



LET'S BEGIN HERE

The road to maturity as a Christian is not a flowered path of ease. According to Chuck Swindoll,

The road we travel from earth to heaven is filled with potholes and detours and sharp curves, dangerous drop-offs and numerous obstacles. It is neither easy nor simple. Never forget this: when you enter the Christian life, you enter a battleground, not a playground. . . . It is not God's desire to make us feel good; it is God's desire to grow us up. And the road that leads to maturity is rough and rugged.

We mature the most and learn the most valuable life lessons during periods of affliction, not comfort. The reason: affliction *forces* us to grow. The stronger the wind blows the branches, the deeper the roots sink into the soil to stabilize the tree. Similarly, the more treacherous the way, the more intensely we listen to the voice of our Guide, Jesus, and the tighter we cling to His hand. Suffering forces us to depend on God's grace—and there's no greater spiritual power to help us mature than grace.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Read 2 Timothy 2:1–13. Notice three sections in this passage about the road to maturity: preparing for the difficult journey (2:1–2), traveling the rough and rugged road (2:3–7, 9–10), and staying on the road when it seems unbearable (2:8, 11–13).



Searching the Scriptures Study Tool

To aid your Bible study, we recommend consulting a good Bible commentary such as Chuck Swindoll's volume, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, from the Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary series. Another handy study aid is a concordance that includes the meaning of Greek words, such as *The Strongest NASB Exhaustive Concordance*. These and other Bible study resources can be obtained in the Insight for Living Ministries Web store.

Quotable

*It is God's desire
to grow us up.
And the road that
leads to maturity
is a rough and
rugged road.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



Preparing for the Difficult Journey (2 Timothy 2:1–2)

To prepare Timothy for the difficult journey, Paul urged him to pack his bags full of grace to help him through hardship, pain, and sorrow.

Timothy, my dear son, be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus.
(2 Timothy 2:1)

Observation: What Do You See?

Let's observe 2 Timothy 2:1 by studying the phrase, "be strong," which in Greek is the word, *endynamōō*. Look up the word *strong* in your concordance, find 2 Timothy 2:1 in the list, and then note the Greek key number, in this case, 1743. Look up the number in the back of the concordance. What definition do you find?

You can also look up this Greek word's definition online at <https://lumina.bible.org>. Locate 2 Timothy 2:1, and then click "Greek" on the right panel. Slowly move your cursor over the words in the Greek text of this verse. An explanation of each word appears below in a box. Find the Greek word for "be strong" and its definition, which is "1) to be strong, endue with strength, strengthen 2) to receive strength, be strengthened, increase in strength."¹ The morphology is verb, imperative (a command), present tense (an ongoing process, "keep on"), and passive (we receive the action).

Interpretation: What Does the Verse Mean?

Chuck Swindoll puts all the pieces together in his interpretation of Paul's meaning of *endynamōō*:

So the command is best translated, "keep on being empowered." Theologians call this kind of passive verb a "divine passive," because it strongly implies divine agency. In other words, God does the empowering, so our responsibility is to submit to His work and to cooperate with it.²

Read again 2 Timothy 2:1, and imagine Paul writing this present, passive command to you. Replace Timothy's name with yours, and put the verse in your own words based on what you've learned so far. In your interpretive paraphrase, "grace" is the *means* of power and "in Christ Jesus" is the *source* of power.



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Traveling a Rough and Rugged Road

2 Timothy 2:1–13

Correlation: How Do Other Verses Compare?

Paul himself modeled a life divinely empowered by God through grace. Read the following verses, and write down what you discover about the role of grace in Paul's life.

1 Corinthians 15:9–10

2 Corinthians 12:9–10

No wonder Paul is considered the “apostle of grace.” Praising God from the rooftops, he exclaimed, in so many words, that “God's grace . . .

- rescued me when I didn't deserve to be rescued,
- reached me when I wasn't even searching for it,
- empowered me when I faced challenges,
- enabled me when I could hardly go on,
- sustained me when I was weak, and
- kept me going during pain and sorrow.”

Application: What Does the Verse Mean to Me?

Paul wanted Timothy—and us—to experience the same grace that strengthened him through every trial on his rugged road to maturity. How can grace help you on your journey today?



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Traveling a Rough and Rugged Road

2 Timothy 2:1–13

Having taught Timothy the spiritual truths he needed for the journey, Paul then urged Timothy to “entrust these [lessons] to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2 NASB). And so through history, the baton of truth passed from teacher to teacher to us—preparing us to travel the rough and rugged road.

Traveling the Rough and Rugged Road

In this section, Paul highlights three metaphors and two models to communicate the characteristics needed to make it through the difficult journey. Read 2 Timothy 2:3–7, 9–10, and list these characteristics and how you can apply them to your situation.

Metaphors and Models	Characteristics	Application
Like a Soldier 2 Timothy 2:3–4		
Like an Athlete 2 Timothy 2:5		
Like a Farmer 2 Timothy 2:6		
Like Christ and Paul 2 Timothy 2:8–10		

Paul’s descriptions warn Timothy of the hardships ahead and what will be required of him, so that he will stay on the road when the way seems unbearable.



Staying on the Road When It Seems Unbearable

Two principles emerge from 2 Timothy 2:7 and 2:11–13 to guard us against disillusionment:

- *Take time to reflect* (2:7)
- *Hold fast to the promises* (2:11–13)

Paul told Timothy, “Think about what I am saying. The Lord will help you understand all these things” (2:7). When suffering, *take time to reflect* on the Lord’s point of view. He will help you see your trials from a divine perspective, just as He helped Paul see his “thorn in my flesh” as an opportunity for Christ’s power to work through him (2 Corinthians 12:9–10).

Also, when a landslide of suffering causes you to slip, *hold fast to the promises* that Paul listed in 2 Timothy 2:11–13—promises that we will “live with Him” and “reign with Him” and that He “remains faithful” even when our faith weakens into doubt.

How might these promises have strengthened Paul’s resolve to endure to the end? How about you? How do they brace your faith?

Bring It Home

To wrap up, think back to Paul’s opening command: “be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:1). Consider the examples Paul listed who are *being* strong: the soldier, athlete, farmer, Christ, and himself. Reflect on the promises to those who are enduring yet feeling their faith waver.

How does this passage instruct and encourage you to “be strong” on the rough and rugged road to maturity? What can you do to put this principle into practice and teach it to someone else?





A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the mystery of Your plan that includes life through death, reigning in heaven through hardship on earth, and Your faithfulness in response to my weakness and doubt. I come to the cross to find a Companion on the road of suffering—Your Son. Fill me with the hope of the empty tomb and the power of grace to lead me to my journey's end. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Lumina.org, <https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Timothy+2>, accessed Aug. 7, 2017.
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, vol. 11, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2014), 190.



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Traveling a Rough and Rugged Road

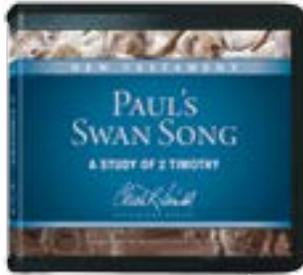
2 Timothy 2:1–13

SEARCHING
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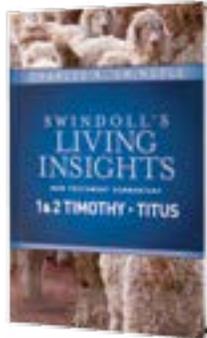
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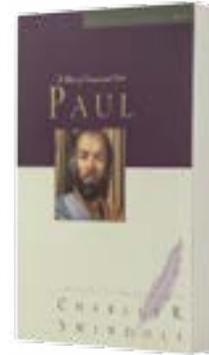
Tools for Digging Deeper



Paul's Swan Song:
A Study of 2 Timothy
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For the 2017 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by the Pastoral Ministries Department in collaboration with Mark Tobey, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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