

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 13 while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Paul warned Timothy and he also warned us that **“evil men will go from bad to worse.”** It is interesting to note that what he literally says is that they will “progress to the worse.” Progression is what evil seeks to do. We see how quickly the LGBT agenda has progressed. Now that homosexuality has been forced upon our country, it didn’t take long for Bruce Jenner’s transition to womanhood to come to the forefront. TLC is now highlighting a show coming out called “All that Jazz” where a young boy - starting at the age of 8 years old - was given blockers to keep his hormones from progressing through his body so that he could be a girl instead. We are supposed to accept this and celebrate this in order for “love” to “win.”

Paul refers to these evil men who progress from bad to worse as “imposters.” That word in the Greek is γόης and it means is “‘magician,’ especially one working with verbal formulas.” Think of the magician who uses some incantation while working his hands, “Abracadabra.” Then something changes while he uses the word. That’s what is happening before our very eyes - where words are being used to redefine what “love” is - equating it with tolerance and acceptance. So if we don’t “tolerate” something then we are full of hate.

I went online to an interview of Jazz and listened how this child defined what he was doing. He used these exact terms to explain and excuse what he was doing -

tolerate
 what makes you happy
 true to your heart
 accepting
 learn to love your child
 unconditional love
 want to be me
 I’m proud of who I am
 it makes me a stronger person - more confident
 makes me myself
 you can’t tell me who I was
 you can’t define me
 I define myself

Notice the terms he used to define himself. Strong. Proud. Happy. He called on what he “wanted” and what made him “happy” to excuse his behavior. He was the master of his own destiny. Nobody could tell him who

he was or wasn't. He appealed to individual liberty - a big American term - and the pursuit of happiness - another big American ideal. If he says he's a girl then that is what he is and nobody can tell him otherwise.

It is what Paul said would happen - using terms and words to make something sound good and fun and acceptable. All of these terms are used to deceive people and also so that they can deceive each other; convincing themselves that they really are doing what is good and right.

It reminds us of what Satan did with Eve - convincing her with words that eating from the Tree would actually be GOOD for her - not bad. He said it would be good for her - help her to PROGRESS in knowledge - when God said it would put her to death. In reality, she shouldn't have even gotten in the conversation with him when God's Word was already clear about it. So it would appear that we have become more and more afraid of just saying "no" to what is clearly called evil in the Bible; in hopes that we can perhaps convince people otherwise or maybe to hopefully understand where someone is coming from before we say anything to them. But as we listen to them explain why they are doing what they are doing, we are starting to let their excuses stick. Satan is using this conversation to get us to accept it.

Think about how we are approaching the terrorists who are beheading people over in Iraq. Let's figure out WHY they are doing it. What are their social and economical conditions? What have we done to contribute to their feelings of hatred? Then we might actually find out that it's our fault that they are beheading us. Now we are being told that it is those Christians who judge sin and condemn people and make people feel guilty - it is their fault that people use drugs and children are obese and commit suicide. Inevitably - the finger always gets pointed at everyone else besides the person who actually is committing the sin. Paul told Timothy that these exact things would happen - and we can see it clearly happening yet today. Isaiah 5 says, **Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.**

But how would Timothy be able to know what was good and what was evil? **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.** He told Timothy to continue in what he learned and had become convinced of. He didn't tell Timothy that he had already graduated from confirmation and that he could now put his Bible on a shelf. He didn't tell him that worship was optional. He didn't say that he already knew all he needed to know and he could relax. He didn't say that since Jesus died for everyone he could lighten up and just live and let live. He told him to keep on remaining in the things he learned and to use what he learned in His vocation.

Timothy didn't learn it from fly by night preachers or people on TV. He learned from his mother and his grandmother. He learned it from Paul. These were faithful Christians who knew their word well. They had taught Timothy these things from infancy - and he had faith that was generated through the Word from infancy. That Word never changed.

Satan is always trying to get you to progress beyond the word - just like he did with Eve. Rob Bell with the Mars Hill Church became famous ten years by telling his people that he wasn't locked into the box of the Bible. He was able to PROGRESS beyond old stuffy doctrines to new things. He was able to find out that hell really didn't exist and that all people end up in heaven. So today Christians are depicted as Neanderthals and knuckle

draggers. We are stuck in the Bible and can't move on. We are now being encouraged to get on the "right side of history." It is inevitable that America is moving on and you need to too.

So that is where Paul told Timothy and he tells you to CONTINUE in what you have learned and become convinced of. Go back to your catechism. Dust it off. Read it. Study your Bible well. Know what the Lutheran Confessions say. Go to Bible study with YOUR PASTORS and fellow believers here. Don't treat confirmation as a graduation. Don't think since you've heard all of these Bible stories before that you already know it all. Don't let familiarity breed contempt as it did for Jesus' hometown people that grew up with him. Study the Word and know it well.

That way you won't be fooled by the Word magicians. What does the Bible really say about love? What does the Bible have to say about tolerance? Think about the common mantra, "**Don't judge!**" Doesn't God's Word say "**Don't judge?**" Yes, Jesus said, "**Don't judge.**" But He said it to people who were committing the same sin as what they were judging. So a drunken person shouldn't turn to another drunkard and say, "Stop getting drunk." The Bible also commands us TO judge. Paul actually commanded the Corinthians to judge a man within their church who was committing adultery - when at first they weren't doing anything about it. He said that they and we are supposed to judge those who are sinning inside the church. (1 Corinthians 5:4) So it is with love. In Romans 12:9 Paul said, "**Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.**" (Ro 12:9) Love does not mean to accept that which is defined as evil in the Bible. It means to hate what is evil and fight against it; to repent of it and not to excuse it or point the finger at everyone else as Adam and Eve tried to do in the Garden.

God's love did not tolerate sin. God's love damned sin by sending Jesus to suffer and die under it for us on the cross. **God so loved the world that He GAVE His one and only Son.** His unconditional love was defined by sending His Son to die for unworthy sinners. It was not for him just to smile at us and tolerate us as we are. It was by providing a place for us to hide from His wrath to find our righteousness. Love is found in Christ alone - what He did to give us holiness, forgiveness and righteousness. Faith runs under the cross and finds salvation there from sin. This is where the Scriptures are meant to take us - to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Notice also how Paul and David and every other believer in the Bible lived their lives. They didn't say, "I need to be who I am. God has to accept me as I am. You can't tell me who I am. Be true to your heart and do what makes you happy." It tells you to throw out repentance and faith and makes you your own god. Paul said that he lived in a body of death and referred to himself as the worst of sinners. He said that we need to be rescued from ourselves. They don't point the finger and get mad at everyone who is trying to show them their sin. Proverbs 9:8 says, "**Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you.**" This whole message that we are being given by Jazz and our fellow Americans is completely contrary to what the Word actually says about what it means to be a believer in Christ.

But if you're not in your Word and you just listen to this mantra time and time and time again on the news and on television shows - you will begin to think like this and accept these lies. If you only come to worship once a month or four times a year, how do you expect to stand firm? You'll put a rainbow color behind your face on Facebook and think that you are being the loving one. You'll think that these types of sermons are just angry and bitter and hateful - that we are just here to pick on people so that we can feel better about ourselves. I don't

feel good about myself when I say these things. I don't feel any more righteous than they. I feel sad for them and for our country. But something needs to be said.

Remember what Paul said to Timothy. **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.** The word is not just to make us feel good. It is for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in WHAT RIGHTEOUSNESS - and WHERE it is found - so that you can be THOROUGHLY equipped for every good work - to do what is loving according to the Word.

Do you really think that by allowing homosexuals and lesbians to marry that they will be happy now? Do you think God will accept their excuses when they blame Him and bless their lives for doing what is clearly wrong? Is God's Word going to change now and say that all of this behavior was actually acceptable? No. Again, Romans 1 is clear. We don't tell those who are addicted to alcohol to go ahead and get drunk because God loves them as they are. We don't tell someone who wants to leave his wife that it's all good - as long as he's happy. Out of love for him and his wife and family we tell him to repent of his adulterous thoughts and get back with his wife. We don't tell those living together before marriage that their adultery is just fine as long as they want to get married some time down the road. We tell the alcoholic to repent and fight against his desires - to flee from temptations that war against his soul. We tell these people in their struggle to cling to Christ and find mercy and forgiveness in Him - to ask God for strength in the fight - so that they can cling to Christ and find hope in their struggle.

Now is not the time to shrink back and be quiet about what God's Word says. Think about it. Wouldn't you rather die in battle going head first against the enemy - fully armed - rather than being shot in the back after having deserted with a bunch of cowards? The devil's lies are telling you to lay down your arms and stop fighting. Join the crowd. Live and let live. It takes great courage and strength to stand up and say "no." Ezekiel was given an impossible call to preach against a hardened people. He needed supernatural strength, so God gave him a forehead of flint; to make him just as stubborn as the rest of the people in order to fight against their sins and their lies. Timothy may have been a very shy young man. But in his call he had to be courageous and stand up for the truth in the midst of lies. He would need God's strength. So do we.

It is not unloving to have standards. If you want your child to be a responsible and hard working person you don't give them no standards at home. You give them chores. You don't allow them to sit and do nothing. You speak to them and punish them and reward them in order to get them going.

You know what God's standards of love are - not to give in to sin but to put it to death and bury it. That's what Christ came to do and He accomplished His mission - according to His Word. Paul told Timothy to keep in the Word and keep USING the Word to motivate the people to fight against the lies that were coming. Keep calling people to repentance and pointing them to Christ. Keep teaching what God's Word says about love and repentance and faith and Christ. If we do nothing; if we say nothing; we will be opening our people up to the lies of our society; your family will not stay in the faith; and this church will not stand. It is time to raise the standard. It is time to stand firm in the Word and make sure you and your children know it well. God grant us the courage to do so. Amen.