

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy Ch 3:12-15

“Perseverance Beyond Persecution”

As believers we're not to be *persuaded* through *persecutions* but rather we're to *persevere* in the truth of God's Word. *Afflictions* aren't to *affect* us so as to *annihilate* our *active* pursuit of godliness, but rather we're continue in the things which we've learned and been *assured* of. God would have us each come to that place in our lives and in our relationship with Him whereby like the apostle Paul, even knowing the afflictions and persecutions that awaited him, how he'd even been called to a life of suffering as directed by God. Yet he could say with a sense of assurance, knowing that God had his best eternal interests in mind no matter what may befall him circumstantially, *“But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”* Acts 20:24 You see what will it take to move you from your position in Christ? Financial hardship? Perhaps losing your job? Marriage struggles, or not seeing God bring that perfect person in your life as quickly as you think He should?

Remember when John the Baptist was put in prison; just before he was executed he sent word to Jesus via his disciples asking if in fact Jesus was the one that they were looking for, or do we look for another? The point being that John was in prison; now he'd been preaching a pretty hardcore message as the forerunner to the Messiah. He would stand before the crowds that would gather around to hear this message that he had been given by the Spirit and tell them, *“Even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”* Matt 3:10-12

Now that's a serious message! John was sort of that hellfire and brimstone kinda guy and didn't mess around when it came to people's need to repent and get right with God. But here he's been preaching this message with bold confidence telling people to prepare themselves to behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, and the next thing he knows he's thrown in prison with no foreseeable chance for parole. and So he sends word to Jesus, “Are you the One or not?” You see John had assumed that when Messiah showed up, He'd rid Israel of Roman rule, establish His kingdom on earth, and they'd all live happily ever after. But instead he's suffering persecution, sitting around in jail, and in essence his telegram to Jesus was, “Hey, if You're the Man, then lets get this show on the road, bust me out of jail and get to ruling!”

But do you remember Jesus' response? He said, "*Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.*" Matt 11:4-6 You see He was sending John a message, and John knew the scriptures, and the opening of the eyes of the blind, the cleansing of the lepers, and giving life to the dead, these were messianic fulfillments. But the message Jesus was sending him was, "Yes John, I'm the guy." "But blessed is he who's not offended (or made to stumble) because of Me." In other words, "John, things aren't working out exactly like you'd hoped they would, or thought they should, but are those things going to *move* you John? Are you going to be moved away from a relationship with because life's not turning out exactly like you thought it should with Me on your team?"

You see, "Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me?" Things don't always turn out in life exactly the way we believe they should just because we follow Jesus.

We've been considering Christian characteristics, the godly attributes that were exemplified in Paul and Timothy. Hey, they had a solid understanding of the Word of God, a manner of life that could be marked as distinguishably different from the non-believer because they not only knew the Word, but they followed through with what the word said. So much so that they could serve as examples even for other *believers* to pattern their lives after, they had lives laid out before God according to His express and explicit direction and desire. They were men who trusted God for the details of their lives, big things or little it didn't matter, they were earmarked by patience, and understanding with those problematic people or circumstances and situations in life. It was obvious that the Love of God served as the foundation for everything they did and said and endured, they had a stick-to-itiveness when it came to the gospel, and the will of God for their lives that seemed to pull them through the most difficult of times. A lifestyle that for the most of us seems enviable, and you would think that a life like that would be honored with a Nobel peace prize or something. That the world would look up to, admire, and love people of such integrity, of such genuine godly stature, but the fact of the matter is that a truly godly lifestyle opens the door and invites persecution upon it.

It's like when Jesus seeing the multitudes, went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then we read in Matt ch 5 that He opened His mouth and taught them, (no doubt one of the greatest sermons ever recorded in what's become known as the sermon on the mount). He began to instruct them on the attitudes of the believer, the attitudes which would make for true satisfaction and contentment in this life. He spoke of the individual that would be poverty stricken of spirit, realizing that they were separated from God and that they had no ability within themselves to bridge the gap between them and God. and Upon this realization there's a sorrow and a mourning that comes upon them, and humility that befalls them upon God's comforting of their lives and extending Himself to them though they've done nothing to deserve it and can never pay Him back. But upon realizing what God has done for them it creates this sense of hunger and thirst for righteousness, realizing the mercy that's been shown them, they in turn become merciful.

He speaks of the purity of heart of such an individual delicately guarding their love relationship with God, desiring to do nothing that would violate such a precious relationship. and Now having been reconciled to God, having made peace with God they have in them both the propensity and desire to make peace with others. Before all they were concerned with was themselves, now they want to do the peaceable thing, that which is right and fair before others.

You read that list and your heart says, “Yes” what an admirable position to be in, who wouldn’t love such a person? and Then you read the next couple of vs, *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.”* Matt 5:10-12 and Your brain just sort of freezes up, you think what do these things have to do with the other things? and You begin to realize that what Jesus is saying is that if anyone truly patterns their lives around godly standards, persecution is sure to follow. Don’t expect the world to stand up and applaud when you do the right thing, to the contrary they’ll shoot out the lip, and shout, “Crucify Him, Crucify Him.” Why, Jesus was very clear, *“Light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.”* John 3:19-20 You see the majority of the world doesn’t do the right thing, they’re in it for themselves, doing whatever, and taking advantage of whoever to get ahead.

But when you come in beside them and begin to do the right thing, that begins to shed light on the wicked self-centered agendas of their lives which results not in *applause* from them toward you, but rather it excites a *hostility* and an *animosity* against you. You become a “do gooder” a “holier than thou” or “bible thumper” and far from being *praised*, you begin to be *persecuted*. Which is why Paul told the disciples in Acts 14:22, *“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”* We read here in vs 12 of ch 3 of 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy

Vs12

You know I have one of those, Bible promise books for your every need, in my office and I searched and searched for this promise in there and it was nowhere to be found. This isn’t one of those promises that we as believers like to claim. We’re all about, *“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”* Phil 4:19 and *“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”* John 14:27 These are words we like to hear, that bring comfort and stability to our lives, but we need to understand that all of God’s Word is inspired, and one promise is just as sure as the other regardless of the connotations or implications that may lie therein. and This is one you can count on, “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”

Jesus said it like this, *“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the*

*world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me."* John 15:18-21 He promised that in this world we would experience tribulation, the bible teaches that as believers we're appointed to afflictions.

And God will often use afflictions to refine your life, and my life, as the dross of this world starts to cling to us and we begin to lose focus on what truly matters in life, we lose eternal perspective. and God will at times allow us to be consumed in the furnace of afflictions that we might be broken down, and melted down that we might be recalibrated in our relationship with Him, refined and purified clinging in desperation to Him once again and shedding the non-essential things of this world that we were holding so tightly to.

God will also allow us to be thrown in the furnace of affliction sometimes not for any thing that's gone awry in our lives, but to the contrary because *we are* right with Him. "What?" Yeah, sometimes you get placed into the furnace of afflictions for the sake of another who needs to see the reality of Jesus Christ Remember Shadrach Meshach and Abed-Nego, they were tossed into the furnace of afflictions, not because they were in sin, but rather because they were right on and they trusted the Lord. But don't you know that God wanted to reveal Himself to that king, and He would use these 3 boys who trusted in Him to do it. The king said if you don't bow down when you hear the music to this idol of myself then you'll be cast immediately into the fiery furnace, then who's the god who will deliver you from my hands? "*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.'*" Dan 3:16-18 In other words God's going to take care of us, but even if He chooses to allow us to be consumed, it doesn't matter we're still not going to serve your gods *or* worship the image of yourself. and Of course you know the story, they wound up getting thrown into the fire that was heated up 7 times hotter than normal, and when they were in that furnace Jesus literally showed up. It was when they were in the fire that the king saw Jesus in their lives.

We read, "*Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come*

*out, and come here." Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire." Dan 3:26 and, "Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this." Dan 3:28-29*

Sounds to me like he had a life altering experience with the One True Living God, why? Because he could see Jesus in the lives of 3 guys who weren't moved when the heat was on in their lives but had purposed to persevere through persecution. God will use your trials to reveal Himself to others around you who are watching your life and seeing how you respond when placed under pressure.

There are a number of words that are key words in vs 12, and They are #1 "All", #2 "Desire" #3 "Godly" #4 "Will", and #5 "Suffer." 1<sup>st</sup> of all we notice this word; "All" there are no exceptions to this rule, this spiritual law if you will. So many people come to Christ seeking to escape all their problems only to find that they've invited more into their lives and so they're offended because of Christ. It's not going like they thought it would, or they believe it should, Jesus is supposed to be the spiritual Santa Claus who takes away all our problems and fulfills our every wish list. and Though it's true that He gives rest for the weary soul, and satisfaction for the spiritual hunger and thirst of anyone who would come to Him, He fills the void and emptiness that's in the human heart. All these things are true, but hard times are apart of life. Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have their nests, but even Jesus didn't have anywhere to lay His head at night, no consistent place to call home, He was a pilgrim and a stranger in this world. and As long as you're shedding light in this dark world, those who love darkness will seek to somehow bring ruin and despair upon your life.

Our second word is "Desire." If you have no desire to lead a life that's set apart to God then you'll probably remedy a huge percentage of heartache and persecution from coming into your life. In the words of John MacArthur, "Self-centered Christians who serve the Lord halfheartedly seldom have to pay a price for their faith. They are of little threat to Satan's work because they are of little benefit to Christ's." So there needs to be that resolve or determination, the will and inclination towards a certain end in the individual. In this case (bringing us to our 3<sup>rd</sup> word), that resolve and desire is to have an end, or lead a life that's "Godly", that takes after Christ. Again if you have little to no desire to emulate Christ, or to lead a life that's set apart to Christ then you'll probably have little to no spiritual conflict in your life. But if you do then #4 is sure to happen, something "Will" happen in your life, not *might* happen in your life, not *could* happen in your life, it *will*, you can count on it, it's a sure bet. What's that? #5 You'll "Suffer," at various times and in various ways you will be persecuted.

Now with Paul he found himself on death row because of his unwillingness to compromise a life set apart to Jesus Christ God had been faithful to deliver him from every affliction so far and he trusted that God could do it again. But even if He chose not to, that was ok; he wasn't going to bow the knee to compromise. and There are Christians all over the world who pay the price of their lives because they refuse to give in to compromise and purpose in their hearts that come what may they're going to live godly in Christ Jesus regardless of what they may cost them, whatever persecutions may come their way.

Exactly what those teachers who try to pervert the Word of God so as to say that if you're godly you'll never suffer, or fall ill, or anything else do with this vs I'll never know. Or the plethora of other vs just like this Old and NT alike, what they do with guys like Paul, or James, or Peter, or even Jesus Himself, the majority of the prophets of old and any of the modern day martyrs that suffer for Jesus Christ I have no clue.

But be that as it may for the present moment in the United States we as a nation don't really have to suffer physical ramifications because we believe in Jesus, though there are those on our home soil who've been beaten, shot, and lost their lives because they love Jesus Christ But primarily we're a people who are verbally and politically assailed and assaulted, for the most part our persecution comes in the form of that which is social. 1 Peter 4:4 describes the mindset of such people saying, *"In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you."* and We all know what it's like to be spoken evil of because we refuse to compromise our relationship with Jesus Christ and if you don't then odds are it's because you are in compromise and need to repent, because to various to degrees and in various ways all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

Vs 13

Now remember that this is a testimony that's still with in the context of the 1<sup>st</sup> vs of this ch, we're talking here about what it's going to be like in the last days, just prior to the return of Christ, the rapture of the church. and There are those who hold the theological position that we're to make this world better and better, that having gone into all the world and seeing the whole world repent, we're to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus so that when the world is converted Jesus will come again and establish His earthly reign. But according to my bible it seems pretty obvious that things aren't going to get better and better, they're going to get worse and worse.

Jesus said, *"And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all."* Luke 17:26-27

The world wasn't converted in the days of Noah, to the contrary sin and rebellion were running rampant, it was business as usual on planet earth, people eating and drinking, marrying and given in marriage not even realizing the tide of God's judgment was on the rise until it was too late. How many were saved in his day? The majority of the world? Eight, 8 people were saved through the grace of God.

Jesus went on, *“Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.”* Luke 17:28-30 Was the majority of Sodom and Gomorrah saved? Not even Lot's wife made it; only he and his 2 daughters were spared. Jesus asked the question, *“When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?”* Luke 18:8 It's not going to get better and better, as much as I hate to rain on anyone's parade. It's going to get worse and worse with those who are blatantly against Christ, and those who are seeking to be fraudulent on the rampage and on the up rise. H.A. Ironside said this, “The nearer we get to the end, the higher is the rising tide of rebellion against God.” People having refused to believe the truth being given over to the lie in droves not only deceiving but being deceived, they taught the lie so long that they've bought the lie themselves.

Vs14-15

So Vs 12, *persecutions* will come, Vs 13 *perilous* times will be on the increase, Vs 14-15 but you must *persevere* in the truth of the Word of God. As we've seen so consistently in this epistle this word, “must” is imperative; it's a command.

We're not to deviate to the left or to the right, checking this out, and studying the other thing, giving ear that opinion or taking heed to how that might be understood. We're to steady on in the solid ground of the Word of God, we're to persevere in that which we've learned and been *assured* of. Don't subject yourself to questionable doctrines, the esoteric obscurities that people want to delve into, the main things are the plain things, and the plain things are the main things. and We're to keep it that way, there are certain things we're assured of by the Word of God, be it the fact that we're born in sin, and in need of a Savior. That God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness, Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, in all ways tempted as we're tempted yet with out sin, and He laid down His life for ours, He hung on the cross, having His life poured out, that everlasting life might be poured into whoever would call upon His name. and We can know that whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved, these are things that we're assured of in the Word of God, and knowing the integrity, and the track record of the individuals we've learned from, we're to continue in them. (Vs 15 we'll tackle next time, God willing).

But maybe you're here and so far from continuing in these things, you've never began in these things, today God is calling you out, He's singled you out so that you might know that He loves you so much that He gave His only begotten Son so that if you will just believe on Him, you'll never perish, but have everlasting life. That's something you can be assured of, God has said it in His Word and He honors His word over all His name, so if you're willing to step outside the realm of reasoning and trust in Him by faith, He'll come into your life, wash and cleanse your heart of sin and unrighteousness and give you a new life and a fresh start in Him. As far as the east is from the west, He'll remove your sin from you, old things will pass away, and all things will be made brand new, and I would encourage you not to resist the tugging of the Holy Spirit upon your heart as it is written today is the day of salvation, if you hear His voice, don't harden your heart.