

October 19, 2025

2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

“God’s Word Is God’s Strength!”

Pilgrim Lutheran Church  
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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Vladimir Shmondenko is an amazing powerlifter from Ukraine. He is 25 years old, 5'11, and somewhere around 172 lbs. He looks rather small and like a novice, or a weakling in his janitor's outfit around other muscular and in-shape people in the gym. But, his deadlift record is 639 lbs. His squat record is 463 lbs. And his bench press record is 320 lbs, which makes him super strong.

What further separates Vladimir, from countless other fitness influencers, is the comedic twist he brings to his strength. His alter ego, Anatoly, is a character he performs with believability. He acts like a silly janitor with a mop that he holds and operates normally but is really 71 lbs. Or, he sometimes acts like an old, feeble man way past his prime. After people laugh or get irritated with him, he lifts their weights like they were nothing - walks around with them - does helicopters with the bar on his shoulders - or lifts the weight over his head with one hand.

The question is often raised: How is he so strong? With good genetics, discipline and continuous training, a well-balanced diet, and an intense focus on performance, he has mastered his craft. And, incidentally, there is no evidence of any steroid use, and his background and training supports this.

God's Word looks small and nothing. It appears to be silly to others. Some call it weak when compared to all the worldly wisdom that people want to hear. People laugh or get irritated with it as the Pastor preaches it, or as the silly Christian holds onto it and uses it in what they say and do. But what people fail to see is that hidden, in the deceptively weak pages of the Bible, is truly the very breath of the living One who made us all and saved us. **God's Word is God's Strength!** He spoke and everything came to be. He breathed into the nostrils of the first man and he became a living being. And when humanity lost its breath in the rebellion of selfish desires and sin, the Word of the Father became one of us and saved us from sin and death. And by the Holy Spirit, who is the breath of Christ and the Father, the words of the Bible raise us from death to life, granting us the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life!

**God's Word is God's Strength!** It reminds me of the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:25, "For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." The heart and center of the Bible is the person and work of Jesus Christ. The cross, with its forgiveness and promise of heaven, is true power. That is why Paul says in Phil. 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." This verse underscores the truth and our belief that Christ empowers us to overcome challenges and fulfill what God has designed for us to do even though we ourselves are weak. In fact, his power is even perfected in weakness. With Jesus, when we are weak, then we are strong. Here, the paradox of divine strength is evident: God's power is most fully realized when we realize our weakness.

When David was confronted by his enemies and cried out for God to deliver him from those who work evil, he said in Psalm 59, "O my Strength, I will watch for you, for you, O God, are my fortress. But I will sing of your strength; I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning. For you have been to me a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress. O my Strength, I will sing praises to you, for you, O God, are my fortress, the God who shows me steadfast love."

Please allow me to repeat those last words again: “O my Strength, I will sing praises to you, for you, O God, are my fortress, the God who shows me steadfast love.” In those words, “steadfast love,” we have Jesus. In Jesus, is the steadfast love of the Father that we may not perish but have eternal life. In Jesus, is our place of refuge that sees us through all the storms of life. You see, when we have his sacrifice for sin and death we have forgiveness, the promise of his care in this messed up life, and the anticipation of a better thing to come in his beautiful presence.

The understanding of God as our strength in his one and only Son, who comes to us by the Holy Spirit working in the Word, has profound implications for the life of a believer. It calls for us to rely on God’s strength rather than our own. By God’s strength, our faith is created to passively receive God’s promises and person. For as long as we live down here, we are invited to seek God’s strength through his Word, which always points us to the love of Christ. Moreover, we are invited to talk to him in prayer, recognizing that he hears us and really cares for us in such a way that he acts in our lives with our salvation always in mind.

And when we are surrounded by enemies, living in times of adversity, and even attacked by our sinful flesh, Psalm 46:1 reminds us that “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth give way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.” And going back to Psalm 59, when David is terrorized, he will not allow himself to be terrorized, for he says: “... I will sing of your strength; I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning. For you have been to me a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress. O my Strength, I will sing praises to you, for you, O God, are my fortress, the God who shows me steadfast love.” Comforting words!

Once again we are brought to the truth that Jesus is the steadfast love of God who sees us through the hours, days, and seasons of our lives! And Jesus is found in the Bible. We say it with conviction: **God’s Word is God’s Strength!** As our epistle lesson reminds us: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness ...” Indeed! The Bible presents God as the ultimate source of our strength. God’s strength is the foundational truth that sustains and empowers us throughout our spiritual journey until we reach the perfection of his glory. Until that moment when we are face to face with Jesus, we meet him in the Bible, and are invited to trust what is written in the book of Isaiah:

The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint (40:28-31).

Now, if we really believe that **God’s Word Is God’s Strength**, then what does that mean for us who want to be strengthened by God? It’s obvious isn’t it?! You might remember that I said that people

wondered why Anatoly was so strong. Well ... it wasn't because he had poor health, was undisciplined, didn't train, ate candy bars and greasy potato chips all day, and was unfocused. He carefully did what needed to be done to be strong. As Christians, our strength lies in remaining in the gospel and sacraments. Where two or three are gathered, there is Jesus. That's why church and Bible class and receiving the sacrament of the Altar are so important. And there is so much that tries to distract us.

Our epistle lesson is a portion of 2 Timothy. The man, Timothy, was a pastor in Ephesus. When Paul wrote our text, he was in prison for the last time, awaiting execution for his faith in Jesus. He writes his letter to discuss false teaching and the ways in which both pastor and people in the Church will grow strong and reach the goal of faith, the salvation of their souls. Contrary to evil people and impostors who will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived, Paul tells Pastor Timothy to:

continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood [infancy] you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus ... preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching ... fulfill your ministry.

If **God's Word Is God's Strength**, then this is what pastors will preach and this is what God's people will want to hear. Moreover, they will take the time to go to church to hear it and receive the visible Word in the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ under bread and wine. Such zeal to grow strong comes only from the love of Jesus in the forgiveness of sins and the hope of heaven. Perhaps we have not been taking God's Strength all that seriously. There is forgiveness in Jesus for our laziness. But today, may God's strength strengthen us to receive his strength and share it with others!

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott