

Paul the apostle makes a prophetic statement which those without the eyes of faith may think to be the wrong way round. This paper sets out to show that it is perfectly stated as a paradox to grab us by the collar and confront us with uncomfortable but necessary truths

The Great Paradox of Life in this World

An Exposition of the
Second Letter to Timothy,
chapter 3, verses 12-13

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"All those who desire to live devoutly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived" (Second Letter to Timothy, chapter 3, verse 12-13)

INTRODUCTION: Stating the Great Paradox

Here in this text that you see above from the sacred scriptures, the great paradox of life in this world is clearly stated. Here is that paradox: **Those who live in a state of true spirituality will be persecuted, while those who live lives of evil and who operate as impostors and deceivers will flourish.** Why should this be so?

A certain kind of pseudo-optimistic thinking may come to the conclusion that it should be absolutely the other way round. I have even been called "negative" for mentioning this text in conversation! I mean shouldn't it be those "evil people and impostors" who get persecuted while devout disciples of Christ should flourish? Does that sound fairer? To the liberal mindset, that may be so. But plainly not according to the prophetic word of God. Yet it is affirmed to be the opposite. Again, I ask "why?" The answer is simple if one has the foundation of healthy teaching in one's heart. Then the paradox will make sense. (In the conclusion, I will be showing the importance of paradox, especially in this context).

In this paper, I am going to ask a number of questions which could be raised about this text. **1)** What is a devout life? **2)** Why should those living a devout life 'in Christ Jesus' be persecuted? **3)** Where would such persecution come from? **4)** Is persecution all there is for those leading devout lives? **5)** Why should evil people and impostors flourish?

I. WHAT IS A DEVOUT LIFE?

At its most basic, a devout life is one in which we reject solely chasing worldly pursuits and instead develop a sense of holiness and reverence for our Creator — seeking every way possible that we can live in sync with that mighty force who we call God and, as a result, carry out His will during our brief sojourn here in earth. That is the devout life at its most basic. Now we can qualify that even further.

Living devoutly means living a life that is devoted. That is its root. The Greek word translated as "devoutly" in our text (or "godly" in many translations) is εὐσεβῶς, *eusebos*. This is the adverb which is derived from the adjective εὐσεβής, *eusebes*, meaning devout. That word is made up from *eú*, meaning well or good, and *sébomai*, "to pay homage" or "to venerate". Thus, to live devoutly means to live in a state of veneration, adoration or worship of one's Creator — which is not something reserved for singing a few hymns in a church building on a Sunday but is the very way of life for the disciple of Christ. Somehow, one is continually attuned to that level of devotion and a sense of adoration for the Divine — like being in love on a spiritual level, in love with God, filled with wonder at what has been wrought in one's being through the ministry of Christ, who is "God manifested in the flesh".

Now, you may at this point want to say to me, *"But living a devout life can be done by anyone in any religion, such as monks in India, Tibet or Japan; so one doesn't have to be*

a disciple of Christ". It is true that one can live an ascetic life devoted to various so-called "gods" or idols or simply as a form of self-discipline. That can be done. But this is not what is being referred to in our sacred text — neither would such a life of necessity lead to one being persecuted. For the efficacy and worth and depth and persecution-receiving of the genuinely devout life is clearly qualified in the text that we are looking at. It says, "*All those who desire to live devoutly **in Christ Jesus***".

So it's not about merely living a somewhat ascetic existence devoted to one's gods, goddesses and idols; it is about living a devout life "*in Christ Jesus*". It is **that** which will inevitably lead to persecution.

Our Perception About What it Means to be Holy is Completely Skewed

Now, what does this mean? It is important to discover the truth about this because it is this '*living-devoutly-in-Christ-Jesus*' which inevitably leads to persecution in this world. It is the "in Christ Jesus" bit which clinches it. You can live some kind of ascetic existence as a so-called "holy man" and yet never have any persecution problems whatsoever, just living your life in your own little world, devoting yourself to the images of gods and idols on your altar. You could even start your own cult! Many such "holy men" have done so and they have also made a lot of money out of it, not to mention preying on the women who sign up [see the manuscript of the book, "Stripping the Gurus", at [https://www.thezensite.com/non-Zen/Stripping the Gurus.pdf](https://www.thezensite.com/non-Zen/Stripping%20the%20Gurus.pdf)]; and that's just the tip of the iceberg.

For many millennia, it has been Satan's fiendishly clever little strategy to make you think that those "holy men", with their beards and kaftans, robes and ashrams, temples and candles and strange-sounding gongs, their idea that stilling the mind and getting blissed-out will bring something called "enlightenment" (which no one ever seems to find!), and that their hypnotic verbal conundrums are where true spirituality is at. You know... like "*If you become nothing, you will become everything*" or "*Listen to the sound of one hand clapping*", and all that malarkey. There was a time, many decades ago, when I used to think that all that stuff was really cool; but once you've seen through it, there is no turning back.

We've been so cleverly brainwashed over the years to believe that this eastern mystical twaddle — much of which has been absorbed into the neo-Gnostic New Age Movement — is what being spiritual is all about. But it's a trap, having the appearance of spirituality to attract you to, and keep you in, their Christless cult.

It may sound clever and super-spiritual, but it's all been one vast illusion, fostered over these millennia as part of the development of satanic religion. I have known many, many people chasing that "enlightenment" in India, Bali and on Mount Shasta, but not one of them has ever found it. The carrot is always on the stick mesmerically hanging a metre in front of them. But they will never reach it. Only the "holy men" who beguile them have ever claimed to have found it. This is because it is a satanic lie (and very often a money-spinning one too). You would think that after a lifetime of trying to get enlightened and not succeeding would finally bring home to them that it is a mirage. But no. They say

that it will, as a result of all their experiences in this life, be even closer to them in their next life. Another trap: The reincarnation illusion.

I should also say here that real holiness — being a holy man or holy woman — has nothing whatsoever to do with separating yourself from the world *physically*. **Real holiness is about being able to live in this world physically, yet remaining uncorrupted, uncontaminated spiritually and remaining faithful to God, whatever happens.** That is real holiness, devoutness. Not getting blissed out on a mountaintop, surrounded by idols and incense. That is just self-indulgence.

When the voice from heaven in the 18th chapter of the Book of Revelation says, “*Come out of [Babylon], My people, so that you will not share in her sins or contract any of her plagues*”, it is not telling us to live on a platform up a pole (like Simeon the Stylite), or hide ourselves in a monastery on a high mountain in Tibet or Greece. It is not giving travel advice to ‘get-away-from-it-all’ tourists, but spiritual counsel concerning personal sanctification — how to live in the world yet not be part of the satanic world-system. Christ plainly prayed to His Father about His disciples in this way. He prayed as follows:

“I am not asking that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth” (Gospel of John, chapter 17, verses 15-16).

The pathway to holiness is plain as a pikestaff from those words. Jesus doesn’t want us to be physically separated from the world (for we have much work to do here). But He asks that we be preserved “from the evil one”, from Satan and his world-system of evil. He says that disciples are “not of the world”, which is true. We are the forerunners and avant garde of the new creation to come. Then He reveals exactly how disciples can be in this world yet be sanctified, spiritually separated, from the world. He prays this: “*Sanctify them by the truth*”. Wow! Don’t you just love that! That is the answer. We do not need to shuftly off to mountaintops or live up a pole or lock ourselves away in walled-cloisters. That is a false perception of holiness with which we have been brainwashed. We simply have to be *sanctified by the truth*. Yes! Truth sanctifies, makes people holy. No wonder the demonic realm, forces of darkness, and philosophers have been doing all they can to make us believe that there is no such thing as absolute truth. For our ability to live separately from the world — from the satanic world-system — lies in our receiving and upholding of truth.

While it is indeed true that all truth sanctifies, Jesus specifies that in particular God’s word is truth — that’s what He prayed, “Your word is truth” — and it is *that* which sanctifies to the profoundest level. God’s word entails everything He has revealed, especially about Himself. The Greek for God’s word is ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ, *ho logos tou Theou*. The word of God. Above all, Christ Himself is the divine Logos. Right at the beginning of John’s gospel, chapter 1, we read about Christ as God the Creator and Upholder of the universe:

“In the beginning was the Word [the Logos], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.

Through Him all things were made, and without Him nothing was made that has been made”.

Then, a few verses later we read that *“the Word [the Logos] became flesh and made His dwelling among us”* (verse 14). This is Christ, the Logos of God, the word of God, who is said to be *“full of grace and truth”* (Gospel of John, chapter 1, verse 14), and also *“the way, the truth and the life”* (Gospel of John, chapter 14, verse 6). Christ Himself as the Logos, the Word of God, is the very personification of truth. Ultimately, it is Christ who is the truth that sanctifies. It’s for this reason that real holiness cannot take place unless it is *“in Christ Jesus”*. You can set yourself up as a so-called *“holy man”* or woman and do all the stuff that they do — the robes, the mantras, the ashrams, bla-bla. But that is not holiness. That is a satanic masquerade of holiness. Real holiness is way inside and does not need any cosmetic tokens, costumes, or stage props.

Why Should Being “in Christ Jesus” Make All the difference?

Disciples of Christ are *“sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (First Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 1, verse 2). So disciples are sanctified, that is, set apart from this evil world, made holy — called to be the counterculture of the world, spiritually separated from it, who see well beyond the false unity which Satan is trying to generate through the syncretic amalgamation of religions and various New Age sects.

All disciples of Christ are said to *“be clothed with Christ”* (Letter to the Galatians, chapter 3, verse 27), wearing Him like a set of clothes, symbolically speaking, thus being ensconced in Him. In similar vein, Paul reminds all disciples: *“Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh”* (Letter to the Romans, chapter 13, verse 14). This corresponds perfectly to the whole concept of *“living devoutly in Christ Jesus”*.

Thus, this being “in Christ Jesus” is a spiritual union with Christ who is our go-between, our intermediary to God. Christ, the God-Man, came precisely to create that bridge between humans and God. He is the link. When we are in union with Him through being *“in Christ Jesus”*, we are living in sync with the Divine will, Divine law and the march of prophecy. We will be sanctified by truth, spiritually separated from the world through our relationship with the divine Logos, living devoutly in Christ Jesus.

So, unlike all the holy men of the world’s religions who are living their ascetic life in order to achieve a mythical *“enlightenment”* or to discover their imaginary *“god within”*, disciples of Christ live devout lives in the midst of the world *“in Christ Jesus”*, in order to draw nearer to God, for we have the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. This does not make us into God or little gods or indulge us in a search for some kind of once-for-all-time *“enlightenment”*. Rather, it cleanses us, strengthens us, matures us, makes us fearless yet humble expounders of Divine truth, and sets us outside the satanic world system, while giving us a deep insight into the workings of the forces of darkness and how the Christ overcame them and their leader, Satan, two thousand years ago.

Living devoutly in Christ Jesus will determine everything about how we live our lives. It will determine the company we keep, the movies we watch, the books we read, the things we take into our bodies and into our minds, the places we visit, our interests, our work, our comportment, our attitudes, the way we treat others, the way we respond to how others treat us, even the way we walk or carry ourselves. In short, everything concerning who we are and what we do. This is not something we have to contrive. It all happens naturally.

In this way, Paul can say to the disciples of Christ, *"You are not your own; you were bought at a price"* (First Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 6, verses 19-20). That price was what Christ paid on the cross, and therefore *"your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God"* (First Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 6, verse 19). This is what it means to be "in Christ Jesus". It brings joy, it brings protection, it brings perception, it brings peace — all at the deepest level. **Yet...** Paul can still say that *"all those who live devoutly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted"*. The Greek word translated as "persecuted" there means 'aggressively hunted down'. Is it strange that should be so? Well that brings us to our second question:

II. WHY SHOULD THOSE LIVING A DEVOUT LIFE 'IN CHRIST JESUS' BE PERSECUTED?

As I said at the beginning, you might think that those living devoutly in Christ Jesus would be living victorious lives, riding on the crest of a wave, ensconced in a little bubble of spiritual happiness, while all the evil folks will get their just deserts. I know this would be true in an old-fashioned 'goodies and baddies' Hollywood movie but this is not the case at all in the present fallen creation and especially not during *"this present evil age"* from which it is imperative that we are delivered (see the Letter to the Galatians, chapter 1, verse 4).

You see, we who are disciples of Christ have a foot in two cosmoses, so to speak. We are already marked out to be the population of the new creation to come. We are, in fact, the forerunners of that, the avant garde of the pure incorruptible cosmos which has yet to be created. But we still inhabit corrupted bodies and we still live in a fallen world. So we are astraddle two completely different creations. This is why on the one hand we know deep joy and feel the love of Christ yet, on the other hand, we remain subject to persecution and hatred. We are like square pegs in round holes. **We are misfits, exiles and vagabonds in a strange and hostile world.** It is for this reason that disciples *"who live devoutly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted"*.

Only Those who are Disciples of the True Christ will be Persecuted

While we remain in the present creation physically, we will be subjected to the rigours and blights of that creation. For this is a creation in which the majority hate Christ and all that He stands for, no matter what lip-service they may pay to Him. When I say that the majority hate Christ I mean they hate the *true* Christ. Obviously, they will not hate the Caucasian kind of Christ with flowing locks of hair who sits on a rock in Galilee dressed in expensive-looking robes and only ever recites the Beatitudes and nothing else. They will not hate the sappy, chocolate-box, greetings-card "Christ" who is

preached in so many churches. They will not hate the 'gentle Jesus meek and mild' of Christmas carol fame. They absolutely love all that schmaltz! Their hatred is reserved solely for the Christ who does battle with Satan, the Christ who zealously saves souls from 'the second death', the Christ who fingers hypocrites and overturns the tables of those who make money out of religion, the Christ who sees right into their hearts, the Christ who rose from the dead and ascended to heaven, the Christ who is going to return to this cosmos like a flash of lightning from one end of the earth to the other. **That is the Christ they hate; and they hate Him with a vengeance.**

But one still has to wonder why such hatred should exist. To many, it no doubt seems irrational. But it is not really. Contrary to popular thinking, the world is not getting better and better and everyone is not 'innately good', as Jesus (who sees into all hearts) knew only too well (cf. Gospel of John, chapter 2, verses 23-25). Since the time of the Fall, there has been an inbuilt corruption and inclination to amorality in human beings which can only be overcome through supernatural transformation. More specifically, it can only be overcome through a realignment of the human soul so that it works in sync with its Creator. That will not come through religion. It will not come through navel-gazing in ashrams or overpriced New Age 'cleanse-your-chakras' sessions. It will not come through psychedelic drugs. It will not come through psychotherapy. It will only come through an encounter with the Christ, as He Himself revealed: *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"* (Gospel of John, chapter 14, verse 6). **This is the truth that people despise and which makes their hackles rise in rebellion. God has shown the way, but most people want anything but that.** So when they see people *"living devoutly in Christ Jesus"*, it triggers them into hostility.

The Koine Greek word translated as persecuted is διώκω, *diókó*, which according to Strong's Greek Concordance means to "zealously persecute, hunt down, pursue with all haste". In modern Greek, *diókó* means to prosecute or to chase. And no wonder they should be subjected to this campaign of oppression. The thing is that disciples of Christ cannot be corrupted, conditioned or socially engineered by fake authority. They stand for truth and reject lies. They live counter to the prevailing culture which is built essentially on lies, dishonesty, greed, and fakery. These are more reasons why disciples are persecuted through aggression, ridicule, ostracism, or even violence and, ultimately, through assassination.

The Disciples' Pledge Renders them Prone to Persecution

Persecution will also come because disciples have pledged themselves to take up their crosses. Christ Himself plainly said *"If anyone wants to be My disciple, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me"*. We can see from those words that there are three elements to becoming a disciple of Christ. The **first element** is to deny oneself — to set aside one's selfish desires and align oneself wholly with God's will. If we are just pursuing our selfish goals without a thought or a prayer to discover what is God's will for us, then we will fail to be Christ's disciples. The **second element** in becoming a disciple of Christ is to take up one's cross — to dissolve one's fears, to ramp up one's courage and be willing to endure whatever hardship the life of discipleship will inevitably

bring. And this is the reason that living devoutly in Christ Jesus will inevitably bring persecution: It is part of the cross that we have to bear. The **third element** in becoming a disciple of Christ is that we must follow Him, as it says in that Bible verse.

Keeping to all three of those elements brings us head-on into conflict with this world. To deny oneself goes completely against the thrust of the world in which you are taught to compete, to push yourself forward, to win at all costs, to love yourself and be something important and 'big-deal' out there. Just resisting that potpourri of conformist tentacles puts you at loggerheads with your family, your friends, your school, and all the forces who want to make you conform to societal norms. To take up your cross will then alienate you further from society and if you follow Christ as a genuine disciple, then that will bring the hatred of the world down on you very quickly. But keeping to this pledge is what makes disciples worthy of Christ. As Jesus said, *"Anyone who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me"* (Gospel of Matthew, chapter 10, verse 38).

If you Truly Follow Christ you Will Bear the Brunt of the World's Hatred

As Christ Himself predicted, *"they will deliver you over to be persecuted and killed, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name"* (Gospel of Matthew, chapter 24, verse 9). Not disliked or ignored or treated with indifference, but **hated!** Because of Christ's name, His power, His authority — which is what His name implies, because you are "in Christ Jesus". **The unregenerated world hates Christ, and there has been a conspiracy in place to eradicate the truth about what His life and death signify for humanity.** In fact, that is the foremost conspiracy in the world. (Readers can see my article on this [here](#)). This is what so many do not realise and feel shocked when they discover the poisonous venom directed at the true Christ and those who follow Him. If you are "clothed in Christ" and "in Christ Jesus", then that world of unregenerated people will hate you too.

Now, that hatred and persecution will not touch you if you're some kind of nominal "Christian". You know... just trotting down to church on a Sunday, never speaking to anyone about Christ, watching TV news and soaking up its lies, never resisting the satanic world-system or exposing the darkness in it, not "living devoutly in Christ Jesus". If that's you, no one is going to persecute you or hate you. You're just the kind of "Christian" they like. The world will love you. You are no threat to them. You will never be persecuted.

But if you follow Christ — that is, if you walk in His footsteps, if you are prepared to suffer as He did, to endure the disgrace and humiliation that He did, to stand up to corrupt authorities as He did — then you will bear the brunt of the world's hatred. There is not the slightest doubt about that. **Thus, taking up your cross means being prepared to be persecuted and hated by the world.** Such persecution will increase immensely as the end draws near and that will sort out the genuine disciples from the false ones. That is the meaning in the Parable of the Sower, as Jesus showed when He said that

“The seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he remains for only a season. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away” (Gospel of Matthew, chapter 13, verses 20-21).

Those who are genuine disciples will not fall away when that persecution comes. But those who are just playacting will soon fall away when they realise how God’s word triggers the desire to persecute in others.

This brings us to our third question:

III. WHERE WOULD SUCH PERSECUTION COME FROM?

In this first place, that persecution comes from...

1) The Satanic World-System of Humans

If the whole world lies under the power of Satan, which it does, as the apostle John clearly states (First Letter of John, chapter 5, verse 19), and Satan hates Christ with his whole being, then it stands to reason that he will also hate those who are “in Christ Jesus” and he will be able to stir up the world to hate them too. Not long before His arrest and crucifixion, Christ said to His disciples:

“If the world hates you, understand that it hated Me first. If you were of the world, it would love you as its own. Instead, the world hates you, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world” (Gospel of John, chapter 15, verse 19).

This “world” is what I call “the satanic world-system”. Those who are wrapped up in that world-system will not be hated because they’re in it. As Jesus said, the world loves its own. But when you have escaped from that satanic world-system, you will be hated by those who are imprisoned in it. This world is like one vast cult. A super-cult under the power of Satan. Just like cults persecute those who have escaped from them, and even hunt them down, so the cult of this world will persecute those who have escaped it through being “not of this world” and “in Christ Jesus”.

The world hated Christ first. Jesus stated very clearly why the world hates Him. He said that it *“hates me because I testify that its works are evil”* (Gospel of John, chapter 7, verse 7). This is the truth that the world cannot stand. People cannot stand the naked truth that they are essentially evil. And that is also another reason why they hate Christ’s faithful disciples, because they carry the message of their Master that in their present condition their hearts are inclined towards evil — either to practise it themselves in one way or another or to passively accept the evil of others. **They will hate you because you tell them with some urgency that it is necessary for them to be completely transformed from that mindset and that they need to be saved.** This is what the world hates: Being told that they are in need of saving.

As highlighted earlier, Jesus plainly said that *“they will deliver you over to be persecuted and killed, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name”*. There is absolutely no doubt whatsoever that if you are a disciple of Christ you will be universally hated and

persecuted because of what you say and how you live and because you represent everything which demons are not. Most people are controlled by demons, to a greater or lesser degree. Thus, it is no problem whatsoever for them to stir people up against you.

In the second place, that hatred and persecution comes from...

2) The Realm of Demons

If Satan cannot get at Christ Himself (which he cannot), then he will get at those who are His. He cannot take away their inheritance in Christ but he can do everything he can, via his fellow fallen angels (demons), to put disciples in "a sad, doubting, questioning and uncomfortable condition". And they are masters at that. They have had aeons of practice. So you cannot take any chances. Never give them any opportunity to harass you on the basis of your own actions. However, they can be permitted by God to stir up persecutions against you, even if you have behaved impeccably. Why should this be?

Usually, God allows this to happen to test us, to mature us, to strengthen us and to increase our faith. To the assembly of disciples in Smyrna, Christ said,

"Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Look, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison to test you, and you will suffer affliction for ten days. Be faithful even unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Book of Revelation, chapter 2, verse 10).

The devil thinks he is doing that test for his own purposes, but it is all happening under the permissive hand of God, which *always* overrules. There was Satan imagining that he was going to break them with a period of jailtime, but it simply provided them with an occasion to be faithful to the death for which they will receive the ultimate accolade — the crown of life. **It is not that you forced God's hand to reward you for your perseverance, but that your willingness to die for your faith proved that it was real.** All faithful disciples of Christ receive that crown of life. It is a symbol of the gift of eternal life — the 'crown' received at the end of this life after having lived in a hostile world.

If you Escape the Cult of Satan you Will Feel 'the Lash of his Whip'

If the whole world is under the power of Satan, this is because of Satan's hatred of those who are "in Christ Jesus". If you are a disciple "in Christ Jesus", you have escaped his cult and he is extremely angry about it, so you will receive 'the lash of his whip'. We read in the sacred texts that Satan (symbolized as "the dragon"), because he had been outwitted by Christ and cast out from being ruler of the world through Christ's resurrection and ascension, *"was enraged at the woman [symbol of God's people], and went to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus"* (Book of Revelation, chapter 12, verse 17). The satanic realm making war with Christ's disciples means stirring up oppression against you of many kinds, including persecution. The aim is to wear you down so that you jump ship and seek comfort on his.

Demonic whispers will say to you, *"You don't need to have this hassle in your life. Just stop speaking spiritual truth, openly renounce Christ and I can make all this trouble go away. You will have a good life"*. And they can do that. They can make you have a very comfortable and materially-abundant life. That is why the so-called "Law of Attraction" works (as exemplified in the book and film "The Secret"). It is nothing to do with 'the energy of our thoughts attracting experiences of the same energy to come into our lives' or, as they call it, to 'manifest'. That is just a mixture of New Thought principles and sympathetic magic. It is like the Faustian kiss of Satan for those who do not rely on God alone to provide their daily needs but who instead use affirmations, mantras and visualizations to get their material wants to 'manifest'. For as soon as an acquisitive human mind engages in Godless greed, the demonic realm will zone in on that and provide the supply for the demand. On the other hand, if your desires in prayer are noble and worthy, altruistic and necessary, then the good angels will zone in on that as helpful influences at the behest of the Creator. The disciple of Christ stores up riches in heaven, while the child of Satan stores up riches on this earth (Gospel of Matthew, chapter 6, verses 19-21).

Persecution and other forms of oppression and affliction will inevitably plague the life of the genuine disciple who lives devoutly in Christ Jesus and who openly speaks about his or her spirituality. There will be those who cannot take that persecution, thus proving that they never were Christ's in the first place. As He said: *"The one who perseveres to the end will be saved"* (Gospel of Matthew, chapter 24, verse 13). Those who do not, will not. Such endurance in the face of persecution and affliction is a sure sign that one is a genuine disciple. It is not that perseverance in the face of persecution saves you. It is that such perseverance to the end proves that you are saved.

Which brings us to our next question...

IV. IS PERSECUTION ALL THERE IS FOR THOSE LEADING 'DEVOUT LIVES IN CHRIST JESUS'?

You may wonder, after all that has been said above, if your life as a disciple of Christ is going to be nothing but persecution, oppression and affliction. Not at all. It is far more interesting and complex than that. Some disciples will be more persecuted than others. **However, the consolation is that these experiences will happen so that one will get precisely those that one needs. For the disciple of Christ, all these experiences are testings so as to foster maturity, strength and courage.**

Before going into this any further, it has to be said that one thing is certain: *"God is faithful; He will not let you be tested beyond what you can bear. But when you are tested, He will also provide an escape, so that you can endure it"* (First Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 10, verse 13). This is like a spiritual law which is designed to tailor testing to each individual and to ensure that no one suffers more than they can take. The fact is that we always think we can take less than we can. **We are very often spiritual 'snowflakes' in our own minds!** But we underestimate what we are capable of.

As disciples, we are not in this world to have a comfortable life of luxury and ease. This may come as a surprise to many. A huge part of the visible church is taught that God

wants them to be materially prosperous and in perpetual full health and that if we are not, then we are not living in faith. This is just one of very many ways that Satan has infiltrated God's people with lies — part of the very *"evil people and impostors going from bad to worse"* that our sacred text is speaking about.

The 'Delicate Plain Called Ease' is Not Very Broad

There is a very revealing part of the story in John Bunyan's *"Pilgrim's Progress"*. After undergoing many trials and testings, Christian and Hopeful suddenly come *"to a delicate plain called Ease"* — you know, a place where you can just relax because there are no trials or testings and you can laze around, enjoy the ambiance and 'mellow-out'. The text then says about this *"delicate plain called Ease"* that it was *"where they went with much content"*; and then immediately comes the sting in the tail: *"but that plain was narrow, so they were quickly got over it"*. I always have to chuckle when I read that. I can just imagine Bunyan giving a little wink to his readers at that point. There you are thinking, *"Oooh, some relaxation. Cool! No more hassle. A well-earned break. We're on a roll now!"* So Bunyan straightaway says, *"Hey! Not so fast! That plain was only some short strides wide and thus just a very brief refreshing interlude and they were quickly on the other side"*. This is actually the way it is for the genuine disciple of Christ. So many assume that because they have now *"given their lives to the Lord"* (or whatever other catchphrase they use) that everything will be hunky-dory. But this is not the case at all... well, not in a conventional sense. For you have now become a protected servant of God. You are living in a hostile world which is overrun by evil. Prior to *"living devoutly in Christ Jesus"*, you were at home in that world. You were not then a threat to that world. Even if you weren't proactive in advocating evil, you aided and abetted that world by your passive acceptance of it. But now that you have given yourself to Christ as His disciple, you have become a foreigner and pilgrim in this world, an exile in it. You have renounced the world, the flesh and the devil. You can no longer live at ease here; and if you *are* granted a period of ease, which will happen from time to time, it will be short-lived. For if you are fully open about who you are now and you declare to the world publicly what you really believe, you will be hated by most of those in it.

Consider All Forms of Persecution to be a Joy

Now, if you are sitting there getting all bent out of shape thinking I am preaching doom and gloom, that is not the case at all. For the disciple of Christ has a completely different attitude to oppression and persecution, trials and tribulations, than the rest of the world. As James put it so well:

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you encounter trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Allow perseverance to finish its work, so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (Letter of James 1:2-4).

There we have it. In answer to the question, *"Is persecution all there is for those living devoutly in Christ Jesus?"*, the reply is, *"No, it isn't all there is. There will be brief times of ease. There will be fellowship and bonding with those likeminded souls of faith. But above all, you can consider your trials and tribulations as being a joyful experience"*

because you know the secret of what they are building inside you: perseverance, endurance, maturity, completeness”.

Be Encouraged Because Christ has Overcome the World & We are More than Conquerors

Another reason you can feel good about trials and tribulations was well-stated by Christ to His disciples: *“In the world you will have affliction, but take courage, for I have overcome the world”* (Gospel of John, chapter 16, verse 33). Whatever happens to you in this world, you can know deep inside you that this is a world which Christ has overcome through His overthrow of Satan. This overcome-by-Christ world is now limping towards a catastrophic outcome. For this world of evil is destined to be dissolved: *“The heavens will pass away with a roar, and elements will be dissolved in fire, and the earth and the works in it will vanish”* (Second Letter of Peter, chapter 3, verse 10). As disciples of Christ, we do not have any real estate here; we do not have any ‘skin in the game’, no ‘dog in this fight’ nor a ‘horse in this race’. Satan still imagines that he is ruler of this world and that it is all still his. He knows that he only has a short time to do it and is mighty angry because of that (Book of Revelation, chapter 12, verse 12), but he is still doggedly setting up his kingdom on earth, not knowing that this present creation has just been a temporary testing ground to sort out the sheep from the goats (in both angels and humans).

As disciples of Christ, we know that we will be the population of the creation to come, which is now our true home. Our sole purpose here, therefore, is to serve God in whatever way He has destined for us, to bring as many souls as we can reach into the flock with us, remaining unconcerned about the degree to which we will be persecuted. There are many texts which give us comfort in this. Here are a few of them:

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Romans, chapter 8, verses 35-37).

Thus, even in the midst of persecution, we are more than conquerors. Moreover, we can even *take delight* in persecutions and other trials and testings:

“Christ said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness’. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest on me. That is why, for the sake of Christ, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (Second Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 12, verses 9-10).

When we are at our weakest in human terms, then God can step in with His mighty power on our behalf. More than that, we can even “rejoice” in the difficulties thrust upon us as a result of our faith:

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial that has come upon you, as though something strange were happening to you. But **rejoice** that you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed at the revelation of His glory. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. Indeed, none of you should suffer as a murderer or thief or wrongdoer, or even as a meddler. But if you suffer as a ‘Christian’, do not be ashamed, but glorify God that you bear that name” (First Letter of Peter, chapter 4, verses 12-16).

The word “Christian” was not then used by disciples to describe themselves. It was an insult given to them by the Romans. But Peter is saying, “Even if you suffer while being given their insulting label ‘Christian’, it is nothing to be ashamed of because you can give God the glory that you bear the name of Christ in that expression”.

If We Publicly Declare Ourselves as Being ‘in Christ’, We will Receive Our Reward

Although living devoutly and publicly declaring oneself as being “in Christ Jesus” will inevitably bring persecution to a greater or lesser degree of one kind or another, it also brings great reward in heaven, which is where disciples should be storing up their riches. Genuine disciples of Christ are those who “*publicly declare themselves to be in Christ in front of people*”, just as Jesus said we should (Gospel of Matthew, chapter 10, verse 32). This is actually a very remarkable and significant thing. This verse is often translated as if Jesus is saying, “*Everyone who confesses Me before people, I will also confess him before My Father in heaven*”, but it is sooo much more than that! The Greek actually translates literally as “*Everyone who publicly declares themselves **in Me** in front of people I will publicly declare Myself **in them** in front of My Father in heaven*”. One is not merely “confessing Christ” publicly; one is declaring oneself to be “in Christ”, just as it is in our main text when it says “in Christ Jesus”. The Greek word, “en” (in), is there. The result of that is that Christ then declares Himself as being “in you” in front of the Father. And this is the way it is. For disciples are “in Christ Jesus” and Christ Jesus is “in them”. This is the beautiful exchange. As He told His disciples, “*Remain in Me, and I will remain in you*” (Gospel of John, chapter 15, verse 4), and: “*You will know that I am in My Father, and you are in Me, and I am in you*” (Gospel of John, chapter 14, verse 20). This is the bond that disciples have with Christ. It is a union. Not a union of essence (which is a satanic teaching taught by eastern mysticism and the New Age Movement) but a union of nature. As Peter put it, through “*His precious and magnificent promises*”, we become “*partakers in the divine nature*” (Second Letter of Peter, chapter 1, verse 4).

So, we are not experiencing persecution, trials and tribulations in isolation. We are experiencing them “in Christ Jesus”, following in His footsteps and in His sufferings. He is right there with us through His Spirit. **When we realise this, it will revolutionize our entire experience of life.** As He said to His disciples: “*If the world hates you, understand that it hated Me first*” (Gospel of John, chapter 15, verse 18). The big reason that disciples are hated is because the world first and foremost hates Christ. That stigma rubs off on His disciples. So you had better be prepared for it!

This brings us to examine the second half of our sacred text, asking the question:

V. WHY SHOULD EVIL PEOPLE AND IMPOSTORS FLOURISH?

Here is a reminder of our sacred text. We have already dealt with the first part about those who live devoutly in Christ Jesus being persecuted. Now we turn to the second half of the text: "...while evil people and imposters go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived". This is clearly a prophecy which is surely applicable not only to the upcoming period from when the words were written but also to the entire aeon. For it is very doubtful that "*this evil age*" — the period of time from the ascension of Christ to His coming again — will be 26,000 years (the New Age meaning of an 'age'), as the evil in human nature would be unlikely to last that long, given the current advancement of technology and its wicked application by the psychopaths who form the power-elite in this world. One only has to scan the whole of history from the time those words were written until the present to see that they are totally applicable to the entire era.

Christ's Victory Has Not Yet Been Established in the Elements of the Cosmos

You may think that this is a rather bleak prophecy, that evil people and impostors will go from bad to worse. It may offend your positive-thinking sensibilities. But it is starkly true. When Christ overcame Satan two-thousand years ago and ousted him from his prior usurped position as "ruler of this world", exactly as Christ promised He would (Gospel of John, chapter 12, verse 31), technically-speaking He could have wound up history there and then and rolled up the scroll of this cosmos like a scrap of paper being tossed on a fire. But the full enactment of His victory was postponed for two reasons. **First**, the message of Christ's gospel had to be spread throughout the entire world so that the full number of souls would be snatched out of Satan's hand and brought into the kingdom of God. Jesus predicted that "*the end will come*" only as soon as the gospel of the kingdom has been preached in all the world (Gospel of Matthew, chapter 24, verse 14), presumably for as long as there is still someone around who will listen. Similarly, in a highly symbolic passage when the Book of Revelation says, "*When the two witnesses have finished their testimony...*" (Book of Revelation, chapter 11, verse 7), the 'two witnesses' there is a symbol of the witness of the *Ekklesia* to the world in this age involving the testimony of the gospel — the period of time from the ascension of Christ to the resurrection of the saints. So, there will come a moment when the testimony of the *Ekklesia* has been completed, and that will be the signal for multiple prophetic fulfilments surrounding the time of the end to begin in earnest. **Secondly**, the full enactment of Christ's victory was postponed for the time of this age because the full nature of human and demonic evil had to reveal its true wicked totality, and be demonstrated to be so, in order for God's judgement to be seen as just and justified. One day, this postponement of the ratification of Christ's victory over Satan will be over and a mighty angel will proclaim that "*There will be no more delay!... the mystery of God will be fulfilled, just as He proclaimed to His servants the prophets*" (Book of Revelation, chapter 10, verses 6-7). So at present, Christ's victory has not yet been universally established in the cosmos. It is declared in the spread of the gospel but it has not been established yet in the 'warp and woof' of the whole creation. This is why the whole

creation is said to be “groaning”, “in the pains of childbirth to the present time”, waiting “in eager expectation for the revelation of the sons of God” (Letter to the Romans, chapter 8, verses 18-23), that is, for the resurrection and transformation of the new heavens and new earth. Yes! The whole cosmos is presented here as if it were a living being conscious of its fallen, corrupted nature and yearning for the day when Christ’s victory can be ratified. In the meantime, while we are in the midst of this ‘postponement/delay’, “evil people and imposters go from bad to worse”.

What is an Impostor in this Context?

It is worth breaking down the Koine Greek word behind the translation here of “impostors”, for it is very revealing. The Koine Greek word in the plural is γόητες, *goētes*, and it has been variously translated as impostors, charlatans and seducers. All three of those words fit the description. Even the modern Greek translation is “charmer”, in the sense of someone who could ‘charm the birds out of the trees’ with their silky smoothness and beguiling nature. Interestingly, this is the only occurrence of this word in the Bible. Strong’s Greek Concordance (#1114) gives these graphic descriptions of the word:

“A conjuror, juggler, sorcerer; a tricky (crafty) deceiver... a fraud who ‘sounds off’ like a whining enchanter. This person uses their verbal spells and incantations to give the (false) impression they can do miracles... a swindler — a shameless cheat pretending to use supernatural power; an actor (cheap imposter), looking for self-gain, i.e. posing to be someone he isn’t”.

That is some description! Now we begin to get a whiff of what Paul was meaning when he wrote *goētes* in this letter of his. Really, he is referring to people who are fiendishly seductive, who are easily able to slip into roles as counterfeits, charlatans or impostors. There is an almost sorcerous element about them in the way that they are able to seduce, recruit, attract and compel. One sees this quality in an incipient way when we observe politicians or political leaders, dictators, cult leaders, gurus (Sai Baba was a classic example of this), confidence tricksters, narcissistic seducers of gullible women, etc. Really, that concatenation of descriptions from Strong’s Concordance above could be an apt description of the future Antichrist. For he will be the culmination of all these “evil people and impostors” throughout history.

These ‘*goētes*’ are therefore progressive throughout this age. The early church itself became full of them in no time and was no doubt in the front of Paul’s mind when he wrote those words. The church has been assailed by them ever since to such an extent that so many wacky ideas and teachings are now accepted as normal and most church gatherings are a zillion miles away from what the early church consisted of in its simplicity, authenticity and community. Really, the visible church today is in the main a real hotch-potch with some islands of sanity and soundness hidden away in the middle of it all. Not only the church but every area of life in this world has progressively been subjected to evil people and impostors going from bad to worse.

The reasons directly responsible for this progressive worsening of evil people and impostors are as follows. The first reason is...

1) The Wrath of Satan and his Forces of Darkness

In order to grasp why “evil people and impostors” should “go from bad to worse”, one must understand the extreme anger of the archangel, Satan, at being fooled by Christ when He meekly went to His crucifixion. For he had not at all anticipated the way in which Christ’s death would be used as an occasion to bring life — not only for Himself in resurrection but also for all those who would become His disciples. As the sacred text specifically says: *“Having disarmed the powers and authorities”,* God through Christ *“made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross”* (Letter to the Colossians, chapter 2, verse 15). The “powers and authorities” there refers not only to the human ones but the demonic ones also.

So when Satan was *“hurled to the earth”* from his prior access to heaven, he was filled with rage, as we are clearly told (Book of Revelation, chapter 12, verses 7-12 & 17). One must also imagine the extreme wrath of Satan at having countless souls continually snatched from his hands throughout this age as they become Christ’s disciples instead of his prey and there is nothing whatsoever that he can do about it.

All this has contributed to bringing about a frenzy of anger towards Christ and His disciples on the part of the demonic realm. I recall the description of Apollyon — a monstrous hybrid representation of satanic opposition who straddles the pathway in front of Christian in Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress and who then, after trying some smarmy entreaties, *“broke out into a grievous rage, saying, “I am an enemy to this Prince [Christ]: I hate his person, his laws, and his people: I have come out on purpose to withstand you”.* That grievous rage and hatred of the demonic realm for anything to do with Christ is what we are dealing with in our verse of sacred text.

The second reason directly responsible for this progressive worsening of evil people and impostors is...

2) The Progressive Degeneration of the World

Here is a reminder of the words of our text, the second half of the whole quotation: *“...evil people and imposters go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived”.*

Many would say that this is an extremely pessimistic, even nihilistic, view of humanity; and that if we look around us we can see that tremendous progress has been made. After all, as they would go on to say, every house has a toilet, there is a public sewage system and civilized people meet in congresses and parliaments all over the world as a result of democratic policies which would have been unheard of in the dark ages. (Yes, one has to roll one’s eyes at that point!).

This is all a superficial illusion. For, no matter what seems to be happening and developing around the world on a hygiene or political level, the hidden reality is very different. The human heart in its natural state is inclined towards corruption — either actually practising corruption or turning a blind eye to it (as the majority do), which is

tantamount to the same thing. This is due to two primary elements which are encapsulated in our text concerning this degeneration of the world. The first one is...

a) *The Gradual Worsening of the Corrupted State of the Human Heart*

“Evil people and imposters go from bad to worse”.

The central assertion of evolution theory is that through continual adaptation and the survival of the fittest, everything is gradually improving, evolving — a kind of cosmic version of Emil Coué’s affirmation, *“Every day, in every way, I am getting better and better”*. But this is not at all the case, both with the cosmos and the human heart.

Because of the Fall at the beginning of human history, everything became corrupted, both in cellular terms and at the level of morality. Things became so bad at one time, with evil hugely burgeoning everywhere, that God had to make a flood happen to wipe the majority of humans off the face of the earth. Jesus makes particular reference to this in saying that *“As it was in the days of Noah, so will it be at the coming of the Son of Man”* (Gospel of Matthew, chapter 24, verse 37). In other words, the conditions at the time when Christ returns to judge the earth will be very similar to those at the time of the flood. So how exactly were those conditions at the time of the flood?

Well, first, the sacred text says that *“the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was altogether evil all the time”* (Book of Genesis, chapter 6, verse 5). Therefore, *“the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and full of violence. And God looked upon the earth and saw that it was corrupt; for all living creatures on the earth had corrupted their ways”* (Book of Genesis, chapter 6, verses 11-12). And on top of that, a horde of demons had impregnated human women which had produced the mutant beings known as the Nephilim (Book of Genesis, chapter 6, verses 1-4). [In fact, those particular demons were dealt with and placed under restraint, Second Letter of Peter, chapter 2, verse 4, until the time they will be loosed right at the end of this age, Book of Revelation, chapter 9, verses 1-11].

In other words, **by the time of Christ’s cataclysmic return at the end of this “present evil age”, we can reasonably expect there to be huge corruption and rampant evil across the face of the earth in all fields (religious, philosophical, social, sexual, scientific, technological)**, mass demonic intervention and even possession, extensive human hubris and arrogance, plus scientific meddling with human and animal genes, bioweaponry, and all of this likely to be entwined with the hubristic use of artificial intelligence.

All of that is a far cry from the notion of everything getting better and better through human evolution. It will all be the result of the gradual worsening of the corrupted state of the human heart.

What Paul is referring to when he says that *“evil people and impostors will go from bad to worse”* is a progressive deterioration through the actions of evil people and those who impersonate others or play a role in order to deceive. Which brings us neatly to the second element encapsulated in our text concerning this degeneration of the cosmos, which is...

b) An Ever-Deepening Plague of Deception

“Evil people and imposters go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived”.

A major part of the progressive degeneration on this planet involves deception. In fact, it is central to the outworking of the affairs of this age. Deception lies at the heart of human development. Everywhere one looks, it is being utilized — whether in politics, advertising, PR, the media, food packaging, religion, and so on. In fact, to quote my commentary on the Book of Revelation,

“One of the driving forces behind most human endeavour has been and is deception. Consequently, almost everything in the world of humanity is fake and/or a lie, yet most choose not to see it and simply go along with it or would say that this is “negativity”. Remember that the forces of darkness never play their whole hand by showing you all their cards. For if you were to see those forces in all their grossness, you would recoil instantly in horror. If the forces of darkness were to reveal themselves in all the fullness of their malice, the vast majority of people would either die of a heart attack or run like a cheetah on steroids! This is why those forces pose as ‘angels of light’, and **false light today is far more deceptive than actual darkness.**

So, I say it again: Almost everything in the world today is fake and/or a lie. Religious authoritarianism poses as spirituality. New Age greed poses as spirituality. Psychological ‘bypassing’ poses as spirituality. Controlling, despotic government poses as benign leadership. Social engineering, personality manipulation and behavioural conditioning pose as education. Narcissist politicians pose as visionaries for a better world. Corrupt multi-millionaire heads of political parties promise you social justice and ‘equality’. Enslavement poses as ‘job opportunities’. Poisons and toxins pose as edible foodstuffs on all supermarket shelves. Indoctrination and disinformation pose as ‘the news’. Government, military-industrial and power-elite propaganda pose as journalism. Obscenity, mesmerism, and sheer banality pose as harmless entertainment. Social control poses as security. Exploitative colonialism, genocide, plunder and various forms of skulduggery are dressed up as respectable history. Illegal invasions and the destabilization of sovereign states poses as “humanitarian regime change”. A list of whacko kings and queens inadequately poses as the fullness of ‘history’. Intel-gathering and narcissism pose as ‘social media’. Infatuation, romance, lust, co-dependency and pheromonal overflows pose as love. Drug-pushing poses as “The Happy Hour”. Whistleblowers are falsely projected to the public as ‘dangerous criminals’, while genuinely dangerous criminals pose as philanthropists. Oligarchy poses as democracy. Pastiche poses as music. Greedy businesspeople pose as promoters of art. Dangerous

pharmaceuticals pose as cures. Genuine cures are projected to the public as quackery. Cures for potentially fatal illnesses are projected to the public as being merely “horse de-wormers”. Lunatic asylums pose as parliaments and congresses. The push to undermine the sacred masculine and feminine poses as “gender-diversity” and non-binary nonsense. Misandry poses as women’s liberation. Plunder and genocide pose as democratization. Assassination death-squads pose as government “intelligence agencies”. The list could go on and on but I’d probably be arrested and this isn’t the right hill to die on! **We live in a world where almost everything is fake and/or a lie, because it is a world run currently by the forces of darkness, in which hypocrisy, counterfeit and desolation are the pinnacles of their achievements; and they are getting desperate because they know they only have a short time.**

All of this phony madness is building up to one thing only: the creation of a one-world government; and that one-world government will be installed for one reason only: The revealing of the Antichrist. As the ultimate representative of lying, deceiving humanity — which, as I showed in chapter 6, is the meaning of 666 — the Antichrist will be the ultimate in the lie, the ultimate in deception; and that lie will be believed by most of the world (Second Letter to the Thessalonians, chapter 2, verse 11), because the world has been raised on lies, as you can see from the long list above ([“The Essential Apocalypse: Making Sense of the Book of Revelation”](#), pages 645-647).

Right in the midst of this fake world, the “*deceiving and being deceived*” which applies to the “*evil people and impostors*” who “*go from bad to worse*” is simply a part of all the fakery, which afflicts the *Ekklesia* as much as any other part of life in this world. In fact, it afflicts the *Ekklesia* even more because that is the prime object of Satan’s wrath.

This “*being deceived*” goes way further than merely the person who is being deceived. **For the natural result of being deceived is that you become a deceiver because you inevitably pass on your deception to others.** It is like a plague. Deception is an infection and it is infectious. If you are deceived, you will pass it on. At the present time, such deception is reaching pandemic proportions. This should not surprise us as it is building up to the time when the Antichrist will be revealed. Deception plays a massive part in the ‘spirit of the Antichrist’ which has pervaded this age. That is the connection with impostors, charlatans, seducers, sorcerers, counterfeiters. Impostorship is the ultimate in deception, involving an immense masquerade. It will reach its climax with the deception surrounding the Antichrist, who will essentially pass himself off as if he is the Christ and even make out as if he is God himself, energized “*by every kind of power, signs and pseudo-wonders*” (Second Letter to the Thessalonians, chapter 2, verse 9). That is the ultimate not only in the flourishing of evil and impostorship, but also in “*deceiving and being deceived*”.

CONCLUSION: The Importance of Paradox

Because many would find it strange that those living devoutly in Christ Jesus should be persecuted while evil people and impostors go from bad to worse, we need to realise that these two verses are presenting a necessary paradox. G.K. Chesterton described a paradox as *"truth standing on its head to gain attention"*. I think this is a beautiful summary of how a paradox works. The fact that many would expect the opposite to be true brings home the irrationality of it. In an ideal world, those living devoutly would flourish, while evil people and impostors would be chased down and dealt with. But this is not the world in which we live. These verses of the sacred text should show us the insanity of the world and encourage us to discover why this has happened and what is the true antidote for it.

As far as disciples of Christ are concerned, these verses of the sacred text are challenging us to endure with courage while evildoers flourish. The antidote to all this persecution and hatred is actually provided in the two verses which come immediately after the words of our text. Here they are in context:

"All those who desire to live devoutly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in the things you have learned and firmly believed, since you know from whom you have learned them. From infancy you have known the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (Second Letter to Timothy, chapter 3, verses 12-15).

But as for you... *continue in the things you have learned and believed*, which is Paul's advice to the young pastor, Timothy. This is why I wrote in the introduction that the answer to this paradox is simple if one has the foundation of healthy teaching in one's heart through grappling with the sacred texts, which are able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. **The only response to persecution and the burgeoning presence of evil people and impostors is the fearless exposition of the truth which sanctifies, shining as a light in the darkness, which comes about naturally as a result of living devoutly in Christ Jesus.**

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