

Be Strong When Suffering for the Gospel

1. Like a Soldier, an Athlete, and a Farmer
2. By Remembering Jesus and His Word

Suffering for the Gospel

- You'd think: if smone did smthng very kind/hlpfl for you or gave smthng very valbl/imp, you'd think you'd be grateful, or at very least not resntfl. Yet quite often, ppl who do good receive bad in return. Think, for instance: nurses/med staff; police; road cnstrctn wrkrs; trckrs. Sad reality: those who do/bring good are often met w/rejctn, resntmnt, hostility. We even have phrases for it: you bite hand feeds; or, no good deed goes unpunshd. It's unfrtnt, but we know it's true.
- Today J tchs us: it's true not only out in wrld but also in ch. When ch, when we Xians share Gos – nthng more imp/valbl than Gos; Gos: msg of God's love/wrld, his plan/slvtn to rescue us fr despr/sin thru dth/res/Son & bring us self in hvn frvr – when we share that life-chngng msg/Gos, you'd think ppl'd receive it well. Some do; many don't. Look at J! J: Gos incarnate; yet today we see him mckd/rjctd in hmtwn – little preview of mckry/rjctn he'll exprnc on cross. We also see prpht Ezkl sent by Lord to grp/ppl Lord proms'll reject him. And here we see Paul, in prison, as says **“chained like crmnl,”** spcfely for sharing Gos. And if it's true for J, Ezkl, Paul, cntlss other prphts/discs, then we have no reason expt it be any diff for any/us. In fact, J assures us: sharing Gos will always be met w/rejctn. **“Blsd are you whn ppl insult you, persct you and falsely say all kinds/evil agnst you bec/me. Rejc & be glad, bec great is your reward in hvn, for in same way they persctd prphts who were before you”** (Mt 5:11-12). And it's not just for prs, tchrs, called wrkrs; this applies to anyone who bears/shares name/J: congs, ch bodies, ch leaders/membs – any Xian. J says we all will suffer bec of Gos!
- Well, yikes! Sounds discrgng! Yeah, it does! That's why in our psg for today, 2 Tim 2, Paul, whose ministry brght him sffrng, writes to young Pr Tim, whose ministry wld bring him sffrng, says: **vs. 1, 3a.** IOW, TITLE, says Paul to Tim, you, me, our cong, our synod, all Xians. In face of certain hardship in carrying out Grt Comsn, Paul: TITLE.

Like a Soldier, an Athlete, and a Farmer

- **Vs. 1;** then **vs. 3a-like** – then does smthng kinda neat: uses exmpl of 3 diff types/ppl, occptns to show how be strng. 1st, talks re soldier: **vs. 3-4.** Soldiers: strng ppl! This Indpndc Day wknd, and ev Mem/Vets Day, very imp for us pause & give thnks for brave w/m armed forces who make it possbl for us enjoy frdms we share as Amrnns. We've got number vets & active duty or reserve soldiers in our cong; and we thank you for serving our ntn! Being soldier: grueling task! Think training, marching, combat, stress, danger! Paul's point here: being soldier is hard wrk; got to be strng/focused; cannot be distrcd by civln affairs. Only then will a soldier receive praise/superior. Sharing J is like being soldier: hard wrk; got to be strng/focused; cannot be dstrcd by temptns/wrld. Only then will we hear our superior: **“Well done, good/fthfl servant”** (Mt 25:21).
- Next, athlete: **vs. 5.** Sports: big deal in our culture; and this summer: Summer Olympics in Paris. We love cheering on athletes as compete at highest level. Paul's point here: athletes got to be strng; got put in hard wrk, so when comes time for compttn, they're ready to go. And only way get gold medal: compete **“acc to rules.”** Sharing J is like being athlete: it's hard wrk; takes endrnc & dedctn; and can't just prch/tch whtvr you want; have to follow **“rules,”** which means: have to tch GW corrcly; w/o falsehd. That's how you **“receive victor's crown.”**
- Finally, farmer. **Vs. 6.** We have lot farmers in our cong, raising crops or livestock; lot of kids in 4H & FFA. Being a farmer is hard wrk; I respect you farmers for what you do! Paul: **vs. 6;** you should be able enjoy fruits/labor. Sharing J is like being farmer: when you study Word & share Word, you also grow persnly in Word, strengthnd in Word, blessed by Word.
- So today, Paul: when sffrng for Gos, need be strng, like soldier, athlete, farmer. All 3 jobs take lot hard wrk, focus, dedctn. But in end, they bring wndrfl bssngs. It's like that w/sharing J too. The hard wrk of carrying out Grt Comsn brings persnl growth in Word (share/crops); victor's crown in hvn; and the commndtn/Lord, **“Well done, good/faithful servant.”** So, to Tim/you/me, Paul: be strng!

By Remembering Jesus and His Word

- Okay, but really, how am I supposed to do that? I look at myself: I'm not soldier, athlete, farmer. I'm not sure I'm very good at sharing my faith. You ever feel same way? How are we supposed to be strong when faced w/fierce oppstn/sffrng for being a Xian? Well, here's how: we can TITLE by remmbrng J & Wrđ! That's what Paul says here: **vs. 8**. It was so persnl to Paul: calls it "my" Gos. And we can all say same thing. It's not just the Gos, some philspchl wrldvw called Xianity. No, this is "my" Gos, touches me, applies to me, it's mine. **Vs. 8a**. Name J, Yeshua, means Sav; remem: Gabrl told Josph, "**You are to give him name J bec save ppl sins**" (Mt 1:21). Xp: not name but title for J. Xp = Anntd One, Mes, the one God promsd all way back in OT who'd smday come, delvr ppl fr slavry/sin. **Vs. 8ab**, which takes us right back to HW, remnds us: J came "**not be servd but serve, give life ransom many**" (Mt 20:28). On cross J offrd up life in terrbl agony in our place, as our sub, so that his dth made full pymnt/sins; died saying "**Finshd.**" Then buried; then descndd into hell to proclm vctry/Stn. And then walked out tomb! Came back to life! That's my/our Gos! **Vs. 8abc**. Dvd lived 1k yrs before J. And thsnds yrs before Dvd, Lord made prom to A&E, that he'd send his Son. And that prom: repeated thruout centrs, incl to Dvd, until finally that prom: fulfilled in great Dvd's greater Son, JC, **vs. 8bc**. So **vs. 8c** means God always keeps his proms! That's my/our Gos.

Be Strong!

- Now, why it is that so many ppl reject that Gos – either by ignoring, mocking, full-out opposing – is beyond me. And it's daunting think: smthng so precious to me will cause me great suffrng. But Paul: **vs. 8**. And this: what makes/keeps us strng. **Vs. 1**. Don't try be strng in self; be strng in God's grace. Some: feeling strng in faith; others weak. Some: have lot support fr Xian frnds; others feel all alone. Some: had really positive exprncs sharing your faith; others faced fierce oppstn. Paul exprncd it all: **vs. 8d-9**, bec God not chained. Lord is: almighty; in control; strng. And he gives us the strngth to endure the hardships we are sure to face for bearing/sharing his name.
- Xianity: no walk/park, and nvr has been. Ezkl, Paul, apstls, prphts, J – they all suffrd for sharing most beautfl/imp msg of all. And we will too – as indivdls, cong, synod, as Ch/God. What we need do: fortify our detrmntn/resolve to take up cross & follow J, w/strength that comes only fr him. So, sis/bro/Xp: TITLE/PARTS. "**And peace/God, which trnsends all undrstndng, will guard your hrts/minds in CJ**" (Php 4:7).

2 Timothy 2:1-13

¹You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ²And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. ³Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer. ⁵Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor's crown except by competing according to the rules. ⁶The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. ⁷Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.

⁸Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, ⁹for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained. ¹⁰Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

¹¹Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; ¹²if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; ¹³if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself.