

TTS Scripture S11 – 2 Tim 3:12-17 – The Godly Example

12 Indeed, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. 13 But wicked people and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived. 14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, 15 and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work. [2 Tim 3:10-17]

[1] BRIEF RECAP FROM LAST TIME:

- Paul has warned Timothy about the deceivers who will emerge within the body.
- We looked at how in verse 10-12 Paul flips over from warning to encouragement and exhortation of Timothy – he lists the things that Timothy has succeeded in doing in contrast to the error of people such as Hymenaeus.
 - What were these things? What did we say last time about their importance?
 - Teaching (not departing from the Gospel he was taught); conduct (he did not deny the power of Godliness);
 - my aim in life (he remained aware of and devoted to Paul's purpose of building the church and proclaiming the Gospel);
 - character (he imitated Paul's unwavering trust in God, unconditional love, patience and grounding/faithful).
 - We did not fully explore faith, love, patience and steadfastness.
 - Persecution – he endured suffering with Paul for the sake of the Truth.
- Our aim in all of this was to realise how, like Timothy, we can be living a Godly example.

[2] PERSECUTION AS A CERTAIN MARK & REFINER OF GODLINESS

“All who desire to live a Godly life in Jesus Christ WILL be persecuted”

- Analyse that sentence – **what can we draw from it?** Who are the people being persecuted and what does that mean?
 - “Godly life” – they are not merely holding doctrine, they are living it. That’s why they draw offense.
 - Having praised Timothy for enduring persecution with him, Paul assures him that to suffer for living out the Truth of the Gospel is a mark that a Christian WILL receive.
 - It’s said as an inevitability – Christ spoke the same way about it to his disciples. “In this life you will have persecution.”
- We may not suffer it directly right now, but Christ is being persecuted, his Church is being persecuted and therefore we are being persecuted in a general sense.
 - On a personal level, if you are living a life in the sight of the world at all – as is our call – where you shine Christ by living in the obedience that He did, denying self, abstaining from sin and challenging the world...you will receive persecution.

“The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.” (1 John 3:1) Christ is a stumbling block to those who don’t know Him (1 Corinthians 1:18-23)

- Anyone who is entrenched in a secular perspective may unsurprisingly persecute or ridicule people claiming to know Him and living a counter-cultural life as a result.
 - Fear of the unknown or what seems to them to be foolish and harmful.
- Persecution can come from within or from without – v.13 says “evil people” and “imposters”
 - The imposters (whom Paul refers to most in letters to Timothy) can be yoked with “the world” to some extent – they are in the church without knowing Christ or representing His word.
 - Like the world they will find offense with true Christianity and mock, isolate etc.

- So long as we hold to what we first heard, we will be persecuted and marginalised – the laws of our society have changed and demand that we go with it.
 - There are people within the church that demand that we go with it.
 - To stand firm is increasingly seen as bigoted and backward.

How does God use this persecution for our good?

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness, and let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” (James 1:2-4)

“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love Him.” (James 1:12)

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our Spirit that we are children of God, and if children then heirs – heirs of God and of fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.” (Romans 8:16-17)

- From these passages we see how the very things Paul praise Timothy for have been produced through the refining process.
 - Patience/steadfastness in James 1, also the obtaining of the eternal reward as we suffer as Christ suffered.
- Notice the condition placed on being children in Romans 8 – “provided we suffer”.
 - What can that mean? Does it mean our salvation is determined by our suffering? Should we start beating ourselves like the flagellants? Should we deliberately seek persecution?
 - NO! What it means is that our faith is made complete when we stand up distinctively in the world and endure all kinds of trial that result from its hostility to the Gospel.
 - Back to James 1:2-4 – steadfastness produced, and the full effect is to be perfect and complete – not perfect as in “without sin”, because in the Bible it means “brought from theory into reality.”

- ALSO, there is a process of separating wheat from tears. **What do I mean by that?**
 - MLJ to support this p240-241 – the purging of the floor so that only those who do not deny the power of godliness remain.
 - Persecution is a time that demands the POWER of godliness to come forth – the rubber hitting the road.
 - Those who have no knowledge of the truth will have neither the motive nor stomach to continue through suffering.
 - They will abandon it due to fear, pride, love of sin, errant philosophy etc.
 - Pliable in the Pilgrims progress/sower parable.
- History proves this – the true church has always been a minority.

[3] THE PSEUDO-PROGRESSIVENESS OF THE PSEUDO-CHRISTIANS

“Evil people and imposters will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived”

- **Those who are always learning and never arrive at the truth (2 Tim 3:7).**
 - That in and of itself is the torment, as they are caught in a cycle in which they are deceived and deceive others.
 - They never reach destination Truth.
 - So there is no positive progression.
 - If anything they move only from bad to worse.
 - That was the real error of Hymenaeus and co.
 - They were coming up with new philosophies according to their pride and desires; they were kicking off pointless and false controversies that entangled the church.
 - The Gospel which they first received was not enough, instead they would keep reinterpreting and adding and disputing.
- **The justice of God** will not be abated forever – “vengeance is mine, I will repay”.
 - As we suffer, we love our enemies and pray for their repentance, but we also have an advocate in Christ who

will one day bring justice on those who have loved sin and error and persecuted the church...

“And He said, “go and say to this people: Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.” (Isaiah 6:9-10)

“And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time near. Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.” “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.” (Revelation 22:10-12)

“It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin.” (Luke 17:2)

What is the contrast with this in v.14...

[4] HOLD FAST AND CONTINUE

“But as for you, CONTINUE in the things you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise through salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”

- If there is one thing to sum up 2 Tim 3:10-17, it is CONTINUE/HOLD TO TRUTH.
 - Timothy has already been living in godliness, so Paul now exhorts him to continue for the sake of the church even though Paul himself is now facing the end of his life.
 - Timothy is to have no fellowship in this progressiveness.

John Piper:

“There is a conservative impulse in Christianity - an impulse to conserve: to remain and to stay and to abide. Be careful here, though! There is also a liberal impulse in Christianity - an impulse to be free from human tradition and to be radical and take risks for God and make changes and to bow before God alone as our ultimate authority, not man. But here Paul stresses the conservative impulse. So we need to ask: Conserve what? Remain in what? Stay with what? Abide in

what? Verse 14 says, "Continue in the things you have learned." But what does that mean? Anything and everything you've learned? No. Verses 14b-15 tell us what Paul has in mind: "... knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings ..." There it is: it's the "sacred writings" - the "Scriptures" - that he should continue in. Don't leave these. Don't "go forward" from these. Don't "advance" from these. Don't think that the "Word of God" is grammar school material while something else (say philosophy or science or technology) is college or graduate school. Don't leave the "sacred writings." Continue in them. Conserve them. Keep them."

Augustine:

"If you believe what you like in the gospels, and reject what you don't like, it is not the gospel you believe, but yourself."

[5] THE VITAL FUNCTION OF SCRIPTURE

What is in the passage about the status and function of scripture?

- **Making us wise unto Salvation through faith in Christ Jesus** – there is no other means by which we can know who Christ is, or the power and meaning of what he has done and how this leads to salvation from sin. ("Faith comes through hearing of the Word" (Romans))
- **It has this power because it is formed from God's breath; it proceeded from his mouth as His word.** The Spirit of God filled those who produced it so that it would testify of His works, His character, His glory, His plan of salvation. (Hebrews 1; OT cases of the Spirit filling prophets etc).
- **Profitable for teaching** – it ensures that we learn of the Truth instead of learning but never arriving at it.
- **Reproof/correction** – it is the standard and the anchor by which we test experiences and doctrines, and are able to call out error. We can rebuke others because it is the objective standard outside of our own hypocrisy and our subjective backgrounds. (Augustine on God's laws transcending our customary laws).

Martyn Lloyd Jones: "It is not experience that enables us to say that we know Him, it is not feelings, not sensations, not vision, not amazing answers to prayer, not thrills, nor the unusual...Here is the first test: what is your life like; how do you live? The test whereby we know we are His is this: are you keeping His commandments?"

- **Training in righteousness** – it not only provides the knowledge required for us to be established as righteous in Christ, but also fuels our sanctification.

"That the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

- Again the word 'complete' – perfect and fulfilled. Like a completed building project.
- We who are in Christ are steeped in holiness as we are steeped in the scriptures, and is thus our equipment to engage in the active works that prove our confidence in our faith.

SUMMARY/APPLICATION

- Today we are facing many challenges in terms of the culture invading the church, and many in the church being deceived and deceiving.
- Contextual theology – scholars twisting everything into interpretations and thereby allowing the postmodern world to invade the church. If we are to achieve the aim that Spurgeon mentioned we must not depart from the Word and know that the Holy Spirit will never lead us beyond or away from it.
- New age and hyper-spirituality as well as legalism on the other extreme.
- Therefore like Timothy we must be a Godly example – as we say at City Church, we must build the church by rightly representing Christ, telling a true story to the culture and to our brothers/sisters that is better than the self-indulgence and falsehood that is taught as the new absolute. We are not to compromise nor to withdraw.
- The one, crucial way in which we can do this is by anchoring ourselves in the Word of God, through which the Spirit enables us to walk steadfastly. The truth will then shine like the unchanging light of an unchanging God, and bring our faith to perfection.