

"Persevering in an Evil World"
2 Timothy 3:13-14
(Preached at Trinity, September 4, 2022)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Last week we looked at Paul's willingness to set his life forth as a model. And it was also true for Timothy – "Now you followed my teaching . . ."
And it must be true for us as well. We must be willing for others to examine if our lives are a consistent pattern of Christianity.
2. We stopped short of completing Paul's list. He also demonstrated perseverance in the persecution he faced in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra.
It would be easy for us to dismiss these persecutions as referring only to Paul. That his persecutions were not the common experience of Christians and that there is little need for us to observe them as an example for us to follow.
3. This thinking would be false. Paul quickly removes any hope that this might be true.
2 Timothy 3:12 NAU - "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."
 - A. In other words, Paul is saying if you are "in Christ." If you are a Christian, and if you desire to live a Godly life, you will suffer persecution.
 - B. We should never consider trials a strange thing in this life.
1 Peter 4:12 NAU - "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;"
 - C. The Bible teaches this over and over
 - a. The words of our Lord
Matthew 5:10-12 NAU - "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ "Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. ¹² "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."
John 15:18-19 NAU - "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. ¹⁹ "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you."
 - b. This was considered an important aspect of the Apostolic teaching
Acts 14:21-22 NAU - "After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *saying*, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

2. This morning I want us to continue by looking at **Verses 12-14**. In these verses Paul stresses some important points that we must never forget. These things put our present-day trials into perspective.
- A. We live in an evil world that will grow progressively evil.
 - B. We can expect persecution if we live righteously in this evil world.
 - C. As Christians we must continue to be faithful in the face of these trials.
- I. We live in a world that is growing progressively evil
- 2 Timothy 3:13 NAU** - "But evil men and impostors will proceed *from bad* to worse, deceiving and being deceived."
- A. The word for "impostors" is γόης, a hapax legomina that carries the idea of someone who is a deceiver, or an imposter or pretender.
 - 1. This refers to those who deceive concerning their Christian profession and those who deceive concerning their doctrine.
 - 2. Paul has already spent the first part of this chapter warning of these counterfeit Christians.
 - 3. Jesus warned of false Christs and false prophets that would deceive many **Matthew 7:15-16 NAU** - "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ "You will know them by their fruits."
 - 4. Paul adds that this evil condition would grow worse and worse. **2 Timothy 3:13 NAU** - "But evil men and impostors will proceed *from bad* to worse, deceiving and being deceived."
 - 5. Literally this verse suggests an advancement or progress in evil. It contains the same word used in **Verse 9** – "they will not make further progress" In **V.9** we saw that they would not proceed or advance in spiritual understanding. Here we find, however, that the existence of evil men *will* proceed or advance implying a continual advancement of evil upon the world.
 - B. To moderate the expectation of the Thessalonians of the immediate return of Christ Paul warned that the day would not come until a great apostasy and the coming of the man of sin. – **See 2 Thes. 2:1-3; 10-12**
 - 1. By apostasy we are to understand an abandonment of their profession of faith in Christ and a departure from sound doctrine. Paul warns in **2 Timothy 4:3 NAU** - "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine"
 - 2. There was much apostasy even during the early days of the church. The destruction of Jerusalem brought great trial and tribulation and many departed from the faith. But Paul's statement in **Chap. 4:3** is describing the conditions of the entire church age but would grow worse and worse. The apostasy mentioned in **2 Thes.** doesn't occur until the end of history.
 - 3. Paul says this final apostasy will include the presence of the Antichrist. He will be destroyed by Jesus at His coming. **2 Thessalonians 2:8 NAU** - "Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;"

- C. Paul has been talking about conditions that would prevail the entire age of the church.
- 2 Timothy 3:1 NAU** - "But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come."
1. In **2 Thes. 2:7** Paul explains that the mystery of lawlessness was already at work even at the time he was writing.
2 Thessalonians 2:7 NAU - "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work;"
 2. God's restraining grace has always kept evil in check upon the earth. Our own nation has been the benefactor of this common grace. We are now witnessing God progressively withholding this grace. Scripture seems to imply that this restraint will be progressively relaxed
2 Timothy 3:13 NAU - "But evil men and impostors will proceed *from bad to worse*, deceiving and being deceived."
 3. In this Epistle Paul always implies a progression of evil as each warning appears in the future tense
3:1 – "in the last days difficult times will come"
3:13 – "evil men and imposters will proceed from bad to worse"
4:4 – "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine"
 4. Paul says evil men shall wax worse and worse. In such an environment God's people should expect resistance and persecution.
2 Timothy 3:12 NAU - "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."
 5. Note it is not just religious people who will face persecution – it is the godly.
2 Timothy 3:12 NAU - "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."
Matthew 5:10-12 NAU - "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ "Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. ¹² "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."
- D. It is genuine Christianity that can expect hatred by the world
1. Humanity is in a constant state of enmity with God – when we are translated into the Kingdom of light they become at enmity with us
 2. They hate the image of God
 3. Paul described his own life
2 Timothy 3:11 NAU - "persecutions, *and* sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium *and* at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!"
 4. Timothy had shared with Paul in many of his persecutions. He had probably been with Paul in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. Lystra was Timothy's hometown.

5. Paul considered it part of his work to warn Christians of the reality of the difficulties that accompany the Christian life
Acts 14:22 NAU - "strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *saying*, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

II. What must our response be to the ever-increasing evil in the world?

2 Timothy 3:14 NAU - "You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*,"

- A. Paul tells us we must "continue" - μένω – abide, remain, tarry, endure
 1. This carries the idea of pressing on – persevering, not being distracted
 2. It stresses the importance of realizing the nature of this present age with all its dangers – these are evil days.
 3. This means we must not be surprised at opposition or persecution. Living righteously in an evil world is bound to cause conflict.
- B. What does Paul mean by the phrase "the things you have learned and become convinced of"
 1. Paul is referring to the sound doctrine of Scripture
 - a. Notice the next three verses
 "from childhood you have known the sacred writings"
 "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching"
 - b. Timothy had been taught and had studied the Word of God and was convinced of its truth – He must continue in it.
 He must avoid compromise at all cost.
 2. Paul was referring to the things that are non-negotiable.
 3. It is our responsibility to uphold the truth – we must teach it even if few will hear. Even if we suffer for it.
- C. In Paul's letter to the church of Ephesus he warned them to remain alert and spend each moment well because these are evil days
Ephesians 5:15-16 NAU - "Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of your time, because the days are evil." "making the most of" - ἐξαγοράζω - to buy up, *ransom*, *redeem*.
 1. Evil days demand careful attention, intense focus.
 2. Redeem means to recover or rescue – He is telling us to rescue precious time that is being lost. Don't squander away your time like a fool. Treat it as the precious commodity that it is.
 3. It is important that we press on with a serious attitude – that we walk circumspectly - wisely

- D. How do we respond to persecution?
1. Perseverance – ὑπομονή (Patient endurance)
This word is characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose even in the face of the greatest trials and sufferings
Romans 5:3-4 NAU - "And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;"
Matthew 10:22 NAU - "You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured (ὑπομονη) to the end who will be saved."
 2. We are to endure all hardship glorifying God.
1 Peter 4:16 NAU - "but if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name."
 3. This ὑπομονη or perseverance, or endurance is the result of God's saving grace. We WILL persevere until the end
- E. As the people of God we are to be content in every situation
For the one who has found Christ, this life's circumstances lose their power
1 Timothy 6:6-8 NAU - "But godliness *actually* is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. ⁷ For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. ⁸ If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content."
1. This does not mean that we are unaffected by adversity
We are human beings. We all desire nice things. We all desire a life free of difficulty.
 2. A Christian is never turned back because of difficulties
 3. In spite of these difficulties Paul could say at the end of his life
2 Timothy 4:7 – "I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith:"

Conclusion:

We can rest assured that Christ will deliver us from every trial and every persecution; even if it means laying down our life. Nothing shall be able to separate us from His love.
2 Timothy 3:11 NAU - "what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!"
Psalms 34:19 NAU - "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all."