

## **Sermon Draft**

**Text: 2 Timothy 2:1–13**

**Sermon: “Be Well”**

As the season of the Church begins drawing to a close, our attention is turned to “the end”—the end of days and Christ’s glorious return, of course, but also our own end. While Paul, writing our Epistle from a Roman prison, anticipates the end of his life, he encourages Timothy, and us, to “**remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead**” and so to dwell not on transient suffering but on that “eternal glory” obtained for us by the resurrected Christ (2 Timothy 2:8, 10).

We are not used to being told what to do in checkout lines. But if you’ve been in Walgreens® lately, you will almost certainly have been given a command. “Be well!” the checker will have said. Or should have said.

For that's the mandate from the corporate higher-ups. Every customer is to be sent on his or her way with a cheery directive to "Be well!"

It's a curious good-bye. Not only because it takes the form of a command, but because of the particular kind of command it is. Be well? If it was in my power to fulfill that command, why would I be visiting a pharmacy? I cannot make myself well; that is why I'm here!

It may seem a similarly curious mandate with which the apostle Paul charges Timothy: "***Be strengthened.***" Yet Paul does not leave off there, in the manner of the Walgreens checker. No, he cannot. For he knows that it is not within Timothy's power to strengthen himself. Timothy's strength must be found outside of himself—in "***the grace that is in Christ Jesus.***"

That's Paul's word for us today too: Be strengthened in the sure promise of the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

To belabor the drugstore analogy just a moment longer, it must be emphasized that though Jesus is indeed the "Great Physician," he is not the great pharmacist. "**You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus**" (v 1). That is, we are not to think of the grace of our Lord as a sort of medicine simply dispensed by him, which then becomes ours. It is not, as some would teach, a healing substance imparted to you or infused into you. No, as Paul here notes, it remains *in* Christ Jesus.

On account of Christ, who obeyed the Law in our stead and who suffered its fatal penalty in our place on the cross, God is now favorably disposed toward us. To believe this, to know that this is most certainly true, *is* to be strengthened.

And Timothy needs strengthening. As we heard in the text, Paul is suffering; he is "**bound with chains as a criminal**" (v 9). He expects those chains to come off only when he's dead. And he expects death to approach speedily (4:6). This is no small thing for Paul, to be sure and neither for Timothy. For Paul is his spiritual father, the one who ordained him, so to speak the one with whom he engaged side-by-side in the ministry of the Gospel.

And yet he is to expect more. "**Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus**" (v 3), Paul further tells him. "Share in suffering." Paul is in chains for preaching the Gospel, for proclaiming the Good News with which he was entrusted. And since Timothy has been exhorted to do precisely the same, he must expect precisely the same consequences. Paul cannot sugarcoat it, not even for young Timothy. He, too, must expect to "share in suffering."

And so he needs be strengthened. As do we, in Christ. Perhaps not because our loyalty or faithfulness to Scripture and its teaching will lead to our imprisonment though we must not discount that possibility. Not because sharing the Good News with our neighbor or co-worker will result in our death. But I cannot sugarcoat it any more than Paul does or Jesus himself does: ***"you will be hated by all for my name's sake,"*** Jesus warns (Mt 10:22).

And so we too, must be strengthened, because it would otherwise be very easy to avoid suffering, to escape the world's hatred. And the temptation to do so is and will be very strong, not least because it need not even require abandoning our faith.

Note: Paul is not in chains because of what he believes, but because of what he preaches.

The world will not hate us, it will not persecute us or even slight us, for what we *believe*, as long as we keep it to ourself.

But that, is not an option. It was not for Paul. It was not for Timothy. And it is not for us. One does not light a lamp and put it under a basket (Mt 5:15). And so we, too, must be strengthened so that we too, might "**endure everything**" (v 10). Not for our own sake and the sake of our salvation. No, that is the free gift of him who has already endured everything, "**who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross**" (Hebrews 12:2).

We are strengthened to endure, as was Paul himself, "**for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus**" (v 10). That they, too, might hear and believe that Word of God, which "**is not bound**" (v 9), but remains "**living and active**" (Hebrews 4:12), and which will not return to the Lord empty (Isaiah 55:11).

**"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" (v 10).**

**"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" (vs. 1–2).** We are strengthened to endure so that we might speak this saving Word to our neighbor. But it remains God's Word. He himself acts in it and with it. And he remains faithful to it, **"for he cannot deny himself."** **"The saying is trustworthy, for: 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"** (vs. 11–13).

Let this, then, also be the source of our strength, our comfort, and our confidence. Even in the face of hatred, suffering, or threat of death, our salvation has already been assured. "**Remember Jesus Christ,**" Paul proclaims, "**risen from the dead**" (v 8).

Remember him who, for your sake, has already conquered death. Remember the "trustworthy" saying Paul placards before Timothy: "**If we have died with him, we will also live with him.**" And remember that we indeed have *already* died with him in Holy Baptism. There we were buried with him and raised again with him (Rom 6:3–5). There his unbound Word together with the water *unbound us* from the shackles of sin, death, and the devil. There his promise was spoken to each of us and for us, and to that promise "he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself."

Be strengthened, therefore, in the sure comfort of this promise of "the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Amen