

Godlessness

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 April 2009

Preacher: Aaron Hoak

[0:00] Let's turn in our Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 3 and we'll read the entire chapter tonight.! But mark this, there will be terrible times in the last days.

People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited.

Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. Having a form of godliness but denying its power have nothing to do with them.

They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires.

Always learning, but never able to acknowledge the truth. Just as Janus and Jambres oppose Moses, so also these men oppose the truth.

[1:18] Men of depraved minds who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.

You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings, what kinds of things, what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, the persecutions I endured.

Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

While evil men and imposters will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

[2:55] Please turn again to 2 Timothy 3. By grace, we want to stand on one of the promises of God tonight. It comes to us from the pen of Paul as he writes to Timothy.

But before we come to what Paul wrote, I want you to remember the words of our Savior Jesus, who said, In this world you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world.

That's the encouraging promise of our Savior Jesus to his disciples that last night they were together before he died.

And after that, he prayed for them. And listen to what he prayed for his disciples. And understand that he prays this for you, his people.

He says to the Father, I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world. And I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name.

[3:58] I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one.

They are not of the world even as I am not of the world. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. And so it has been for Jesus' followers ever since.

We live at this strange junction of two worlds. We are citizens of the kingdom of heaven. But we live in this world that has set itself against the kingdom of heaven.

Though we're citizens of that glorious kingdom, we live in this corrupt world. And we're not of this world. We're of the heavenly kingdom, but we do live in this world. And as long as we live in it as holy worshipers of God and obedient followers of Christ, the world isn't going to like us very much at all.

Well, outsiders aren't welcome. If you're talking about an exclusive club or a clique of friends or a team that has excellent chemistry, outsiders aren't welcome.

[5:12] And brothers and sisters, in this world, we are outsiders. And so we will not be welcome. And so what Jesus says is true. In this world, you will have trouble. Because this world doesn't love Jesus.

And it doesn't love members of his kingdom. Timothy was learning that the hard way in Ephesus.

He was finding trouble. Maybe you're learning that the hard way.

You're finding trouble in your life. We see the reality of it in the Christian life. There is trouble. There is persecution. There is suffering. And we want to notice that tonight.

But more importantly, we want to notice the marvelous encouragement that in the midst of that trouble, there is hope. We are not left to ourselves in that trouble to face that persecution.

We are in the hands of God. Notice again with me, verses 10-13. That's what we want to zero in on tonight as we consider God's faithfulness to us.

[6:13] 2 Timothy 3.10 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

While evil men and imposters will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. From these verses, we want to see three things tonight. One is that you must live godly in Christ Jesus.

You must. It's not optional. Secondly, you will be persecuted. And thirdly, you will be rescued. And so there's a promise for us tonight.

The certainty of rescue. But before we get there, notice first with me that you must live godly in Christ Jesus. Now, Paul sets up a remarkable contrast for us. He's been describing wicked people in the last days.

And how they are lovers of self and lovers of pleasure and lovers of money rather than lovers of God. And many people follow Him. But you, Timothy, and that you is emphatic there at the beginning of verse 10, but you, you don't follow them.

[7:31] You don't go in the ways of the wicked. You follow me. You see how he says, you know all about my teaching. You know all about it. That's the word follow. You follow my teaching.

And way of life and so on. Instead of following these ones that he's just trying, you follow me, Timothy. Timothy, we are to live godly in Christ Jesus just like Paul had done.

He reminds us of what his life looked like. And this isn't pride on the Apostle Paul's part. We heard this morning of what a humble man he is. This is a father on his deathbed looking at his spiritual son in the faith and seeing that that son is in trouble.

And he's saying, Timothy, I want you to finish well. I want your ministry to succeed. I want you to prosper. And if you go the way of these wicked men, depraved minds, who reject the truth, you won't finish well.

Your ministry won't be blessed. Don't follow them. Rather, you, Timothy, you follow me. As he says elsewhere, as I follow Christ. And so we are to live a godly life like Paul had done.

[8:40] And Timothy was to do what we are as well. And Paul's example of a godly life is spelled out here. We're not going to take long with it, but it's his teaching that we're to follow. It's the truth that we're so concerned to guard and keep.

The church is the pillar and ground of the truth, so we can't let the truth go. And Paul taught the truth, so we follow that truth. And his way of life, one sure way to weaken the truth that you proclaim is to live contrary to it.

Well, Paul didn't do that. He had a way of life that supported his teaching. And you all know that you can say one thing with your mouth and completely go and undo it by the way you live.

Don't do that. Follow my way of life and my teaching and my purpose. And what a purpose Paul had to glorify God in everything. And more specifically, to see men saved.

We saw it back in chapter 2. I endure everything for the sake of the elect that they too may obtain the salvation that's in Christ Jesus. That's what Paul lived for. Wanted to see men saved.

[9:37] And just we'll pause for a moment. We're considering Paul's example of how you live Godly in Christ. And we'll see in a moment it must be true for you, but let's see it right here. Do you have purpose in your Christian life?

You have a goal. Do you know what you're aiming for? Why are you living this life? Are you just wandering around doing whatever the rest of the world does and slapping the label Christian on it and thinking that you've got a purpose in life?

No, you've got to live with a self-conscious purpose like Paul did. Aim to make it to glory. To get to heaven first of all. And to bring as many others along with you as you possibly can.

And to glorify God all along the way. You know, you get a student going into college and if he doesn't have a purpose, he doesn't know what he wants to do or what he wants to study, you can waste a lot of time and money.

If you don't have a purpose. And we as Christians could waste the very valuable time that God has given to us if we don't live with a purpose as Paul did.

[10 : 38] So you follow my teaching, my way of life, my purpose. And then these Christian graces that are so evident in Paul's life. Faith, patience, love, endurance.

All things that we will need to demonstrate as well. We're not going to dwell on those. We've seen them different places time and again. There were things that marked Paul. That was his example of living godly in Christ Jesus.

And it must be true for us. Timothy followed that way and we must as well. Now, Timothy had literally followed Paul. He went with him on his journeys. He had had opportunity to hear Paul teach firsthand from his own mouth.

He had seen Paul's faith. He had seen his way of life with his own eyes. He followed him. And by God's grace, he was following in those footsteps. Don't blow it now, Timothy, by following wicked, idolatrous people.

May we as the people of God not blow it either by turning aside from living godly in Christ Jesus. We're kingdom citizens. We're members not of this world, but of a better world, a better kingdom, Christ's kingdom.

[11 : 41] And we must live like it in this world. And it's for everyone who wants to live godly in Christ Jesus. You see that in verse 12.

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. And I want to be clear here that Paul isn't saying, he's not just describing really holy Christians as if only Christians who want to live a godly life will be persecuted.

And the rest of us who don't really want to live a godly life will just be satisfied with living a mediocre sort of life of godliness, but we deny the power of it like the people in verse 5.

Those kind of Christians won't suffer persecution. This is an optional. This is for all Christians. You must live godly. In Christ Jesus. You can't make it optional.

As Paul says later to Titus, when the grace of God that brings salvation appeared to all men, what did it do? Or what does it do? It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled and upright and godly lives in this present age.

[12 : 50] Each of you, people of God, followers of Christ, must live a godly life in Christ Jesus before the watching world. Not optional for you. You must do it.

And we're going to see. It brings persecution. But that can't make us shy away from our responsibility, our duty to live the way Paul had with purpose, faith, love, endurance, and patience and to live godly.

He told us just a few verses ago that we're not to have anything to do with people that claim to live a godly life but deny its power. That's not Christianity. We must live that life.

We must cling to the truth and follow and live according to it. Follow the way that Paul walked. The way that Christ walked. The way that many have walked before us.

We do it as followers of Christ. And if you do that, if you follow Christ in this world, if you live according to His Word, then the second thing we see is that in a world that's no friend to Christ, you will face persecution.

[13 : 58] Not you might. Not it's a possibility. You will. Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. And we start again with Paul's example.

You notice Timothy also followed not just his teaching, his way of life, and so on, but verse 11, he also followed his persecutions and sufferings. Paul had lived a godly life.

He had brought light to a dark world and what does Jesus tell us but that darkness hates the light. And so when Paul brought light into that darkness, guess what happened to Paul?

The darkness hated him. The people who lived in darkness hated him, and so they persecuted him.

And before we go on and talk just a little about that persecution, I want us to notice something here. Paul is already warned earlier back in the end of chapter 2, verse 26, about the trap, the snare of the devil. And I think there's an interesting parallel between this passage and between the parable

of the sower.

[14:58] In the parable of the sower, it's Satan. It's the devil that comes and snatches the word away from the hard beaten path where it falls. And Paul has warned us about the snare of the devil. The end of chapter 2.

And the seed that falls on thorny soil is choked out by what? By the pleasures of the world. And Paul has warned us about pleasure, hasn't he? Those who love pleasure rather than loving God. And now he warns us about persecutions. And do you remember the seed that fell on the rocky soil? It didn't have any root. And so when the son of what?

The persecution because of the word beat down on it, that plant died because it didn't have any root. And Paul warns us of the same three things here. The devil, pleasure, and persecution. Just before he comes to these very well-known verses, verses 16 and 17, where he talks about the usefulness of the Word of God. The Word of God is useful. It's profitable.

[16:00] Teaching, rebuking, and so on. That we may be equipped for every good work, but if the devil snatches that word away, it won't be useful. If pleasures choke it out, it won't be useful.

If persecution makes us fear and turn away from that word, it won't be useful. And so before he gets to that usefulness of God's Word, he warns us of these things that will make the Word of God to not be useful to us.

So whether it's intentional or not, our attention, I think, can be drawn to that parable and we see the parallels there. Well, anyway, Paul suffers persecution.

You will be persecuted. We see it in Paul's life. And because of the persecution, that results in suffering. Physical, verbal torment. Hurts us.

It's painful. It causes us to suffer. And to illustrate that, Paul reminds Timothy of his own suffering. That Timothy might have had an opportunity to see firsthand. You see, Timothy was from the city of Lystra.

[16:56] That's where he was from. And Paul could have talked about all sorts of times he was persecuted. You read the book of Acts and it seems like it's unending the persecution that he faces. But Paul singles out the persecution he faced on his first missionary journey.

The church in Antioch sent him out and he went to a different Antioch in a different region. And he was persecuted there. You can read about it in Acts 13 and 14.

The persecution he faced in Antioch and Iconium and Lystra. I'm just going to summarize it for you here to remind us that Paul isn't just...

He's not telling Timothy something you need to be willing to suffer persecution that he hasn't done. Paul's not a hypocrite. He's not calling us to do something that he hasn't been willing to do. And so when he got to this other Antioch, there they talked abusively.

The Jews were jealous of Paul. He's drawing great big crowds. They're coming to hear him. But the Jews were jealous. And so they talked abusively against what Paul was saying. They abused him with their words.

[17:59] And they also incited the people in the city against him. And they stirred up persecution against Paul. And they expelled him from the region. So he gets to Antioch right away.

First he faces persecution. So they go on to Iconium. And he gets to Iconium. And there the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. There was a plot of foot among the Gentiles and Jews together with their leaders to mistreat them and stone them. And they suffered persecution in Antioch. But Paul, Barnabas, they get wind of that persecution.

So they move on. They go to Lystra, which is where Timothy lives. Young man. Impressionable young man. There's a stir in Lystra. Things actually go well there for a time until the people that caused trouble back in Antioch and Iconium come down.

They come down to Lystra and they say, we're going to cause trouble here too. And they do. They won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city thinking he was dead. That's persecution.

[18:59] You know what stoning is, right? They throw stones at you until you're dead. They thought they had killed Paul. That's persecution.

He suffered physical pain. He wasn't dead. He was able to get back up and go back into the city. And God preserved him. He rescued him.

But Paul lived a godly life in Christ. He faithfully proclaimed Christ and therefore he was persecuted. He suffered. And you know what I think is amazing? And I hope it's an encouragement to us to not fear persecution, but be willing to face it.

This was Paul's first missionary journey. And you know what? If that was my first missionary journey and I had been stoned within an inch of my life, you know what I think I would have done?

I think I would have gone back to the church that sent me out and said, I don't want to go again. I'm going to stay right here. No more persecution like that. That's too much.

[19 : 59] But that was Paul's first missionary journey. And we know that he took at least two more. But even on this first one, and this is so amazing to me, even on this first one, before he has a chance to get back to his sending church and to be encouraged and refreshed by the...

Before that happens, do you know what they do? They went on from Lystra and Derbe and continued, but then they're heading back to Antioch. They're sending church.

And we find in Acts 14, 21 and 22, they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith.

That's amazing. On the same journey that he was stoned on, he went back to the place he was stoned to encourage the brethren. That's a man that's not afraid to face persecution and to suffer for the cause of Christ.

He was concerned for the believers that were made there. So they go back and they strengthen them. They encourage them to remain true to the faith. And what an example he could provide for them of one who remained true to the faith and didn't quit.

[21 : 03] At the first sign of persecution. It's remarkable to us, the example of Paul, but it must be true for us as well. We will face persecution. You live a godly life in this world, in Christ, and that hates Christ, and you'll face persecution.

Timothy was finding it to be true in Ephesus. We find it to be true in our lives. We don't like to be outsiders. We don't like to suffer, but if we live godly in Christ, in this world, it's inevitable. Do you remember what Jesus said?

Mark 10, 30, I tell you the truth, Jesus replied, no one. See, this isn't just for the really strong Christians. No one, he says, no one who has left home or brothers or sister or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age.

Homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and fields. And with them, persecutions. You follow Christ.

You follow me, Jesus says. In this world, you'll receive persecutions. And in the age to come, eternal life. And you remember the words of Christ we spoke at the beginning. In this world, you will have trouble.

[22 : 12] And he says something similar in John 15. If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belong to the world, it would love you as its own.

As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you. No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.

They obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. Jesus said, they hate me. They're going to hate you, my followers. They persecute me. They're going to persecute you.

And again, he draws our attention to this. You're not of this world. In a world that hates me, you're going to suffer persecution. They persecuted the prophets. They persecuted Jesus. And they persecute his followers.

It's a given. And it will come from all sorts of men. We're going to be persecuted. Now, verse 13, there's evil men and imposters who go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

[23 : 12] Persecution might come from them. Or they might be avoiding persecution by progressing from bad to worse, living as they are of the world. They may mock you for not following their ways, for not being enlightened and progressive like them, but they're progressing the wrong direction.

They're becoming worse and worse. They're not just deceiving others. They're deceived.

Persecution could come from people like that. It'll come in various forms. It did for Paul. It's not all stoning, is it?

It's not all physical suffering. They spoke abusively against Paul. They stirred up people. They poisoned people's minds against Paul so that they wouldn't listen to him. They plotted against him. Some plots were carried out. And that's just on the first missionary journey. He suffered in ways that we might never, but all followers of Christ, as Calvin says, shall have the world for their enemy in some form or another that their faith may be tried and their steadfastness proved.

It might come in the form of being passed over at work for a promotion because you don't work on the Lord's Day. You're not willing to sacrifice the Lord's Day. So they're not going to put you ahead. [24 : 19] That might affect you on the team that you play on. Your love for the Sabbath might prevent you from doing things on it that might benefit you. There's things that only happen on Sunday.

You could only do them if you do them on Sunday. You say, you know what? I love God's Day too much. It would do me good. It would bring me great prosperity to death. I'm not going to do it. I'm suffering persecution because the world hates God in this day.

Maybe some will poison others' minds against you so you never have a chance to win them over. You ever found that? You meet somebody and they're immediately cold to you. There's not been a chance to make a bad impression.

And their mind has been poisoned. Somebody from the world has gotten to them. That's persecution that we suffer. People will prejudge you because of something slanderous someone said.

Or because of your clear Christian testimony and life. You might be mocked and jeered for your faith. And suffer the injury of hurt, pained emotions.

[25 : 19] Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names actually hurt me even worse when we're honest. And people might have something to say about that to mock us.

Many today suffer physical persecution, imprisonment, torture, and even death. Some form of persecution will come to everyone who lives a godly life in Christ Jesus.

It is inevitable. It will come at various times. If you're not suffering persecution at this moment, it doesn't mean that you're not living godly. There were times in Paul's life when he wasn't persecuted. But if you're consistently living a godly life before a godless world, you will be persecuted in some form or another.

And so there's three options that I see here for professing Christians. There's only one option. You see if you can figure out which one is the real one. John Stott was helpful in fleshing this out.

One is, you live a godly life in Christ Jesus and you live in this world and you face persecution. It's what we've just said. You live for Him. Not in an obnoxious way. I'm not talking about bringing persecution down on your head because you're hitting people over the head with your Bible and being an obnoxious Christian.

[26 : 34] Peter says, but how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. So option one is, you live a godly life, you do it in this world, and persecution comes.

Option number two for a professing Christian would be something like withdrawal or isolation. You live a godly life in Christ Jesus, but you isolate yourself from the world.

And that removes you from this sort of sticky persecution business. If the world is over here, I'm going to stay over here. Away from the world as much as I can so that they won't see me.

And if they don't see me, they won't know about me. If they don't know about me, they won't hate me. If they don't hate me, then they won't persecute me. And we think that there's some comfort and some insulation. So you can isolate yourself from the world so that they don't hate you and persecute you.

That's option number two. Option number three is assimilation. You claim to be in Christ, but you don't really live a godly life. You live in the world and you live like you're of the world.

[27 : 45] And that too avoids persecution. Because you'll look just like the world and they don't hate that. You remember Jesus said, if you belong to the world, it would love you as its own. And so Calvin says, they who wish to be exempt from persecutions must necessarily renounce Christ.

In vain shall we endeavor to detach Christ from His cross. You can't say, you know what, Jesus? I love you and I want you to save me from my sins, but I'm going to go live how I want because I don't want persecution.

That's not an option. See, the only valid option of those three is the first one. To live godly in Christ Jesus in this world and thus face persecution. You simply can't say, I want to live a godly life, but I don't want persecution.

It'd be like saying, I want to be an exceptional athlete, but I don't want to work very hard. I don't want to practice very much and when I do, I don't want it to hurt. Well, that's foolish. You'll never be an exceptional athlete that way.

Or I want to lose weight, but I don't want to change my eating habits or exercise. No pain, no gain. If we live godly in Christ Jesus in this world, we will suffer.

[29:00] And we can't just turn tail and run after the first little bit of persecution. We can't get to Antioch and Iconium and say, people are plotting against me. I think I'm going to go home.

I've done my part. I faced some persecution. Now I'm going to withdraw into my cocoon and never face any persecution again. Not an option. We are to live our lives in this world.

Living godly in this world. Not living like the world, but living godly in this world. And that will bring persecution. Let's press on like Paul, even if we know it means suffering. By now, maybe we feel just a little bit of the weight.

Persecution is coming. It's inevitable for you if you're a follower of Christ. Maybe that causes us to fear. But it shouldn't because of a little phrase here that we might read right past if we're not careful. At the end of verse 11, yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. And that brings us to our third point. And that is, you will be rescued.

[30:03] You must live a godly life in Christ Jesus. You will face persecution. And thirdly, you will be rescued. And again, we see it in Paul's example, don't we?

He's able to testify not just concerning what happened to him in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, but from all his persecutions and sufferings. The Lord rescued or delivered him.

He delivered him out of prison where he was for healing a girl that was possessed by a demon. The Lord rescued Paul from rioting mobs of people, from abusive language, from arrests and trials because he preached Christ.

He delivered him from plots to kill him and from a shipwreck when he was being taken to Rome to be put on trial again. The Lord rescued him. You can read Paul's own catalog of suffering in 2 Corinthians 11.

Read all the things that God rescued him from, delivered him from. Now, it obviously doesn't mean rescue in the sense of keeping Paul from going through it. It doesn't say he kept me from persecutions.

[31:06] It says he rescued me. He gave me the grace to endure them. He brought me out of them on the other side. So don't look for the Lord to rescue you in the sense that you'll never be persecuted.

But for the grace to endure those persecutions. And notice that it's the Lord who does the delivering. The Lord rescued me from all of them. I think he's talking about Christ.

The Lord who appeared to him on the road to Damascus. This Lord with him every step of his journey rescuing him from persecution and suffering. But as you read the Bible, this doesn't really surprise us, does it?

That the Lord delivered Paul from all his suffering and persecution because we see it with every one of God's people in the Scriptures. The word rescue or deliver has a rich history in the Old Testament.

The Lord rescued the Israelites from the wicked people of Egypt. He rescued the firstborn sons of the Israelites. Delivered them when the firstborn sons of the Egyptians were killed.

[32:06] He delivered or he rescued David from the hand of Saul. He delivered Hezekiah and the people of Judah from wicked Sennacherib and the Assyrians.

And so David cries out in Psalm 7 and verse 1, O Lord my God, I take refuge in You. Save and deliver. That's our word. Save and rescue me from all who pursue me.

And that pursue word is persecute. Save me. Rescue me from those who persecute me. In Psalm 34, 19, which Paul might be quoting here, A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all.

That's David's words. And Paul could take those words on his lips and we can take them on our lips and say the Lord has delivered us from all persecution and suffering.

It's not the same word, but doesn't the Lord deliver Hanani and Mishael and Azariah from the fiery furnace and Daniel from the den of the lions? Hasn't God proven again and again that He delivers His people from persecution?

[33:12] It's true for Paul. It's true for others in the Bible. It's true for you as well. For everyone who lives godly in Christ Jesus and therefore faces persecution and suffering, this promise is yours.

You will be rescued. It's what we pray for. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us. Rescue us from the evil one. And doesn't God delight to hear our prayers and to answer them.

To rescue us. It's what Jesus prayed for us that we would be protected from the evil one in John 17. We can, even as we've spoken of in our worship tonight, look at past deliverances that we've been persecuted before.

And we can look back at that and say, you know, I was delivered then and I know that God is able to and He will deliver me now. Paul took that approach in 2 Corinthians 1 and verse 10.

He says, He has delivered us from such a deadly peril. And He will deliver us. On Him we have set our hope that He will continue to deliver us. Paul looks back, He delivered me.

[34:13] And I know that He will. And He will continue. That word deliver is our word. Rescue. And we find in 1 Corinthians 10:13, no temptation has seized you except what is common to man.

And God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

So that you can endure it. Paul says here, I endured sufferings. And that's the word here in 1 Corinthians 10:13, so that you can bear up under it. We'll be able to bear up under whatever temptations come.

And you better believe that persecutions will often take the form of temptation. This world that we live in that hates Christ so much would like nothing more than to see us turn astray.

They'd like nothing more than to see that Christian over there stumble and fall. So they can brand us hypocrite. And so they will put temptations before us. They will persecute us in that way.

[35:16] But even from such persecution like temptation, God will deliver us. He will provide a way out. He will enable you to bear up under it. That's His promise.

He's able to rescue us from this. God may use different methods to deliver us. He might give us the strength to get through it. The strength to endure. Lengthy time of persecution.

He might give us a way of escape so that we can get out of it. He might cut it short. And we don't see that, do we? We think it's as long as we see it, but maybe God cuts it short so that we have a way out.

He gives us perhaps help from another one of His children. Maybe the way of escape is that He brings a brother or sister alongside of you in your persecution. And you're at your wit's end.

You're despairing. You've almost given up. And they come along with the promises of God's Word. And they encourage you. And they pray with you. And God has rescued you again. Maybe it comes directly through your Word.

[36:17] You're again at your wit's end and you turn to the pages of Scripture and you're reading 2 Timothy and you see that Paul suffered, endured persecution. And he's able to say, yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.

And God uses His Word to rescue us again. To deliver us again. And the final way that He'll deliver us from persecution is by taking us out of this world.

If we're no longer in the world that hates God, we're no longer facing the persecution, death will be the final deliverance. It's better to depart and be with Christ.

And not even death can separate us from the Lord who rescues us and takes us home to Him away from suffering here. William Hendrickson says, the Lord ever rescues His people frequently from death, sometimes by means of death.

Either way, nothing ever separates them from His love. What shall separate us from the love of God to us in Christ? Persecution is in that list of things that can't separate us from God's love.

[37:17] And so is death. It can't separate us from the love of God. He will rescue us. He will take us home. What a rescuer. What a redeemer. What a Savior.

I hope you're getting a glimpse of Him tonight. Lately in 2 Timothy, God has had us take many looks at ourselves. We've done some introspection.

Had warnings about trouble within the church. And I feel the weight of that. And I wonder, you know, Timothy got this letter and he probably sat down and he read it all at once and he needed to

do some introspection.

And maybe for a week or a month or a couple of months he poured over it and he did some introspection and then moved on perhaps. And maybe there's a danger in breaking it down and spending months and months in a letter like that where we constantly are being rebuked and turning our eyes inward and there's a Puritan that says, for every one look you take it yourself. Take ten looks at Christ and forgive me for not pointing us enough to Christ as we've gone through this letter. But tonight, I hope we have a look at Christ. A glimpse of the one who rescues us. [38:27] The Lord. Christ rescued us from all of these things. He was a rescuer and a redeemer for so many when He walked on this earth. He is for all of His people now as He sits at God's right hand waiting to come and take us home.

But what a blessing that is. Christ waits to come back to earth. He's not waiting passively. He's not sitting up there twiddling His thumbs doing nothing. Our redeemer, our rescuer is active. When He was on this earth, He actively pursued our salvation and He accomplished it and He is now actively pursuing our deliverance, our perseverance, our rescuing until He takes us safely home to heaven.

And He will just as surely accomplish that as He has our salvation. He will rescue us. He will take us safely home. He is absolutely sufficient to get us through this world home to His heavenly kingdom. Do you believe that Christ is sufficient for you tonight? to save you and to take you safely home? I hope so. Do you doubt His ability to deliver you?

[39:32] To rescue? I hope not. Think on what Christ has already done for you. What God has done for you in Christ. Colossians 1.13 For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves.

If He's done that, He's rescued us. He's brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves. If He's done that, don't you think that He's going to take us safely home to that kingdom? And deliver us through this world.

The deliverance that Christ purchased for us cost Him His own blood. He's paid such an unimaginable price. Do you think that now He's going to let us go before taking us home to glory? No. He's overcome this world. He knows the persecutions that you face. And He will deliver you from them. He's overcome this world.

And so as we live in it, we cling to Him by faith. Listen with me to Gardner Spring. He wrote a book called The Attraction of the Cross. And he says, Now is there any reason to believe that God would thus have made bear His arm to awaken, convince, and renew this once depraved creature and conduct Him to the cross of His Son and give Him joy and peace in believing, only to suffer Him at some future period to break away from the cross and perish?

[40:58] Or does He now that He has led them so far pledge Himself never to leave nor forsake them, to keep them as the apple of His eye, to nourish and bring them up as children and fit them for His heavenly kingdom, which were the most like God?

The God of love never leaves His own work unfinished. And that what He begins with grace, He ends in glory. I love that. What He begins with grace, He ends in glory.

He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it. He gives us His grace. He saves us from our sins. And then He doesn't just leave us to ourselves.

He brings us safely home. You may wonder sometimes. God, I'm persecution. Suffering? Has Christ forgotten about me? No. No, He's the reason you're still breathing.

That you're still enduring through it. Paul was confident in Him and we should be too. And then as Paul wraps up his letter to shaken Timothy, as we conclude our message tonight, maybe you're shaken in your faith.

[42:09] Suffering. Facing persecution. May we have this confidence. Look with me at verse 18 of chapter 4. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom.

To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen. He's going to bring you safely to His heavenly kingdom. You're a citizen of His kingdom.

He's going to take you there. He will rescue you from every evil attack along the way and will bring you safely home. Do you know this rescuer tonight?

Do you know this redeemer? Maybe some here that don't trust in Christ. Hear us talking about the difficulty of the Christian life and the suffering.

We've talked about it tonight. You will face persecution. You hear that and you think, I don't want any part of it. Don't just hear that. Hear tonight as well that there's one to rescue us from all of those troubles.

[43:16] He's our compassionate, glorious Savior Jesus. He can rescue you from the coming wrath and He can deliver you safely home to heaven. And He will if you come and trust in Him tonight.

You come and trust in this Savior and He will deliver you. And people of God, take courage tonight. In this world, you will have persecution.

You will have suffering. You will have trouble. But take heart. Jesus has overcome the world and He will deliver you from all of your trouble.

Period. Amen. Let's pray together. O Lord, our God, we take refuge in You. Save and deliver us from all who persecute us.

We thank You for the promises of Your Word. We thank You that You've promised to be with us when we go through the fire. That You'll never leave us or forsake us.

[44:22] We pray that You would make us so faithful. We pray that You would give us a burning desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus before this wicked world. We pray that You would make us bold to be willing to endure persecution for Jesus' sake.

Suffering. And we thank You that You will be with us through all of it. That You will deliver us. That You will rescue us. And You will take us safely home.

Comfort our hearts with that truth tonight. Come and draw the heart of some lost sinner to You tonight and comfort their heart with that truth. Do us good, we pray. Do it for Jesus' sake.

We thank You for Him and what He's done for us. And we pray in His name. Amen. Amen.