

CONTINUE

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There is a great danger among today's Christians, and that is instability — that is, the inability, or unwillingness, to consistently do that which they know they ought to do. They are too often blatantly disobeying 1st Corinthians 15:58: “...**be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord**”

The Holy Spirit warns us, “**A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.**”¹ When a person becomes unsteady and erratic in one area of life, that imbalance adversely affects all other aspects of one's existence. Having that realization, the Apostle Paul warned the younger preacher, Timothy, to establish strength and stability in his spiritual character. Paul began by declaring in:

📖 2nd Timothy 3:

1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

He went on to declare:

- 10 But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,**
- 11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.**
- 12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.**
- 13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.**
- 14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;**
- 15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.**
- 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:**
- 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.**

Note that key word in verse 14: “**continue**”. Once you learn the truth, and conform yourself to it, and begin doing that which is right, you must *continue* to do it. It's not good enough to begin well, but then drop out of the race. It's not good enough to be faithful for most of your Christian life, but then to stumble and fall just before crossing the finish line. It's not good enough to be a spiritual slaggard though your Christian life, but then at the end finally get busy and accomplish some things for the Lord; though certainly that is

¹ James 1:8

preferable to finishing your life having done nothing for Christ. No, your goal needs to be to *start* well, *continue* well, and *end* well.

Evangelist Dennis Corle preached:

Everybody can do something. I'm afraid too often we allow the circumstances to discourage us, or we allow what we *can't* do to keep us from doing what we *can* do. Instead of doing what we *can* do we fret over what we *can't* do.

But God has always used little things.

It's not a hundred yard dash; it's a marathon. I've got to pace myself and stay at it for a lifetime: do the best I can every day. It doesn't matter what anybody else does; I need to do everything I can do every day for the glory of God.

The concept that the Christian life is “not a hundred yard dash; it's a marathon” is not original with Brother Corle, but I'm glad he reminded us of it and emphasized it. *Faithfulness* is the basis of our eternal rewards, not merely results. Notice the subtle reminder given to us by the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul: “...**be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.**” The Lord has committed Himself to reward not just the great preacher or the great Bible teacher or the great soulwinner or the great counselor or the great ministry leader or the great church administrator. Rather, He is most delighted with the humble saint who may have served unseen, unheard, and unknown, but that believer's life epitomized “**always**”. He was always busy; he was ever faithful; he refused to quit. He was “**steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord**”. Despite any affliction and all opposition, he *continued*!

Jesus taught us, “**If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**”²

And again, “**As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.**” {John 15:9-10} Loving Jesus is not an effusion of emotion; it is steadfast *devotion* that results in profitable *motion*.

We're told about the Original Baptist Church of Jerusalem: “**And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.**”³

Paul and Barnabas preached in the churches of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, “**Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.**”⁴

The presence of “**much tribulation**” does not negate your duty to “**continue in the faith**”. Paul himself testified, “**Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great.**”⁵

The Holy Spirit exhorts us to “**Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving...**”⁶ If you really want to activate the power of God in your life, and see some miracles, you can't just pray a prayer; you must *continue* in prayer.

² John 8:31-32

³ Acts 2:42

⁴ Acts 14:22

⁵ Acts 26:22

⁶ Colossians 4:2

The Apostle Paul instructed the younger preacher, Timothy, **“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”**⁷ That counsel is being given preacher to preacher. If a man of God must **“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them”**, how much more must the average Christian be careful of his behavior and take care with his beliefs?

The Apostle James adds, **“But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”**⁸ The end result of continuing your Bible study is not to have a head filled with knowledge and a spirit puffed up with pride⁹, but to be more effective in the work of God, particularly in one’s local church.

1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

The symptoms of those perilous times are outlined in the next several verses. They describe not only American society in these last days, but the state of the average Christian and the condition of the average church in America today.

To navigate your way through these **“perilous times”**, the Lord Jesus gave you the gift of the pastor to not only teach you from **“the holy scriptures,”** but to use the Word of God **“for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”** in his own life as well as yours, **“That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”**, and thereby equipping himself to be the example you can follow of what a Christian is meant to believe, think, and do. It is on that basis that Paul could challenge Timothy in:

10 But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience...

Paul would speak with the authority that comes from personal experience in:

11 ...what persecutions I endured...

12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

It must be understood that standing for the Lord, and upholding the tenets of Biblical righteousness, will result in opposition, and perhaps outright persecution.¹⁰

⁷ 1st Timothy 4:16

⁸ James 1:25

⁹ **“But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.”** {1st Corinthians 4:19-20} **“Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.”** {1st Corinthians 8:1}

¹⁰ Jesus expressed contempt for those who begin serving Him well, but then surrender their convictions if they are made to suffer for them. **“And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.”** {Mark 4:16-17}

Even within the relatively pristine context of First Century Christianity, Paul was moved to warn the younger preacher in:

- 13 **But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.**

That's not just speaking of politicians, entertainers, and other social influencers; that's describing a growing majority of today's preachers and Bible teachers. They are seducing Christians into ever more carnal lifestyles that result in their behaviors becoming "**worse and worse**". They are "**deceiving**" God's people with perverted bibles,¹¹ false doctrines, tainted music, worldly philosophies, carnal appearances, and even deviant morals. One factor that makes these men "**evil**" is that as they make Christians ever more worldly, they disincentivize them to live holy lives, neutralize their testimonies, deactivate their zeal, impair their prayer power, and rob them of eternal rewards.

It was Paul's concern about such seduction and deception within the churches that moved him to write to the church in Ephesus: "**This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness¹², to work all uncleanness with greediness.**"¹³

Or as Paul urged Timothy in:

- 14 **But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them...**

Continue thou, even if others won't. Continue thou, even if others quit. Continue thou, even if others succumb to the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Continue thou, even if others evidently "**desire again to be in bondage**" as they "**turn ... again to the weak and beggarly elements**" of this present evil world.¹⁴

- 17 **That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.**

Don't let anyone tamper with your mind, tinker with your heart, or tarnish your spirit so that you lose your zeal to "**continue**" to be and to do what *Christ* wants you to be and to do. Strive, instead, to "**be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord**".

¹¹ Every English Bible produced since the publication of Wescott and Hort's utterly corrupt Revised Standard Version of 1880, including the New King James Bible, King James II, and the New Scofield Reference Bible.

¹² lasciviousness = "driven by lust; preoccupied with or exhibiting lustful desires"

¹³ Ephesians 4:17-19

¹⁴ Galatians 4:9