

# *Empowered by Grace!*

*“You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”*

2 Timothy 2:1

## **Strengthened by Grace**

If you've done some carpentry, you've probably tried pulling out some very stubborn nails. The strength of a hammer may not be sufficient so you've had to bring in a pinch bar, that two- or three-foot metal rod with claws on the end. With the power from the pinch bar, you could wrench the nails out.

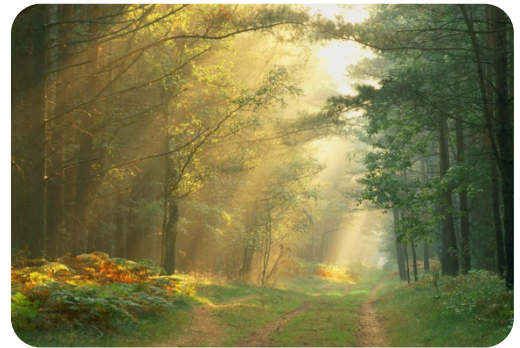
As helpless as we can be with just a hammer, we are even more helpless without God. As the pinch bar helps us with nails, God equips us for faithful stewardship. God enables us to understand that all we are, have, and do are the result of God's grace in Christ. God's grace not only brings us salvation, it trains *“us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and Godly lives in the present age”* (Titus 2:11-12). Knowing our lives are gifts from God's grace, we live our lives in gratitude for who God is and what God has done for us. God's purpose becomes our purpose. Strengthened by grace, we seek to do God's will leading to productive and abundant lives.

Even though we are sinful and undeserving, God loves us and wants only the best for us. Through faith, he tells us *“Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might”* (Ephesians 6:10). Being in a relationship with God through his Son, Jesus, our lives have purpose, and we are changed from being self-centered, selfish people to people who serve God by loving and serving others through our faithful stewardship.

By his grace, God equips and energizes us to do our best. The Apostle Paul tells us to *“put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator”* (Colossians 3:10). Being renewed by God's grace, we live the Godly lives he calls us to live. We live a new life marked by the mysterious union with Jesus described by Paul in these words: *“It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me”* (Galatians 2:20). God directs us to areas and activities he wants us to pursue. God takes ordinary people like us and does extraordinary things through us. We become his hands, feet, and mouth.

## **Faithful Stewardship**

Stewardship is more than giving some money and a token amount of time. Stewardship is our response to the faith that God gives us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel. Stewardship is faith in action. Faith gives us access to God's endless source of grace and power, and faith produces the works of love that we do in Christ. Through the continued reading and study of God's Word and through faithful attendance at the Lord's Table, we are nourished, strengthened, and sustained in our faith for faithful stewardship.



God's stewards are on a lifetime journey of faith. In this journey, God is changing us from owners to stewards, from bondage to freedom, and from a sense of obligation to joyful obedience. The journey moves forward as our relationship with and our dependence on Christ grows. In our journey, God calls each of us to be faithful in our living, serving, witnessing, and giving. The steps we take are sometimes large, sometimes small, and sometimes even backward.

As stewards, we understand that we are managers, not owners of what God has entrusted to us. God is the creator and owner of the universe. *"For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills"* (Psalm 50:10). We have been given the responsibility of managing God's property according to his will wisely and effectively. As faithful stewards, our wills and purposes become one with God's.

Our lives as stewards do not start or stop at certain times of the day or days of the week or month. We are not stewards merely on Sundays or other special days. As stewards for Christ, we are to be devoted to a full-time effort and commitment to serve the Lord with our lives and possessions. Faithful stewardship requires our entire beings, and involves both our attitudes and our actions. It is a commitment of all that we are and all that we have to God's glory.



**Empowered by grace ... go and be a faithful steward!**