

**Theme:** You, Christian, continue on

If everyone else was going to jump off bridge, you wouldn't, would you? Of course not. But what if you didn't know you were jumping off a bridge? What if you were going along with what everyone else, or a big chunk of everyone, was doing or thinking which wasn't great, but had no idea? How could that even happen?! Hypnosis? Sort of, but not the kind where a pocket watch is swung in front of your face for a few seconds, and when the fingers snap, your mind is no longer yours to control.

There is cultural hypnosis happening to us constantly. We hear and read the same ideas with such repetition that they became familiar, come to be enjoyed, and a taste for them develops. All the while, without realizing it, a relationship of trust is formed with these voices, and where trust exists, authority is often given. When too much trust is given, when too much authority is give to voices that aren't your Lord's, there's a serious problem. As God's people, this is something we always need to watch out for because it happens to us. We are not of this world and, by Jesus alone, have been liberated from its thinking – haven't we?! We are enlightened to know what God would have us know, that he's love, gives salvation, and what his blessed will for how we live life is.

Continuing on in the Word, listening to the voice of Jesus your savior in God's Word when there's much opportunity to listen to all manner of other voices that appeal to sinful thinking and sensibilities is exactly what Paul was telling Timothy to do for himself and then to encourage other believers to do also. Stay in the Word. Live the Word. In doing so, the destructive voices of the world are silenced and, as far as it depends on you, their evil influence stopped. Continue listening to Jesus. Continue speaking and living the love of gospel of Christ you believe. You, Christian, aren't of the world, so don't be like the world. Continue in what you learned from Jesus in the Bible, no matter your age when you first learned it. That's what Christians do: *“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it,<sup>15</sup> and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”* (II Timothy 3:14-15). Continue. Grow. Learn the love of Jesus in the Bible. Next, love people enough to learn about them and how to communicate God's grace to them better – read books on the subject, listen to a book or a podcast, take a class/workshop. God blesses those efforts just as he blessed those who put effort into teaching you God's truth. Think of that beloved Christian in your life who told you about Jesus' love and exemplified it in their own gracious way.

They taught and lived the Word to you because they knew it's benefits! Using the Word and being blessed by it is exactly what it's for, why God gave it! *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,<sup>17</sup> so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* (II Timothy 3:16-17) God himself, his ideas and the way he wanted them expressed in words, is what you have in the Bible, so listen to it, all of it. Each word, each thought is what God wants us to know and do. Because the Word of God is God's Word, it's powerful and proves incredibly profitable for the reader. It's good for teaching, provides much practical wisdom, but most notably, tells what one must know for salvation and how to live according to that salvation. The result of the Word doing what the Word does is you being equipped by God for every good work as only you can do them as God's uniquely made and wholly loved person.

As Paul gave to Timothy, God gives to you the charge before Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, to be ready all the time for preaching, correcting, and encouraging with a tremendous amount of patience and all according to his Word because: *“For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.<sup>4</sup> They will turn their ears away from the truth and*

*turn aside to myths.*” (II Timothy 4:3-4) Use the Word to do what Paul says to do because the time these verses are talking about is now: listen to the truth and reject teachers who don’t speak truth. Don’t limit the “teachers” mentioned here to be spiritual only. Nope. Think all the media you consume, you learn, are taught from those teachers. Examine it all finding out what’s factual information or fabrication to validate and encourage sinful thinking by proclaiming a gospel very different than the gospel of Jesus.

Damage happens when the government and the many media influences of the world sensationalize events and turn ideologies into facts and in so doing, create a version of truth which grabs peoples’ hearts and steers them into a school of thought which often results in the powerful condemnation of others. People, us, we look for voices to tell us such things because it’s what we really want to hear to justify our rage toward or disgust of others, the people we condemn. This rage and condemnation are masks for fear and self-loathing. We often listen to voices that sanitize sin so effectively that we sometimes fail to see it as such. But if we don’t call sin “sin” as the Bible does, why would we ever need to call Jesus “savior”? People turn aside to all sorts of things that aren’t true because any bias we have for or against anyone or anything has a voice to affirm and advance it. Our ears are often itching to validate such negative biases, fueling the dark flame of hate and malice, but we were not made for this. Let’s not listen to voices that feed such thoughts or think and speak and act such ways because this does the opposite of advance God’s kingdom. Examine what you hear and learn to not elevate other voices to same level of or above the voice of Jesus.

What’s the best guidance for Christians? Continue in the love of Jesus according to the Word which means learning and knowing the Bible – read the Gospels a lot! – and live it whole heartedly. If anything is worthy of sincere sensationalism because of how truly excellent it is, it’s the love of Christ who died for all people to take away the sins of all on the cross. Continue in that and voices that call you to your salvation and power found in the love of Christ. God the Son, Jesus, died for you to take away all your sins. That’s a whole lotta love. He did that for literally everyone else too. That’s a whole lotta love. And that’s what Scripture, which make us wise for salvation in Jesus, tell us to do to love a lot! Christian, continue on in living the love of your God by loving neighbor, put the Word you believe into action.

Let’s continue in this, “*But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*” (II Timothy 4:5) Be balanced in everything. Be merciful because your God desires mercy. Continue to bear hardship patiently. Do evangelist work, which isn’t limited to pastor or people paid to do it. Christian whoever you are, teach people what makes them wise for salvation, teach them Christ crucified. Beam his love, which you so appreciate, out to people all the time, no matter what. Do what you’re here to do and serve God’s kingdom. Keep your head trusting that Jesus keeps it safe with the helmet of salvation. You, Christian, don’t be like or listen to everyone else. Continue listening to the voice of your Lord who guides your life now and leads you to salvation forever. Amen.