**2 Timothy 2:1-13**

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, **2** 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. **3**  Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. **4** No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. **5**  An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. **6** It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. **7** Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. **8** Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, **9**  for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! **10** Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. **11** The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; **12**  if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; **13**  if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.

**“Strength In Christ Alone”**

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord, Amen. Life has troubles, no great revelation there. People know it and they do not need the Bible to tell them. However, God’s Word does offer what none in trouble can give themselves. It is to turn with trust to the God of all compassion. We see this in our readings today. When the troubles of death ravaged Naomi’s family her two daughter-in-laws were to go back to their old lives. Orpah cut her losses, but Ruth clung even more saying, “Your people shall be my people and your God my God.” Likewise, Jesus healed the troubles of ten lepers and sent to the priests. Yet, one saw more than what was good turning back to praise God and give thanks to Jesus.

What we have in our epistle reading, is the final prison scene of St. Paul in Rome. For him to be, “bound with chains as a criminal” meant death was around the corner. The last letter we have from this apostle seeks encouragement far more than in a general way. Timothy was a pastor trained personally by St. Paul. Only now things were going in a different direction. Entrustment was upon Timothy to hand the Gospel over to, “faithful men who will be able to teach others.” Rather than a power in Timothy, St. Paul turns to strength God alone gives by His grace. It is the same strength for any Christian who grows weary. Troubled lives can turn for deliverance and praise to the one true God who is in Jesus Christ.

1. **Where do troubles turn us?**
2. St. Paul knew for Timothy that this meant dangerous options lay before him.

* Since Paul was a spiritual father to Timothy, his impending death bring grief that could be all consuming.
* With growing persecution, it would also be tempting for Timothy to deny Christ and go off to the pagan ways of his earthly father.
* If Timothy were to trust his works for the ministry, the overwhelming burden of this high calling would crush him.
* Finally, defense against false teachers would be never ending, which meant every kind of doubt was trying to snuff out faith in Christ.

1. Troubles also turn us to many options that are no good.

* Does an unforeseen death or suffering in life embitter our hearts against God by shutting out the compassion He seeks to give?
* Are the cultural anchors that once supported Christianity, now tempting you to settle for a security outside of Christ and His Church?
* Does the burden of works in life turn you to anger and distress proving how the law never lets up with its demands against us?
* Are the sarcastic remarks, questioning words, and continual false teaching in today’s modern media drowning out faith in Christ?

1. **Since troubles turn us in all directions, God’s grace is the strength we need for deliverance.**
2. “You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me.”

* St. Paul does not turn Timothy inward, but outward to Christ.
* This grace IN Jesus means it belongs to Him not a product we buy at the store.
* We receive this undeserved favor of God in the same way as Timothy from, “what you have heard.”
* In other words, God delivers us because of Christ who troubled Himself by the cross and faith keeps receiving Him as our strength.

1. We need this grace in Christ for it takes our troubles and turns us to, “share in suffering.”

* The three examples of a soldier, athlete, and farmer all suffer with a final goal in mind.
* Timothy was to be mindful that being ashamed of Paul and the witness of the Lord Jesus was to deny what gave him faith in the Gospel.
* No suffering has the last say, except what Christ defeated, won, and planted by His cross for all in a sinful world.
* What Paul says had the goal of strength for Timothy to still rest in the saving Word for, “…the Lord will give you understanding in everything.”

1. **Strengthened by Christ no troubles will keep us from praising God in our life.**
2. “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering…”

* Paul was in prison not for what he believed in his heart, but what he publicly preached and praised with his life.
* This was not a pep rally for Timothy, but praise that belonged alone to Christ and the perfect work of His death and resurrection.
* Your strength dear baptized comes not from how well you praise, but from the fact that, “the word of God is not bound!”
* Our praise endures because God’s love endures to serve by Word and Sacrament with, “salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”

1. Hymns have value more than for a moment of entertainment, but are an answer for all times in life.

* The last few verses of St. Paul words today are considered to be such a hymn that Timothy and others would have known.
* “If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.”
* God is faithful and His grace is sufficient to strengthen you in Christ who by baptism has unbound the prison of sin, death, and the Devil that held you captive.
* Paul tells Timothy and us we always have room to sing for your salvation is assured in Jesus, even while there are all kinds of trouble.

Jesus showed shock over how only one Leper saw that God’s grace was bigger than health problems, but able to save sinners. Ruth saw no future, but God’s grace found a way to provide a new family and that kindness even made its way to us for Jesus would come from the line of her descendants. Timothy saw what was on the horizon, but Paul turned him to the better grace risen up in Jesus. So many troubles just talk to anybody. Maybe you have enough of your own to deal with today. Either way, we all would be crushed beneath the burden of sin, death, and even our works if God by His Word did not provide a sinful world with a better answer. Troubled lives can turn for deliverance and praise to the one true God who is in Jesus Christ. Amen. Now the peace of Christ, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.