

## Strengthened by Grace

Hebrews 13:9

*“Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; **for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were so occupied were not benefited.**”*

We all want something good to come our way. Our text tells us something that is incredibly good for every single one of us: “It is good for my heart to be strengthened by grace.” That’s really good news.

### I. This verse tells me something good about my *entire life*.

The word “heart” (Gr. *kardia*) occurs over 1,000 times in the Bible. The ancients used this word to denote the whole person—the physical *and* the emotional–intellectual–spiritual core of a person. Abraham gave food to guests to “*sustain their hearts*” (Gen. 18:5). This is the physical use of *kardia*. “*God sees not as man, for man looks at the outward ... but God looks at the heart*” (I Samuel 16:7).

**A. The word speaks of your desires or your will** (“*May God grant you your **heart’s** desire*”—Ps. 20:4).

**B. The word speaks of your feelings and emotions** (“*A happy **heart** makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit*” – Prov. 15:13; “*a cheerful **heart** is good medicine*” – Prov. 17:22).

**C. The word speaks of your thoughts or understanding** (“*Wisdom will enter your heart*” – Prov. 2:10) is translated “*wisdom will come into your **understanding***” because both are the same thing).

So what is the good news about your emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual well-being?

### II. This verse tells me *my entire life can be strengthened*.

The word translated strengthened (Gr. *bebaiousthai*) is used in various forms eight times in the NT. It means to “establish” or “strengthen” or “confirm.” The person who is strengthened is somebody who is “not carried around” or “blown around” emotionally, intellectually, or spiritually. The best English synonym would be “rock solid.” I recently heard Hugh Jackman describe his father as a “rock.”

### III. This verse tells me that *it is a good thing for my entire life to be strengthened by grace*.

A. W. Tozer defines grace: “*Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines him to bestow benefits on the undeserving.*” Grace is not merely unmerited favor; *it is favor bestowed on sinners who deserve justice and wrath.* Showing kindness to a stranger is “unmerited favor”; doing good to one’s enemies is more the spirit of grace (see Luke 6:27-36). Grace is not a dormant or abstract quality, but it is a dynamic, active principle: “*The grace of God has appeared ... instructing us*” (Titus 2:11-12). To be strengthened by grace is something really, really good, but how do we become strong by it?

**A. Remember those who’ve gone before** and learn from their lives and imitate their faith.

“Remember those who led you ... considering the end of their life ... imitate their faith” (v. 7). We talked about how people ended their lives—it’s the overcomers who are the encouragers.

**B. Reflect on the immutability of Jesus Christ.** He never changes. He is faithful when you are not.

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever” (v. 8). Think on this truth. Meditate on it. He is strong when you are not. He loves when you do not. He never changes. He never mutates.

**C. Resist the temptation to go after strange doctrines.**

This is our verse. “*Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings ... not by foods*” (v. 9). There is always some newfangled teaching about food, aromatic spices; things that Christians should eat, shouldn’t eat; should drink and shouldn’t drink. At the heart of each of these new teachings is the belief that God is more honored, more pleased, more loved by you. Resist it!