

Strengthened by Grace

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[0 : 00] It feels like almost every week when I come before you with a message, I have gone through at least one rabbit hole of obscure or esoteric ideas.

And this week it wasn't so obscure or esoteric, it's just kind of weird, and that was self-contained breathing apparatuses. This was my rabbit hole for this week.

Self-contained breathing apparatuses. So you've probably seen these in firefighting movies, this whole glass face shield that is connected to an oxygen tank on the back of a first responder.

And they're encouraged to put these on before they even go into the building, and they train with these because they want to get used to trick, they want to get used to, they want the brain to get used to this idea that though they are in a smoky room, they are not breathing smoky air.

That's kind of a trick. The use of the thing isn't that hard. You put it on and breathe, which we should do naturally, of course.

[1 : 08] But the brain using the eyes and saying, you're in a smoky room, therefore you are breathing smoky air.

And it takes this training process to learn how to bridge that gap in your own mind and understand, yes, I am in a smoky place, but I am breathing completely different air.

Now, in the Christian life, we know that this is a thing. We know this from a verse like 2 Corinthians 4, or a passage like in 2 Corinthians 4, where Paul says, Though outwardly we are wasting away, inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

There are a number of these passages that indicate that a person's circumstances isn't necessarily the same as the air they breathe, the spiritual air they breathe. And it really is just a process of learning to understand that that's a thing.

And it takes some time. It takes some time to realize that God has provided for us, even in the smokiest of circumstances, fresh, eternal air.

[2 : 20] And you can say that, and you can know that, but you just got to keep doing it until you realize, oh, this self-contained breathing apparatus is really a thing.

God really will strengthen me. He really will establish me. He really will give me the grace I need to endure whatever circumstance. And that's what we see in our text today. Paul tells Timothy in verse 1 of chapter 2 to be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Now, one key, I think, to being strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus is to know what grace actually is.

John Stott, I believe it was, once said that grace, G-R-A-C-E, stands for God's riches at Christ's expense. God's riches at Christ's expense.

This is why Stott's a big deal and I'm not. That's brilliant. So it's faithful, it's true, it's simple. God's riches at Christ's expense.

[3 : 27] Now, this is a very helpful way of thinking about it because I believe that one of the common Christian misconceptions that keeps you from understanding the mask you have is, I believe that a lot of Christians tend to equate grace with forgiveness.

But those are two, those are the same thing. That we tend to think of grace as an eraser that removes our guilt and establishes us before God as if we had never sinned.

We tend to make grace and forgiveness synonymous. And then you would be like, well, how do I, how am I strengthened by grace if what grace is is really just something that removes my sin?

But the Bible actually teaches that those two things are not synonymous. Grace and forgiveness are not synonymous. But that we are saved, we are forgiven by grace.

But those aren't the same things, okay? So I just want to take a moment because I believe that when you read this and Paul says, be strengthened by grace, if you don't really know what grace is,

or your understanding of grace is fairly limited, kind of be like, well, I don't know what kind of mask this is.

[4 : 36] I don't know what kind of breathing apparatus this is. How am I supposed to be perpetually strengthened by forgiveness? It seems like maybe there should be more to it, and there is. So let me just walk you through just a really quick kind of theological outline of the nature of grace.

And a lot of it has this sense of almost tension or dichotomy. The first thing I'd communicate to you this morning about the nature of grace is that it is expensive, yet it is extensive.

It is expensive, yet it is extensive. Let us make sure that we never believe that grace came to us cheaply. Grace is secured by the most precious resource in all of reality, namely the blood of Christ, okay?

So let's make sure we understand that grace isn't cheap. It costs a whole bunch. It costs the very death of Jesus Christ. Grace is expensive.

But, counterintuitively, it is also extensive. Typically, when things are expensive, there's less, right? Typically, when something is very precious, there's less of it.

[5 : 43] And that's what drives its preciousness. But let's make sure we understand, on the one hand, that grace is super expensive. All of God's riches at Christ's expense, and that expense was his own death.

But it is also extensive. It isn't a small amount. Think of it this way. It is as if each drop of Christ's blood has secured its own ocean of grace.

There's plenty of grace, even though it is extremely expensive. The next thing to think about, just as we're working through our brief theology of grace, another way to think about this is that it's an undeserved prerogative.

It's an undeserved prerogative. The word prerogative means an exclusive privilege or right exercised by a person or group of people holding a particular office or hereditary rank.

If you had a ticket to the Super Bowl, it is your right to go to the Super Bowl. If you have a VIP pass that lets you go on the field, it is your right to go onto the field. It is your prerogative.

[6 : 49] Grace is a right. Isn't that crazy? Grace is your prerogative if you're in Christ, and yet it is an undeserved prerogative.

You didn't earn it. The way that you talk about something like this, because it's kind of a complicated idea, it's like, well, how could something be a right, but I didn't earn it? Well, there's one category where this is true, and we use the term birthright to describe it.

What is a birthright? Well, you were born into a certain family and have certain rights because of something that happened outside of your control. You didn't choose it, but it is yours.

You didn't choose it, but it is your right. And so one of the things that we're starting to build here as we discuss this is Paul's telling Timothy, be strengthened by grace. And one of the things we want to know is that grace is unlimited.

There's as much of it as we need. And because of our place in Christ, if you've placed your faith in Christ, it is your right by birth in Christ to call out for this unlimited grace.

[7 : 58] But I think most importantly, as we think about grace, we need to understand that it is both expulsive and propulsive. Now, I want to be clear. I'm using weird words because I don't want you to be lulled into thinking you understand something that you may not.

So I'm essentially choosing weird words to force you to think weirdly and hopefully more deeply. It is grace is both expulsive and propulsive.

What do we mean by that? Well, perhaps you've heard the trick question. If you had access to all the latest machinery in a sophisticated science lab, what would be the most effective way to get all the air out of a glass beaker?

You had unlimited equipment, unlimited budget, and you had to get air out of a glass beaker. And it turns out that that's a bit of a, some of that's a bit of a red herring.

The answer is, is that you just fill the beaker full of water. You fill the beaker full of something that is not air, and now all the air is out of the beaker.

[9 : 06] Well, that's what the word expulsion means. It means that it's replacing something else. There was an old Scottish theologian named Thomas Chalmers, who's famous for preaching a sermon called the expulsive power of a new affection.

The expulsive power of a new affection. What does he mean? Well, here's what he was doing. Here's what he was thinking about. It's like, it is the human's natural preference for, we have a

human natural love for comfort.

We have a human natural love for the things of this world. How do we get rid of that so that we can honor Christ? And Chalmers' answer is, is we don't hook up a sophisticated lab and do all this stuff. We just fill our hearts with something else. And what is it that we fill our hearts with? We fill our hearts with the grace of God. The grace of God pushes out all of these other things.

This is important because we're going to go to the next section of the text here in a second, and we're going to see that the Christian life is described as three things. A soldier, an athlete, and a farmer.

[10:16] And as we'll see in a moment, all of those vocations require a fair amount of suffering on the front end. And it's like, well, how do I engage in the hardships of Christianity when my natural preference is to love comfort?

Well, if your view of grace is simply that of a racer that gets you back to where you were before, then you don't need, then your view of the Christian life is probably like, the Christian life is me doing what I want and God forgiving me when I fail.

But if your view of grace is, it's energetic. It's not just an eraser. It's a power. It pushes things out. It propels me forward.

Then your sense of the Christian life is more in conformity with what Paul's talking about here, with the idea of the farmer and the athlete and the soldier. So grace is expulsive. It pushes out our old affections.

But it's also propulsive. It moves us forward. Louis Burkhoff, in his systematic theology, goes through this entire kind of section on just all of the different ways that we can understand grace.

[11:31] And one of the things he says about grace is that it is a power. It is not simply an eraser. It's got an engine-like quality to it. It doesn't simply get you back to where you were before you sinned.

It moves you through life to obey God. And he says it this way. There are clear indications of the fact that it is not a mere passive quality, but also an active force, a power, something that labors. And what would be a good text to show that? Well, in 1 Corinthians 15:10, Paul says this. By the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain.

On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is within me. So let me just paraphrase that for you. By the grace of God, I am what I am, and one of the things I am is a hard worker.

But it's not me who is doing the work. It's God's grace that was doing the work. See, this picture of grace isn't simply that it removes sin, but that it actually drives you into positive action, into godly action.

[12:42] Okay, now this is all important, as I said before, because the next section of our text describes a life that is not a life of ease. Look at verse 3. Share in suffering.

As a good soldier of Christ Jesus, no soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hardworking farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. So we have three occupations, and what do they all have in common?

They essentially all invest discomfort for the sake of future glory. They commoditize suffering. They sort of like, what's your business's primary asset?

My ability to endure hardship. That would be the answer of the soldier, of the athlete, and of the farmer. What's your primary sort of competitive advantage, as they say in business plans?

[13:49] My competitive advantage is I can endure suffering. And that's what these have in common. They're all pointing to what Jesus says in Matthew 16. If anyone wants to be my disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.

Now, I have absolutely no idea how a megachurch, which essentially does one thing, convince you that the Christian life is easy. I have no idea, except when it comes to giving. I have no idea how they handle farmer, athlete, soldier.

It seems to me that you look at these professions and would have to say, all of these professions indicate one thing to me about the Christian life.

It's going to be hard. It's going to be hard. And now you can maybe begin to see why I started with the self-contained breathing apparatus.

What kind of confidence do you have to have in your equipment in order to walk into the smoky room, right? In order to walk into the hardship.

[14:57] You would have had to train so often with this self-contained breathing apparatus that you know, you know, that I can walk into this smoky room and this oxygen from somewhere else is what I'll really be breathing.

It will keep me alive. Now, friends, we may or may not, depending on your particular opinion of things, be looking down the barrel of a more hostile culture to Christianity.

If we would say that Christianity has always been hard, we might say that in certain cultural conditions it gets much harder. And there can be this quiet intimidation that causes you to sort of embrace winsomeness for the sake of the gospel, which is really avoiding offending others so that you don't have to go into the smoky room.

And the truth is, is that we're going to have to go. You might go in last, but you'll go too. And we need to have some confidence that the Lord of grace is there and he will strengthen us with his grace when we go into this particular hardship.

I don't want to spend a lot of time, you know, there's a lot of good stuff at the end of this passage I want to make sure I get to. But let me just walk through soldier, athlete, farmer, and just communicate a few things.

[16:14] When we think of the soldier, one of the things we can think about is suffering as second nature. Suffering as second nature. You see that in verse 4. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. Now, when we say suffering as a second nature, what do we mean? Well, that saying, that phrase is essentially someone who has sort of taken to a new environment.

They're so familiar with it that they just kind of know how to do that without thinking about it. They've gotten quite used to it. That's what a soldier is when it comes to suffering.

A soldier just assumes that suffering is part of the job. A soldier just gets used to suffering and just continues to do what he's supposed to do.

When the text says no soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him, I think in part what it means is that no soldier in the midst of suffering looks over into the civilian world and says, why can't I do that?

[17:25] A soldier simply says, this is who I am, and it's my job to please he who enlisted me. You know, way, way, way, way back when, Tertullian wrote an address to martyrs because the culture was heating up.

Persecution was looking more and more imminent. Tertullian says this, John Stott comments, So one of the things that we see from these examples, the soldier, is just a sort of second nature to suffering.

This is just part of the deal. I'm not going to be looking over at the civilian wishing my life was different. This is part of what it means to be a soldier, is to suffer. And now we get to the idea of athlete.

And we can add to the second nature of suffering, we can add sort of the rejection of shortcuts. The rejection of shortcuts. Look at verse 5. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. So we already have soldier, and now we have athlete, and another aspect of the Christian life emerges.

[19:06] And that is namely a rejection of shortcuts. Say, well, why is that a rejection of shortcuts? Well, almost certainly the athlete that Paul was referring to here was a runner.

And he's like, well, how do runners cheat? I mean, this was before doping, right? Maybe they, like, ejected tiger blood or something.

I don't know. But I'm assuming that that's not the view of cheating in play here. How does a runner cheat? Well, there are these great articles online that you could look up for this.

One of the titles for one of these articles was, Nine of the Most Brazen Marathon Cheats of All Time. How do you cheat in a marathon? Shocking, shocking, audacious attempts at cheating in these marathons.

Often involving public transit, by the way. I mean, this takes some guts. They're running along the course. They see a bus. They get on the bus.

[20 : 11] They take the bus through a number of sections of the course. Get out and keep running. And, yeah, there you go. Almost all of the cheating involved in this particular sport involves skipping over the hard stuff.

Right? So, in addition to saying, we're soldiers. We take suffering as second nature. It's just a part of the deal. We're athletes, and we don't skip the hard parts because we're running to win the prize. Now we turn from the athlete to the farmer. What should we add here? We have another role, another picture. What emerges? Well, one of the things, I think there's probably a lot of things I'm not talking about here, but one of the things that emerges that is unique to the farmer as compared to the soldier and the athlete is obscurity.

Obscurity. John Stott writes this. The farmer lives a life of strain and prosaic toil. And he says, unlike the soldier and the athlete, the farmer's life is totally devoid of excitement, remote from all glamour, of peril, and of applause.

So, you might say the soldier embraces suffering. This is just part of the deal. The athlete doesn't take shortcuts. And the farmer understands that a lot of his work looks totally lame and uninteresting and small and irrelevant.

[21 : 41] And no one's there to cheer him on. So on and so forth. So that's also part of the Christian life. A very significant amount of our integrity is tested in situations in which no one's watching.

Or in situations in which no one is eager to give credit. A lot of small things, day after day after day. So now we have perhaps a clearer view both of grace and of the Christian life.

The one thing I want to add real quick before we move on to the next section of the text is, Yeah, they're all three suffering. They're all three also seeking and receiving glory.

When the soldier wins, he gets a parade. When the athlete wins, he gets a podium. And when the farmer wins, he gets a feast. Don't miss the obvious glory that is the outcome of all this hardship and suffering.

And we'll refer to that again in a moment. Now, Paul's done two things so far. He has told us that we need to be strengthened in grace. And he's told us why we need to be strengthened in grace.

[22 : 49] Our work, our Christian life is full of hardship. And we need to know we need to be strengthened in grace. But what he hasn't done yet, as best as I could see, is he hasn't told us how to be strengthened in grace.

And I think that's what we're going to see in the next section. Look at verses 7 through 10. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound.

Therefore, I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may attain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. All right. This is so important.

Please, if you've drifted, get yourself back. All right. So important. This will really be helpful to you. I promise. How we're asking a real simple question.

[23 : 50] How do we put the mask on? How do we strengthen ourselves with grace? We're told that it's possible. We're told to do it. We're told that it's necessary. Okay.

How do we do it? All right. I'm going to tell you how. Now, a huge part of being strengthened by grace involves mental discipline.

Mental discipline. I want you to look back at verse 7 and verse 8. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

Remember Jesus Christ. Remember Jesus Christ. Now, if you know the Bible, you know that remember is a constant. It's even going to be a part of the table.

How is it that mental discipline provides the strengthening of grace? Because what is really called for in any kind of endurance, whether it's Christian endurance or just endurance endurance, is to quiet the inner quitter.

[24 : 57] How does one endure? They must always quiet the inner quitter. What separates an endurance athlete from a regular person?

Genetics in that particular sport plays a small role, though not negligible, but the small role is any sport I know of. What really separates an endurance athlete from a regular person is that the endurance athlete has learned to quiet the inner quitter.

And where does the inner quitter live? Well, it feels like he lives in my knees, but he doesn't. He lives in my mind. I have seen this in my whole life.

When I take a walk, I think like a normal person. I look at the scenery. I consider what's been going on with my day or what's going to go on throughout the rest of the week and so forth.

I think like a normal person when I take a walk. But when I go for a run, I only have one thought.

Why are you doing this? Suddenly, I stop thinking like a normal person.

[26 : 04] And all I've got is a quitter in my brain with a megaphone. And I will be honest with you, I have not learned how to turn him off. And I don't think I will learn how. Because as I've said, he has got other people on his team now.

My knees and my back and so on and so forth. But what is involved in endurance? What is involved in endurance is getting your mind right. Getting your mind right.

And if you were to just read through the New Testament this week, and you were to examine all the calls for perseverance, all the calls for endurance, what you would see time and time again is a call by the faithful spiritual leader who's encouraging them to endure to get their mind right.

Quiet their inner quitter. So the words in verse 7 and verse 8, think on these things. And verse 8, remember Jesus Christ. Those are not incidental words.

This is the way that we endure. We discipline our mind. We take every thought captive and make it obey Christ. And if you can't do that, that's where endurance breaks down.

[27 : 11] Because you'll start talking yourself out of enduring. I'll just be super specific. You're trying to quit a sin. Well, the inner quitter who doesn't want to quit the sin, but wants to quit the trying to quit the sin, the inner quitter will appear.

What are you going to do? You're afraid to enter into a difficult conversation. You're afraid to be obedient in some area. Well, the inner quitter is going to speak. What do you have to say?

How do you control this thing? Friends, we have to get our minds right if we're going to walk right.

Now, there are probably more than three, but I'm going to give you three things that I see Paul thinking about in this passage.

I'm going to start with, I don't think any of them are unimportant, but I'm going to start with the least important. And the first one will be this. Think of those who depend on your endurance. When you're tempted to quit, when you're tempted to take the easy way out, when you're tempted to get on the bus and avoid a big chunk of the race, I want you to think of those who depend on your endurance.

Look at verse 10. One of the ways we quiet our inner quitter is to just think, who depends on me finishing well?

[28 : 42] Who depends on me not giving up? Who depends on me being faithful and doing good? Who depends on me? Remember how this letter, 2 Timothy, began?

We just looked at this particular verse last week, actually. It begins in part, well, substantially, with Paul saying in verse 3 of chapter 1, I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.

We tend to think, because now you know, I hope you know, Paul's in prison when he's writing this, awaiting execution. We tend to think, how amazing of Paul to think of other people while he's in prison.

How amazing of Paul to remember and pray for Timothy. Here's the question. Is it possible that that's actually a survival strategy? Is it possible there's actually even self-interest in that for Paul's sake?

And that is, here I am, enduring. I could say one little word, recanto, in the Latin. I recant. And I'm free. Maybe we go back through and notice in the prison epistles the warmth, which is unique in the prison epistles.

[29 : 57] The letters that Paul wrote to people while he was in prison. And we see the relational warmth. And we see him remembering these folks. And we think, well, that's so nice of him. Wow, he had many other things to worry about.

I don't know, guys. I actually think this is him grasping hold of the rope and saying, in moments where I would be tempted to recant, in moments where I would be tempted to quit, I will quiet the inner quitter by reminding myself of those who I am enduring for.

And I believe that that is an exceptional strategy for helping us with our mental discipline in the times of hardship. One more that I think is a minor before we get to the major.

And that is, in addition to thinking of those who are depending on our endurance, we think of the eternal glory gained by our earthly endurance. That's still in verse 10.

Read it again. 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. Think of these illustrations.

[31 : 05] I've already referenced this, that Paul's thinking of. They all provide an ultimate outcome of glory. The soldier is working for ultimate victory. The athlete is running to receive a crown.

The farmer is working toward a great harvest. So in addition to thinking of those who depend on your endurance, think of the glory that will be given to you on the day of your completion of the race. Paul is used to thinking about this. We see Paul consistently in his letters being extraordinarily eternally minded. It's like, how do I discipline my inner quitter when I want to give up?

You have to teach your mind to not think so much about what's going on now as to what will happen in the future if you endure. In chapter 4 of this book, Paul says, I have fought the good fight.

I've finished the race. I've kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day. And not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing.

[32 : 09] And so far we have these two lines of thinking. You're wanting to give up. You're wanting to quit. You're wanting to sell out. You're wanting to avoid the hardship. What do you think about?

Number one, people depend on me. Number two, eternal glory is coming. And we see that those two thoughts, they're in the same verse, we see that those two ways of thinking actually work really well together.

Heaven will be a place of corporate victory. Where all of the soldiers who shared in suffering join King Jesus in triumphal procession.

Heaven will be a kind of collective finish line. Where all who ran the race congratulate each other, even as they praise the one who ordered their steps.

Heaven will be a kind of communal feast. Where all the farmers sit down at the table and enjoy the production of God.

[33 : 10] And so one way you'd want to think about and quiet the inner quitters is to think of these things. And if you think about these things, by the way, Philippians 4, 8 through 9, if you think about these things, what does the Bible say?

The God of peace will be with you. See, we're getting into how are we strengthened by grace? How do we bring God into the cell room with us? How do we put on the mask?

It's like think on these things. Use your mind to access the riches of God. Now, I've said that those are minor. They're not minor because they're unimportant, but because the one thing that I'm going to talk about next is so big.

And that's found in verse 8. Remember Jesus Christ. Remember Jesus Christ. What else are we doing with our mind? We're thinking about those who benefit from our endurance.

We're thinking about the glory that awaits us. Most importantly, what you must do with your mind to access the grace of God is to remember Jesus Christ.

[34 : 10] Remember Jesus Christ. B.B. Warfield writes, Amid all the surrounding temptations, all the encompassing dangers, Paul bids Timothy to bear in mind as the sufficing source of abounding strength, the great central doctrine, or rather, let us say, the great central fact of his preaching, of his faith, and of his life.

He enunciates this great fact in these words, found in verse 8. Jesus Christ. Remember Jesus Christ. Raised from the dead. The seed of David.

This phrase, Raised from the dead. The seed of David. Listen, please, we're almost done. Is meant to draw Timothy's mind to a very specific reality of Jesus Christ.

When he says, Remember Jesus Christ. Raised from the dead. The seed of David. He's meant to draw a very specific picture of Jesus to mind. Now, give me a little slack here, because I don't mean to be overly negative and in one direction, but I do want to say this.

Many pastors and Christians continually try to comfort chronically anxious Christians with a gentle and lowly Jesus. But we have, in the Bible, the picture of Christ used by Paul to strengthen those about to suffer.

[35 : 35] And it is not, it is not, the gentle and lowly Jesus. It is the cosmic Christ. It is the Christ seated at the right hand of the Father, ruling over all principalities and powers, who will rule until his enemies are made his footstool.

We know which Christ, which picture of Christ, is brought to the comfort of the saints when they're about to suffer. And it is the Christ who sits at the right hand of the Father, ruling over all things. Again, from Warfield. Paul bids Timothy, in the midst of all the besetting perplexities and dangers, which encompassed him, to strengthen his heart by bearing constantly in remembrance, not Jesus Christ's impliciter, but Jesus Christ conceived specifically specifically as the Lord of the universe, who was dead, but now lives again and abides forever in the power of an endless life as the royal seed of David ascended in triumph to his eternal throne.

In verse 9, Paul says, that he is in chains, but the word of God is not bound. Why is the word of God not bound? The word of God is not restricted in any way because Jesus Christ, the living word, reigns at the right hand of the Father with everything at his footstool.

And we could say, if we know church history, that this thought, this cosmic Christ has dominated the hearts and minds of countless men and women who have endured all the way to the end.

[37 : 09] And it has always been intended to be our primary source of strength when Jesus gave his marching orders to the disciples to face the gunfire of every principality and power and bring his gospel into the world, he gave them one view of himself in particular to hold on to.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore. Go into the nations. Share in suffering as a soldier.

Win the race. Run the race to win the prize. Sow in tears and reap in joy. All as you remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the seed of David.

Of all the things we could use our minds to consider, the one thing which seems most potent to keep us in persevering shape is to think of Jesus Christ reigning as he is even now in triumph. They tried to kill him. They tried to wipe him away. And all they did was fulfill the very purposes of God to put Jesus Christ on the throne of the universe.

[38 : 30] We have access to that incredible strength because he endured the punishment for our sin on the cross.

And we end every service by celebrating his great gift to us represented by this bread and this wine. I'm going to read to you from Mark 14, 22 through 24, where it says, as they were eating, he, Jesus, took bread and after blessing, it broke it and gave it to them and said, take, this is my body.

And he took a cup and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them and they all drank of it. And he said to them, this is the blood of my covenant, which is poured out for many.

It is good, as the book of Hebrews says, it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace. And you have grace that you can touch and taste and see before you this morning to come and celebrate this Lord Jesus, who though he is very high, became very low so that you might reign with him forever.

Let me pray. Oh great God, fill our hearts with faith as we come before your table. Give us the courage that can only come from seeing Christ. Fill our hearts with strength, Lord.

[40 : 01] Strengthen our hearts with grace. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.