

- ***READ II Timothy 3:10-17*** Following his warnings to Timothy concerning soon-to-be hard times that he would face, Paul reminds Timothy that he had everything he needed in order to overcome such hard times. He had been instructed from a young age in the Scriptures, and he had even seen the truths of those Scriptures at work in the life of Paul himself. With these things being true and with him continuing to have the Scriptures to lean upon during these hard times, Timothy was ready and properly equipped to stand against those evil people and imposters who would continue to grow worse and worse.
 - We might hope that the truths and principles found within these verses would only be needed for a defined period of time within Timothy's life, but the reality is that evil people and imposters continue even until this day to grow worse and worse. The more our world moves in the direction of postmodernism, humanism, and secularism...the worse our world will become because there will be less and less room for God and His truths to be heard and recognized.
 - Therefore, we must be a people who are committed to continuing to live godly in an every increasingly ungodly world. That idea of going against the flow in our world today is going to be the focus for our congregation in 2020. Each and everyone of us can look around and observe different ways in which our world is growing further and further away from God, and we must be establishing ourselves all the more as people who are committed to the ways of godliness no matter where the world might be currently or where it might be going in the future.
 - As I say that, I would feel confident in saying that those gathered here in this place this morning would agree wholeheartedly with the idea that we need to be a people who are willing to stand up strong against the world, the wicked influences within it, and the fiery darts that Satan might be throwing at us, but I do hope that we recognize that this is a battle will only be won if we put our full trust in God and His strength that He desires to provide to us.
 - This seems to be exactly the reality of the situation when we consider Paul's words in **Ephesians 6:10-13**. *"Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by his vast strength. Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens. For this reason take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand."* It is only through God's strength that we can live godly in an ungodly world because if we try to do this on our own...we will surely fall. There is real danger in becoming discouraged by the vast amount of wickedness and evil influence all around us.
- I. There is a real danger in thinking that we cannot overcome the wicked world that we live in.**
- A. Consider **Psalms 69** that is attributed to David. Notice the language of despair and how it seems that David wasn't so sure that he would be able to make it out of this situation. *"Save me, God, for the water has risen to my neck. I have sunk in deep mud, and there is no footing; I have come into deep water, and a flood sweeps over me. I am weary from my crying; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God. Those who hate me without cause are more numerous than the hairs of my head; my deceitful enemies, who would destroy me, are powerful. Though I did not steal, I must repay."* (**Psalms 69:1-4**)
- B. Also consider **Psalms 42:5-11**, a Maskil of the sons of Korah. *"Why, my soul, are you so dejected? Why are you in such turmoil? Put your hope in God, for I will still praise him, my Savior and my God. I am deeply depressed; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your billows have swept over me. The Lord will send his faithful love by*

day; his song will be with me in the night—a prayer to the God of my life. I will say to God, my rock, “Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about in sorrow because of the enemy’s oppression?” My adversaries taunt me, as if crushing my bones, while all day long they say to me, “Where is your God?” Why, my soul, are you so dejected? Why are you in such turmoil? Put your hope in God, for I will still praise him, my Savior and my God.”

- C. These are only but a couple of examples from the Psalms (windows into the innermost thoughts and feelings of real people) that exemplify the reality that this world is difficult, and it is entirely possible for us to look around us at the level of depravity in this world and wonder if we can actually make it out. But we also saw within those texts that there is a way that we can overcome and it is through commitment and faithfulness to God! **(Ephesians 6:10-13)** We see this not only in principle, but we also see it through numerous examples in the Scriptures.

II. Yet, there are numerous examples of faithful individuals who rose above their wicked surroundings and maintained their godliness.

- A. We might think that things are pretty bad in our world today, and I won’t argue with you that things are pretty bad at times, but let’s all take a moment to agree that things aren’t as bad today as they were during the days of Noah. **Genesis 6:5-7** describes an incredibly wicked state of affairs following Adam and Eves expulsion from the Garden of Eden. *“When the Lord saw that human wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every inclination of the human mind was nothing but evil all the time, the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and he was deeply grieved. Then the Lord said, ‘I will wipe mankind, whom I created, off the face of the earth, together with the animals, creatures that crawl, and birds of the sky—for I regret that I made them.’”* And yet, there was one man who was willing to rise above the horrible negative influences and wicked environment. *“Noah, however, found favor with the Lord. These are the family records of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among his contemporaries; Noah walked with God.”* **(Genesis 6:8,9)** Though the entire world was living in complete ungodliness...Noah refused to go with the flow, and instead walked with God.
- B. The young man Daniel also stands out as an example of not just a godly person, but he serves as a great example of a godly young person who was willing to be determined and make up his mind that he wouldn’t defile himself in a completely wicked environment. **Daniel 1** tells us of Daniel and his three friends being taken off into captivity by the Babylonians with Nebuchadnezzar having plans for these young men and other impressive youths to be groomed into strong Babylonian citizens and servants to the king. Yet, Daniel wanted no part of that which would defile him before God when it came to his acclimation into Babylonian society. He would stand strong. *“Daniel determined that he would not defile himself with the king’s food or with the wine he drank.”* **(Daniel 1:8)**
- C. To many of us, this is all we need to see in order to know that we can rise above the negative influences of the wicked environment we live in, but for others of us who might have spent time in that type of world...we might wonder if we can truly ever get past who we used to be. In response to that possible thought...let me say “YES! We absolutely can rise above our pasts and now live godly in an ungodly world!” I say this based upon what we see in **1 Corinthians 6:9-11** where Paul writes, *“Don’t you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God’s kingdom? Do not be deceived: No sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or [homosexuals], no thieves, greedy people, drunkards, verbally abusive people, or swindlers will inherit God’s kingdom. And some of you used to be like this. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”* What is key within this text? *“And some of you used to be like.”* Some of these people used to go with the flow of the world and live ungodly lives, but they came to know and obey the Gospel which set them on a new path for how they live. It is possible to be godly in this ungodly world!

III. No greater example is there of this being possible than that of Jesus while He was on this earth.

- A. Some might say that Jesus's temptations were only a farce because a wholly good God could not actually be tempted by evil. This is a true statement according to **James 1:13**, but that is where Jesus coming in the flesh comes into play. The Hebrew writer seeks to encourage us in our own struggles with temptation by helping us recognize that Jesus went through what we go through. *"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin."* (**Hebrews 4:15**)
- B. We talked at the onset about the spiritual war that we are engaged in, and sometimes we might feel overwhelmed even though we aren't able to witness the spiritual war that is taking place. Yet with Jesus, He was directly tempted by Satan during His time in the wilderness, but as we just read...He wasn't willing to give into the wicked influences of the evil one. He stood strong upon the word of God and committed Himself to only doing that which would please His Father. If that is what the Son of God did while on this earth then we must recognize that it is entirely possible for us to overcome if we will lean upon the Lord's strength and take advantage of the ways of escape that He lovingly provides to us. (**1 Corinthians 10:13**) We have every ability in the world to resist the wicked influences of this ungodly world and remain godly in our behavior. Jesus proved that is the case!

IV. Therefore, it is His desire that His followers maintain their faithfulness, and stand boldly for God's will.

- A. It is not just enough for us to recognize the broken nature of this world with its negative and wicked influences. Yes, we must know what it is that we are facing, but we must take that knowledge and do something with it! What we must do is be like Noah, Daniel, the Corinthians, and Jesus. We must maintain our faithfulness to God and be willing to stand boldly for Him and His will for us in this life.
- B. The whole world was on a pathway to hell, but Noah was committed to God. He acted upon that commitment by building an ark. The Hebrew writer tells us that through this building on the ark, Noah *"condemned the world."* Without a word, Noah told the world that you can go on your way straight to condemnation, but he was going to stick with God. Daniel was willing to act upon his faithfulness by boldly requesting for himself and his friends nothing but water and vegetables for himself during the Babylonian training period. Such a request could have gotten him killed, but He feared His God more than he did men. The Corinthians were admonished by Paul to act upon their commitment to God by making sure that their bodies were being treated like the temples of God that they were. This would have been especially out of the ordinary in Corinth where pagan religious sexual activity was a normal routine for many. And of course, Jesus's righteous life was on full display day in and day out in a day when far too many of the Jewish nation were behaving as if there existed no covenant between them and Jehovah.
- C. These actions by these individuals all go to show us that it is entirely possible for us to live godly in a godly world, but even more so...we must recognize that this is God's will for us in this life. It is His desire that His people be noticeably different from those in the world who are under the influences of the evil one and ruler of this world. As disciples, we are to be different and uninfluenced by the world so that we will only do that which is pleasing to our God.

It is my greatest desire that our focus on living Godly in an ungodly world will remind us of God's great desire for our holiness and further equip us with the knowledge and tools necessary to live above the negative influences that are all around us. Our monthly focuses lesson, Bible classes, Daily Bible Readings, additional studies, and more are all geared towards helping us to simply be what Jesus died for us to be holy, and I hope that each of us will be committed to the goals set before us. It might seem difficult, but we can, by the Lord's strength, be successful in our goal of living godly in this ungodly world.