a relationship of grace with God. It's His love for us. It never ceases. It's never diminished. God loves us. And He works with us. It says in Romans 6 verse 2 that sin shall not have dominion over you.

It's not going to have demastery over you. We're not going to be governed by sin. But governed by grace. Take a look at Romans 6 later. It talks about reigning. It talks about ruling. It talks about dominion.

[13:42] Grace can rule over your life instead of sin having domination over your life. Take a look at that later. Romans 6. And Romans 8 it says, For I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Grace. Grace. It's with you. It's with you. It's with you. It's with you. It shouldn't be something that you can take or leave. It's with you. And nothing can separate you from that grace, from that love of God.

Paul's convinced of it. He's sure of it. He's persuaded, he says, that nothing can separate the Christian from the love of God. Nothing can cut us off from God's affection, from God's love for us.

It's, as someone described it, God's love is relentless. It's relentless. He chases after us. He chases after us like that shepherd. He chases after us and he won't let go of us.

He can't help but love you. Despite you sometimes as we know. Despite me. Grace is something that you can know.

[14:56] You can know that you're saved this morning. Why? Because of the grace. Because of the grace of God. As you in simple faith, trust the grace.

You can know grace. You can grow in grace. Don't be a stagnant, sterile, stuck in the mud Christian. Be an ongoing, moving, shaking, breathing, activated Christian.

Be equipped, be energized by the Spirit of God. Be a growing in grace Christian. It's something you can grow.

And lastly, it's something you can show. Grace is something you don't want to keep to yourself. Grace is something you want to show. You want to be evident in your life that grace is at work in your life.

Grace is going to be something that's stamped upon your personality. It's like a family likeness. It's like a family likeness. You know? I look at my son sometimes.

[15:59] And sometimes when I see them, they've got a bit of fuzz on their faces now. And I think, when I look at them, sometimes I think I'm looking at myself in the mirror. Like about 20 years ago. And they still have black hair.

You know? You see the family likeness there. Amen? And brothers and sisters, I like to think that when you look in the mirror, when Brother Don looks in the mirror or Brother Ian or Joshua, that you're looking in that mirror and you can see Jesus in the mirror.

Amen? Amen? And you ladies too. Not that Jesus is a female, but you've got that family likeness. Amen, Mandy? That you've got that. You look like Jesus because you've got his love.

You've got his grace. You've got his spirit. You've got his nature. There's a family likeness there.

And it's something that you can show. That people will see that you've been with Jesus. And he'll be stamped upon your personality, upon your likeness.

And it shows who you belong to. Grace shows who you belong to. And as God's people, we're called to be people of grace. Acts 4.33 it says that great grace was upon them all.

[17:10] Great grace was upon them all. Acts 4.33 talks about great power. Now some churches focus on all the power things, but they miss out. In the same verse, it says great power and it also says great grace.

Great grace. You know, that's probably more powerful than any signs and wonders. Is that God's people will have some grace. Amen. Glory. You know, I know many Christians and they're a bit lacking in the department of grace.

Me too. Oftentimes. Great grace was upon them all. Wouldn't that be great if that was a hallmark of our church? That we would have great grace upon us all.

There was a spirit of grace about the Acts church in Acts 4.33. There was abundant grace and it was on all of them. The question for you and I today, this morning, do you show grace?

Do we show grace? Are we a people that radiate grace? Are we a community of grace? We can always fail in that department, can't we?

[18:11] That we don't show grace. I know there's an occasion when people speak disparagingly of me, believe it or not. Sometimes people don't speak well of me.

But I can still extend grace to them. Amen. And I have done. And I will do. God helping me. To show grace to those that we can't naturally find the graciousness to love and to care about and to consider that God will help us to have grace.

Like God had grace to us. Amen. It's interesting. There's a verse in the Bible that says, Speak evil of no man. Amen. Now, we can all find something to whinge about.

Especially if it's in somebody else. But it's interesting, isn't it? Speak evil of no man. Not one. We shouldn't find any fault in another. God helping us.

It's interesting that evil speaking is listed with things like adultery. In the list of sins. So evil speaking is a dangerous thing.

[19:16] It's a damaging thing and it's an ungodly thing. Don't speak evil of anyone. Don't speak evil of anyone. I know. I need to learn that too. But grace.

Isn't that grace? Isn't that grace to have that spirit that makes us that kind of faith that makes Christianity unique is grace. Other religions don't have that.

Is our church a place of grace? Is there an atmosphere of grace about how we interact and care for one another and exhort one another? Are we reflecting His grace to other people in our workplace, in our out of church life?

Where's your grace gone? Where's your grace gone? Where's your grace gone? Brother, sister, learn grace. People are watching you as a Christian. And God's blessings flow through grace, not our performance.

Do you need a recharge of grace? Yes. Wouldn't it be good to be able to just plug in and just turn up the grace meter in our lives to increase that level of grace?

[20:20] Let's plug in. Amen. Let's plug into the power source and get some more grace. Amen. The word of His grace, the gospel of His grace. Grace. The merciful activity of God towards undeserving people like you and I.

That gives us the desire, the power, the resources to live life as He has designed. Grace. It empowers us. It lifts us. It sustains us. It carries us.

It helps us to live with victory. One author wrote about grace like this. He said, Holiness is a gift of God's grace as much as our salvation experience is.

To live by grace is to live solely by the merit of Jesus Christ. To live by grace is to base my entire relationship with God, including my acceptance and standing with Him, on my union with Christ. To recognize that I in myself bring nothing of worth to my relationship with God, because even my righteous acts are like filthy rags in His sight.

[21:27] Even my best works are stained with mixed motives and imperfect performance. I never truly loved God with all my heart. I never truly loved my neighbour with the degree or consistency with which I love myself.

Grace. Grace. We need to grow in it. We need to grow in it. We need to grow in it. Barnabas visited the Antioch church and Barnabas, it says of him in Acts 11 verse 23, when he saw the church at Antioch, Acts 11 verse 23, He saw the grace of God and was glad.

He saw the grace of God when he saw this church. Wouldn't it be great if someone walks into this gathering, this fellowship and mingles with some of you lovely people here today and they see the grace of God.

They see it. They see it beaming out of Stuart's face. They see it in Ralph's actions and conduct. They see it in everybody's way of living, their demeanour, their nature, their spirit.

They see the grace of God and they're glad. Grace is evident. It's visible. It shows. It manifests itself. Others are going to see the grace. You're going to see grace. You're going to, there's going to be an evidence, there's going to be a fruit of God's grace.

[22:41] It says as Matthew 5 16, the Lord Jesus says, let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. It's not that they may see your good works and pat you on the back.

They're going to glorify your Father which is in heaven because of the evidence of grace. The evidence of grace in your walk, in your attitude, in your talk. How's your grace today?

How's your grace today? Maybe you've lacked a bit of grace. You can think of occasions where you've said a thoughtless word, you've been uncaring, unheeding of another.

You've been ungracious. You've been ungracious. Let your speech be always with grace.

Colossians 4 6. Season with salt that you may be able, sorry that you may know how you ought to answer every man.

How is your grace level this morning? Maybe you need to plug into the meter and just gauge how's that grace level? Is it getting a bit low? Are you getting a bit ungracious, ungracious?

[23:47] Grace. You know, I was thinking the word grace and it's completely graciousness and you know, sometimes we can be ungracious. I

was walking with somebody lately, you know, somebody that I went shopping with this week and we were walking down the aisle and this somebody, I won't name who she is, but this lady that I'm inclined to go shopping with sometimes, she slipped on a grave.

And there was only, I think there was only one grave or maybe two and she made this gracious fall. She graciously fell down.

I thought it was some special ballet movement that she learned at school one day or something. But it wasn't very gracious, but it was kind of gracious but it was a bit ungracious.

And you know, sometimes we can slip, we can not have grace, we can make a mess. And instead of being ungracious, let's be graceful and gracious.

How is your grace level? Do you know it? Salvation from beginning to end, it's God's work. It's God's initiative. It's God who in love acts towards us and gives us grace and mercy.

[25:02] Grace is God stooping, loving, coming to the rescue, giving to us generously through Christ Jesus. Do you know it? And secondly, just to recap, do you grow it?

Do you grow that grace? Or is your grace stagnant and you stop growing in grace? Brother, sister, grow in grace. Paul and Barnabas, they urged the people in Acts 13, 43.

Acts 13, 43. Paul and Barnabas, it says that they persuaded them to continue, to continue in the grace of God. They urged them, they wanted them to continue in it.

Back to our text that we started with. Paul says to Timothy, grow in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Be strong in the grace.

Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. It's God the sense of be strengthened. Be strengthened inwardly. Keep renewing your strength. Be strong in the grace.

[26:03] God wants you to be a strong Christian. Every one of you. God doesn't want us to be weak, anemic, half of Christians. He wants you to be a strong, full on, full out.

Amen. Aggressive, active, alive Christian. Amen. A strong Christian. Do you want to be stronger? Yes. Do you want to be a stronger Christian? Yes.

Yes. To be strong. Yes. To be strong. Yes. Absolutely. That's my train of thought now. Wouldn't you like to be stronger, braver? Yes.

I'd like to be stronger and braver. I know I say this sometimes, that when I was a little chap, I used to pray and ask God to make me like Superman. Yes. I used to pray, ask the Lord to make me strong like Tarzan and Batman or whoever else.

But, you know, wouldn't it be far better, you know, there are some really strong men here today and it's great to see strong people. But much more than physical strength, it's spiritual strength, isn't it?

[27:05] Yes. God wants you to be spiritually strong. To be strong.

Deuteronomy 31, it says, Be strong and of a good courage. Fear not, nor be afraid of them.

For the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee. He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage. God is with you.

He's not going to fail you. He's not going to forsake you. As Christians, we need to be courageous, brave and bold in whatever circumstance that faces us. And as we grow in grace, we're going to grow stronger.

We're going to grow more dependent on the Lord who is our helper. Hebrews 13, 6 says, We can be courageous when we know that the Lord is our helper.

As we grow more dependent on God's grace. Be strong and courageous. Get into the battle. Be a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

[28:02] Our grace and strength is from knowing Christ. It says in Daniel 11, 32, The people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits. You can be strong and do exploits if you know your God.

If you know grace. If you're saved. If you know your Saviour. Let that grace be renewed. Let it be strengthened. Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

Be strong. It means be invigorated. It's that same word of be strong in grace. Be strong in the Lord. We need strength as Christians to live. To live faithfully. To encourage our brethren.

Brothers and sisters, I know all of us need more grace. We need more. Just with closing now. I know I've said that before. Do you know it?

Are you in Christ? Do you grow it? Are you strong? Getting stronger? Do you show it? Is Christ in you? Living through you to others. And his grace, if you know that grace, if you grow it and show it, it's going to make a change in you.

[29:06] It's going to give you strength. Just one little quote here. This is Corrie Ten Boom. She said this about the increasing attacks on Christians in our world.

You see it in the media. I know I've seen some articles. Amazing things about, like for example in the UK, there was a nurse who just gave a bit of a witness to a patient and asked if she'd like her to pray for her.

And she's faced losing her job and all kinds of things. There's all kinds of wacky things going on in the school system. In all kinds of areas where Christians are getting targeted and persecuted. Nothing like in countries like India and Africa. But it's happening in the Western world too. Bit by bit, it's all happening. And this is what Corrie Ten Boom, she says, I feel I have a divine mandate to go and tell the people of this world, if it is possible, to be strong in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Be strong in the Lord Jesus Christ. She says, we're in training for the great tribulation, but more than 60% of the body of Christ across the world has already entered into the tribulation.

[30:14] There is no way to escape it. We are next. Now of course we know as Christians, we know that the rapture is going to save us. But it doesn't mean there's going to be some persecution first.

I think sometimes we've got this impression that we're going to be avoiding any kind of tribulation and any kind of persecution. And yet the Lord says to Timothy, all that live godly in Christ Jesus are going to have persecution.

And like Corrie says here, 60% of Christians across our planet are already in the tribulation. They're getting it full on in their faces.

And they're facing it day by day when the rubber hits the road. We need to get stronger because we need to be willing and able to stand up and be counted when it's going to get tougher.

It's going to get harder. God says to Paul, my grace is sufficient for thee. For my strength is made perfect in weakness.

[31:13] Have you experienced the grace? Do you know the grace of God? The grace, the gospel of the grace of God? Do you know the good news, as we talked about before, of His saving grace?

It's just so simple to trust Him. So simple to trust what He's done. He's done it all for you. He's done it all. Grace is just everything God. It's just extending in His hand to you.

It's just waiting for you to reach out. Grace. Have you experienced the grace? The power of His grace? And as a Christian, you've received His grace. Do you extend His grace to other people in your circle of acquaintance?

Are you gracious? Are you graceful to others about you? Do you show the grace of God at work in your life? And do you have that grace that is growing, that's equipping, that's strengthening you to deal with difficulty and opposition?

There's a war waiting. God's sustaining grace is so vital for you, for me, to be stronger. Put your trust in the grace of God. Let it be evident in your lives, I pray.

[32:19] Friends, to close, if you're not a Christian, please seek prayer today. Call out to Christ today. Call out to the Gracious One. Call out to His grace today and believers today.

Maybe, maybe you need to take stock. My grace level is just absolutely zilch. I don't have the patience with people. I don't have the love. I don't show the grace in how I speak to people, in how I act to people.

I'm not a witness for Christ in my workplace like I should be. God, help you to have grace, to grow in His grace. Let us pray. Lord, we pray that you are glorified in our thinking of you today.

Lord, encourage each heart. Stir us on, Lord. Spur us on in this race that we might be equipped, that we might be energized, that we might be empowered. Lord, with your grace that you've given to us to live it, to breathe it, to live it out.

Help us, Lord, to have grace with those around about. Lord, help us to be your people in this world.
For your glory we pray. In Jesus' name, Amen.