

Day 196, 2 Timothy 3

by David Servant

In the last days, Christians can expect to face increasing persecution and difficulty, but God's Word remains a source of hope and guidance.

Scripture: Matthew 7:6, Matthew 24:9, 2 Timothy 2:15, 2 Timothy 3:1, 2 Timothy 3:5, 2 Timothy 3:12, 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Topics: "End Times", "Persecution"

Description

David Servant preaches about Paul's warning to Timothy regarding the difficult times ahead in the last days, emphasizing the surge in humanity's rebellion and the impending wrath of God. As sin increases, Christians will face unique challenges and persecution, culminating in a world-wide movement against them under the antichrist's rule. Paul highlights the hypocrisy of those who hold to a form of godliness but deny its power, urging Timothy to avoid such individuals and emphasizing the inevitability of persecution for those who live godly lives.

Transcript

Although Paul apparently believed that he would not live to see what he refers to as "the last days," he obviously believed that Timothy might live to see them. Therefore, he wanted him to be ready for the difficult times ahead (3:1).

Although sin has always characterized the human race, humanity's ever-increasing rebellion will surge in the last days, which one would suspect, since the last days culminate with God's wrath being poured out on the world. It would seem strange for the Lord to return to pour out His wrath upon a world making moral progress. I admit that I've never understood the "Kingdom-Now" and "Dominion" theologians who try to persuade us that Christians will increasingly take charge of the world's institutions and improve life for everyone. Nor have I understood those who tell us that a world-wide revival is on the horizon.

Naturally, as the world approaches its apex of rebellion, things will become worse for everyone on the planet, as sin carries with it its own inherent judgment. Times will become uniquely difficult for Christians, whose holy lives will contrast even more starkly against the backdrop of the world's wickedness. Persecution against the righteous will also reach its zenith, and they "will be hated by all nations" as Jesus Himself foretold (Matt. 24:9). There will be a world-wide political movement against Christians under the rule of the antichrist.

After Paul lists some of the specific sins that will characterize the ungodly in the last times, it is interesting that he mentions that they will hold "to a form of godliness" yet "deny its power" (3:5). It is hard to imagine how the extremely wicked people whom he has just described could also be characterized as "holding to a form of godliness." I can only think that he meant that people will be religious but not righteous, maintaining a facade of morality that hides their rotten core. It is also interesting that Paul instructs Timothy to "avoid such men as these" (3:5). To share the gospel with these kinds of people is to cast one's pearls before swine (Matt. 7:6). They are "men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith" (3:8). Tragically, their judgment is already sealed.

Never forget, "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (3:12). That's one promise that you don't need to claim by faith for it to come to pass! Paul mentioned the sufferings he endured at Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, out of which God delivered him every time (3:11). As you may recall, in Antioch, Paul was run out of town. In Iconium, he barely escaped being stoned. At Lystra, Jews from Antioch and Iconium succeeded in stoning him, leaving him for dead. But the Lord raised him up (Acts 13:14 - 14:20).

So why didn't God deliver Paul from being executed shortly after he penned this letter? Because, as we'll read tomorrow, he had fulfilled his ministry and his time of departure had arrived (4:6-7, 17). Paul viewed his death as a "drink offering" (4:6)---an act of worship whereby he could once more prove his devotion to the Lord.

"All Scripture is inspired by God" (3:16). The words "inspired by God" literally mean "God-breathed." God's words fulfill a five-fold purpose in our lives: they teach, reprove, correct, train and equip us (3:16-17). Don't downplay the reproofing and correcting aspect. I've met professing Christians who aren't open to any teaching that reproves or corrects them because they've found out they're "the righteousness of God in Christ," and thus they no longer "receive any condemnation." Such an attitude is a perversion of scriptural truth.

Notice also that Scripture is what Paul said makes the man of God "adequate, equipped for every good work" (3:17). The primary job of ministers is to communicate biblical truth. So the best thing anyone can do to prepare for ministry is read the Bible. Every Christian, and ministers especially, should "be diligent to present [themselves] approved to God as [workmen who do] not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (2:15).

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