

A Lord's Day Snippet!

Biblical And Southern Studies

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Afflicted saint, to Christ draw near,
Your Saviour's gracious promise hear;
His faithful Word you can believe:
That as your days your strength shall be.

Your faith is weak, your foes are strong,
And if the conflict should be long,
The Lord will make the tempter flee
That as your days your strength shall be.

Should persecution rage and flame,
Still trust in your Redeemer's name,
In fiery trials you shall see
That as your days your strength shall be.

When called to bear your weighty cross
Or sore affliction, pain, or loss,
Or deep distress or poverty,
Still as your days your strength shall be.

So, sing with joy, afflicted one;
The battle's fierce, but the victory's won!
God shall supply all that you need;
Yes, as your days your strength shall be.

John Fawcett (1740-1817)

Being Strong

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

2 Timothy 2:1

Paul's letters to Timothy were also letters to each and every child of God. All Scripture is given by God's inspiration and is profitable for our spiritual benefit. Paul in this letter to Timothy is preparing him for service in the Kingdom of Christ after his departure to be with the Lord, which was very near. Thus, Timothy was given a Holy Spirit inspired directive from his father in the faith.

There are three areas for us to consider: 1) Paul makes a fatherly identity with Timothy—“Thou therefore, my son....” 2) Paul gives a fatherly admonition to Timothy—“be strong.” 3) Paul gives fatherly advice to Timothy—“be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

First, Paul makes a fatherly identity with Timothy—“Thou therefore, my son....” The word “son” here “male child” which is essentially the same and carries with it the sense of affection. Paul began this letter to Timothy calling him his “dearly beloved son” and then in the first epistle calling him “my own son in the faith.” In this second letter Paul spoke of recalling “the unfeigned faith” in Timothy which was also in his mother and grandmother. This “unfeigned faith” is an unhypocritical or genuine faith. Paul’s son in the faith was the real article. Later Paul urged his son to continue with the things he had learned and received with assurance because that from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures. Timothy was his son in the faith.

Second, Paul gives a fatherly admonition to Timothy—“be strong.” This phrase is an imperative for him to utilize the power he has been given. This chapter has a number of admonitions to Timothy: be strong like a son (v. 1), fight like a soldier (vv. 3-4), strive like an athlete (v. 5), and labor like a farmer (v. 6). Here are a number of examples of admonition. The admonition to “be strong” is not a fleshly strength, but a spiritual strength or divinely given strength. “Be strong in the Lord and the power of His might.” Yes, the kind of strength one needs to use is provided. We do not or should not seek to face these evil days in our own strength, but in the strength that raised Jesus and those trusting Him who are made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:4 ff.).

Third, Paul gives fatherly advice to Timothy—“be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” One is strengthened by grace, and this grace is in Christ Jesus. Our power or strength is centralized in a person who is Christ Jesus. Here is where our spiritual power originates, because to be in Christ is to be a new creation whereby old things pass away and all things become new. Remember “the promise of life ... is in Christ Jesus” (1:1). “Faith and love ... are in Christ Jesus” (1:13). We are chosen in Him to be holy (Eph. 1:4), we are made accepted in Him (v. 6), we are redeemed through His blood (v. 7), we are sealed by His Spirit (v. 13), and we are raised together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6). “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might” (Eph. 6:10). This is why we are strong in Christ Jesus who is our righteousness and salvation.

Paul is intimating that God will fill Timothy with strength for whatever He wants Timothy to do. This power is located “in the grace that is in Christ Jesus,” and Timothy has experienced this grace. Christ Jesus is our dynamo generating power in us to do the work whereunto we have been called. We are as it were engulfed with grace which is the

spiritual atmosphere that the believer's soul thrives on and in which the vitalizing element that drives him is constituted. Our strength is in the person of our Lord and Saviour, which is distributed to us by His grace, through the faith gifted to us with the end result that it is unto good works which He has ordained that we should walk in them. Yes, Christ Jesus is the instrument of grace, and no one can have it except through Him by virtual and vital union.

“There is grace enough in Him (Christ Jesus) for all of us. We must be strong in this grace; not in ourselves, in our own strength, or in the grace we have already received, but in the grace that is in Him, and that is the way to be strong in grace. As a father exhorts his son, so does Paul exhort, Timothy, with great tenderness and affection: *Thou, therefore, my son, be strong, etc.*” [Matthew Henry].

When W. Woods was a student for the ministry there was a young woman, he met. She was heavily afflicted, paralyzed, crippled, deaf, and half blind. Her life was passed in one chamber, for the most part on one couch, but the circle of her influence was quite wide. In the face of overwhelming infirmities, she maintained a spirit of serene and cheerful contentment which no new adversity could break. When her bodily strength rallied a little, she filled her room, not with wailing or complaint, but with songs of thankfulness; when the wave of physical vitality ebbed again, the unspoken praise lay in quiet sunshine on the pale but smiling face. When the benumbed fingers recovered for a few days some portion of their former nimbleness, she was happy in resuming the dainty needlework by which her bread was earned. When she could do nothing but suffer, her brave soul shone in undiminished patience. Even among women I have never known another so strong in grace—in ‘love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.’ And what, think you, was her own explanation of this noble and beautiful strength? She gave it to me one evening after I had watched her through a paroxysm of neuralgic torture: “He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.” She knew about the words of Paul, “Timothy ... my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”