

Series Title: **'Stronger: Discovering Truths for a Resilient Life'**

Message Title: **'Who Will You Trust with Your Tears?'**

Scripture Source: **2 Timothy 1:1-5**

Date: Sunday, October 9, 2016

Teacher: John Garner

Stronger

In what area of life do you wish you were stronger or could experience strength to face certain realities? What instinctively comes to mind? Is it stronger and healthier relationships? Is it inner strength to manage your emotions more wisely...and behave more maturely? Is it a stronger faith? Is it a yearning and need for a stronger character to endure hardships and disappointments? Is it strength to resist temptation...especially the kinds of enticements that appeal to you deeply and relentlessly?

We know how unsettling it is to feel weak, to feel strength of will or heart wane and falter. We know how uneasy we feel when we wonder if it is worth it to pursue maturity of character and faith in God. Illustrate:

God's intention is that we would grow stronger and wiser in the journey of life. Isaiah 40:29-31. Yet, we must choose to connect with God and trust him for inner strength and clarity of purpose for the life He purposes for us to engage in and live out in the flow of everyday life.

But...

What if I am struggling with anxiety, fear, and uncertainty? What if strength and resilience is lacking? What do I do then? Where do I turn...who do I turn to?

God's word offers real, tangible hope for us. We are not abandoned by God. We may feel we are, yet we have a choice before us. Will I believe God exists and is good, powerful, and loving...or not?

Discovering Strength in the Face of Weakness: 2 Timothy 1:1-5 (Compare 2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

Over the next number of weeks we will explore a letter written by a veteran follower of Jesus to his beloved friend in the Christian faith, a younger man named Timothy. A little background: at the time of writing, Paul the veteran is imprisoned in the city of Rome, during the rule of Nero, about 66-67 AD. Paul senses that the clock is ticking, his time on earth is coming to a close. He wants to see his friend again, and he wants to encourage his protégé to be strong in faith, hope, and love in the face of challenging realities in life and ministry.

Timothy is pastoring a community of faith in the ancient city of Ephesus. He has been entrusted with this ministry by the apostle Paul. Yet, he is prone to anxiety and fear which can breed tentativeness and the tendency to withdraw and be isolated. Paul knows this about Timothy. He clearly alludes to this in another letter, 1 Corinthians 16:10-11. Also, verse 7 and 1 Timothy 4:23.

Paul warmly greets his 'son in the faith' in verses 1-2. Paul had met Timothy years earlier on the first of his 4 missionary trips, his first included Lystra as recorded in Acts 16:1-2. Timothy became a valued team member, and Paul spoke warmly and well of him. Philippians 2:19-22. Timothy has so much going for him, such potential. Yet, he struggled with fears and uncertainties within. Just like most of us.

The Gift of a Trustworthy and Insightful Friend: 2 Timothy 1:3-5

God knew that Timothy was faltering in living wisely and with strength and clarity of purpose. And God spoke words of reassurance and reminder to Timothy, words that would have breathed life into Timothy's timid soul.

Reassuring Insight: 1. 'Timothy, I know your tears and the stories behind them.' Vs. 4 Paul doesn't scold or shame Timothy for his tears. Tears born of fear, nervousness or uncertainty. He acknowledges them with graciousness. Timothy could trust Paul with his tears and the reasons behind them.

Personal Reflection: Who can you entrust your tears, and the stories behind them to? For many of us, we struggle with showing weakness, with shedding tears. We feel vulnerable and wonder what people will think of us...and say about us, in person or on line. We tend to withdraw and hide, with our tears and the reasons for them. We bottle up our feelings and put on a mask of adequacy and strength, when we feel the opposite.

Tears matter to God. Psalm 56:8 *"Record my lament: list my tears on your scroll – are they not in your record?"* or an alternative reading *"put my tears in your wineskin."*

Job 16:20 *"My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God..."*

Lamentations 1:16 *"This is why I weep and my eyes overflow with tears."*

Hebrews 5:7 *"During the years of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud crying and tears to the one who could save him from death..."*

Your tears and the reasons for them matter to God. Be honest with God, and if we can help you, let's talk. Ask God for a trustworthy friend who you can trust with your salty tears and unedited stories. That is one compelling reason for consistent engagement in church life, Sundays and between Sundays in a well led Journey Group, discovering safe place for real tears.

A Timely Reminder: 2 Timothy 1:5

Paul clearly and strongly reminds Timothy that he has full confidence in the genuineness of Timothy's faith in God. He is not play acting. That's the meaning behind the word 'sincere'...without pretense, not a hypocrite putting on a religious mask that is not representative of reality.

'Timothy, you are the 'real deal' spiritually. I have no doubt about that. God has given you strengthening resources and a tremendous purpose for living. Rise strong Timothy, rise strong.'

Personal Reflection: Do you have a genuine faith in Jesus? Have you come clean with God about your sin and need for forgiveness? If not, why not? What holds you back? Come clean with God today...about your questions, your hesitations, your longing for forgiveness.

Many of us are followers of Jesus...are we growing in genuineness and honesty of faith, that includes being real about struggle, but refusing to be defined and imprisoned by that struggle?

Place yourself in environments that can help you grow stronger in faith, and wiser in perspective about life, faith and God...and your purpose on this planet.

What One Truth Can You Take Home Today?

Is it about your tears and the story behind them? Who can you trust with your tears? What environments can you choose to place yourself in to grow stronger in faith, hope, and love? Cultivate specific relationships...with God and a few others, where honesty about life is valued and comfort, insight, and reassurances are passed on that help strengthen who you are, where you are.