

BE STRONG IN THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS!

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Rite of Confirmation

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2 Timothy 2:1

Grace, peace and mercy from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen!



Please listen carefully to the text of our message for today and this is also your confirmation verse. 2 Timothy 2:1 ***“You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”*** So far the text.

Be strong! That’s a phrase that catches every teenage boy’s ears. It’s as if it were preprogrammed in their DNA. I don’t know at what age it starts, boys begin strutting and flexing and posturing anything to show how strong they just might be. When I grew up magazines were filled with stories of Charles Atlas and Jack Lalanne men who were 98 pound weaklings. These were supposed sickly men who decided to be strong and build up those weak bodies. Kids would gather around the magazine racks hoping to sneak a peek at the secret to big muscles.

Our society is all about being strong. Many movies showed the strong men of Muscle Beach. I even heard a rumor that California even had once elected a muscle man to be governor. But I think that was just a rumor much like the one about Minnesota electing a professional wrestler to be governor. Who would ever do such a thing?

But let’s face we are all fascinated with strength, maybe not being overly muscular but strong, and capable and independent. Our nation is filled with organizations which help us tone up our bodies and minds or even our finances. We are fascinated with independence, self reliance and yes even self glorification. Just think of some of the magazines names, like ME or Us or Self. Health clubs opening up week after week to help us lean out, strengthen up and gain stamina. But on the other hand, when was the last time you heard of a club opening for nerds or weaklings or those with a heavy need of reliance upon others? Our society just doesn’t embrace the idea of being weak or needy.

Where does this fascination for independence and strength and self glorification come from? Perhaps we need to be reminded of our original parents and that nasty little garden episode. What did they think they were going to get from eating that forbidden fruit? Remember the serpent’s words, Genesis 3:5 ***“For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”*** Go ahead eat, control your own destiny, be independent and be your own god.

Man and woman bought into that lie of the devil and has been paying the price ever since. Woman feels the pangs of labor in childbirth. Man toils the ground by the sweat of his brow to provide a living for his family. Man and woman now live only so many years and earth and then death. Jack Lalanne the muscle man found this out last Monday when he shrugged off his mortal coils.

Original sin causes us to be curved in on self (curvatis en se). We are ego-maniacs, self-centered and self absorbed. Some people will even say it’s good to have a healthy ego. Whatever that means!

Someone once told me that EGO stood for Edging God Out! Maybe he was right. A person of the world definitely wants a god of their own making, maybe even be their own god. They want to be in control, to say what is right or wrong. They want to be independent and strong and self reliant.

But all that strength, all that independence and all that self reliance will end. Man grows old and then comes death. Romans 6:23 says: ***“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”***. True strength is not in man. The prophet Isaiah (64:6) says: ***“But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteous deeds are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away”***. In trying to offer God our best, we still fail, we still fade and then we wither up and fade away. We think by our strength, by our morality, by our pietism we can please God. But all that we offer of our own is nothing but rubbish.

Listen to what St. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12:9: ***“And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me”***. The more we think we are strong the weaker we really are. The more we boast of our weakness the greater the power of Christ is within us.

To us a fallen sin filled people how blessed are the words: ***“You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”*** If you want to be truly strong, be in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. For in Christ Jesus you have all the strength you need, a strength given by God for all eternity. This is a strength given to you in your baptism and is now being reaffirmed in your confirmation. For Christ Himself lived a life you could not. He (†) has died a death you dare not. So that He could rise again to give you credit you did not earn but that He (†) freely gives to you.

For in Christ alone you can know beyond any shadow or doubt that all your sins are forgiven and you are a child of the most high. For He (†) has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. May our Lord and Savior make you strong in the grace that is found in Him now and forevermore! In Jesus name, amen and amen!

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, Amen!

Soli Deo Gloria!

To God alone all Glory!