

“BUT CONTINUE”

John Isaac Edwards

The first two words of Paul to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:14 are much needed today. The aged apostle exhorted the young man, **“But continue...”** To continue is to persevere. The word is used of him who cleaves, holds fast, to a thing. Paul is a sterling example of a continuing Christian. He said, *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith”* (2 Tim. 4:7). This brief writing highlights some areas in which we need, **“But continue...”**

1) IN THE WORD OF THE LORD. Jesus told believing Jews, *“...If ye **continue in my word**, then are ye my disciples indeed”* (Jn. 8:31). True disciples of Jesus are those who continue in His word! Luke 11:28 says, *“...blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it”* (Lk. 11:28). It is by His word that we live (Mt. 4:4), have everlasting life (Jn. 5:24), are clean (Jn. 15:3), sanctified (Jn. 17:17) and will be judged in the last day (Jn. 12:48). So, let’s continue!

2) IN THE LOVE OF CHRIST. Christ taught, *“As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: **continue ye in my love**”* (Jn. 15:9). Verse 10 explains how we continue in His love: *“If ye keep my*

commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.” Love and commandment-keeping go together! *“If ye love me, keep my commandments”* (Jn. 14:15). *“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me...”* (Jn. 14:21). *“If a man love me, he will keep my words...”* (Jn. 14:23). *“He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings...”* (Jn. 14:24). *“But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected...”* (1 Jn. 2:5). *“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments...”* (1 Jn. 5:3). *“And this is love, that we walk after his commandments”* (2 Jn. 6). Are we love-continuing through commandment-keeping?

3) IN THE GRACE OF GOD. Paul and Barnabas persuaded folks in the first-century *“...to **continue in the grace of God**”* (Acts 13:43). This is so important because it is by the grace of God that we are saved (Acts 15:11; Eph. 2:5, 8; Titus 2:11) and justified (Rom. 3:24; Titus 3:7). We can fall from grace (Gal. 5:4) and fail of His grace (Heb. 12:15). If we do not continue in His grace, then His grace will have been

bestowed upon us in vain! Paul penned, *“But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me”* (1 Cor. 15:10).

4) IN THE FAITH. Acts 14 reports of Paul and Barnabas: *“Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to **continue in the faith...**”* (v. 22). The word “faith” sometimes has reference to one’s personal faith; what one believes (Heb. 11:6). Other times, it is used of the gospel system of justification (Gal. 1:23; 2:2). We are taught, *“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith...”* (2 Cor. 13:5). We can be turned away from the faith (Acts 13:8), depart from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1), deny the faith (1 Tim. 5:8), and err from the faith (1 Tim. 6:10, 21; 2 Tim. 2:18). Holy, unblameable, unproveable presentation hinges on continuing! *“...to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel...”* (Col. 1:23). To leave the faith is to lose the hope!

5) **IN THE GOODNESS OF GOD.** In Paul's Romans 11 olive tree teaching it is recorded: "*Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou **continue in his goodness**: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off*" (v. 22). This points out that God is both good and severe. The context shows olive tree branches broken off through unbelief or disobedience! Thus, to continue in the goodness of God, we must keep on obeying God!

6) **IN PRAYER.** Colossians 4:2 declares, "**Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.**" The Scriptures also teach: "...men ought always to pray..." (Lk. 18:1); "*Praying always...*" (Eph. 6:18); "*Pray without ceasing*" (1 Th. 5:17). Daniel continued in prayer. When prayer to God was against the law of the land, "...he

kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (Dan. 6:10).

7) **IN FAITH, CHARITY AND HOLINESS.** In the context of women teaching Paul said, "... she shall be saved in childbearing, if they **continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety**" (1 Tim. 2:15). Our faith can be cast off (1 Tim. 5:12) and overthrown (2 Tim. 2:18). Paul said, "...*though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing*" (1 Cor. 13:2). Without holiness, "...no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). So, continue!

8) **IN TAKING HEED TO SELF AND THE DOCTRINE.** Timothy was instructed, "**Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save**

thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:16). Every man's first responsibility is to self! When Paul gave admonition to elders in the church of Christ he said, "*Take heed therefore unto yourselves...*" (Acts 20:28). Doctrine, which is teaching, is important. Timothy was to "... charge some that they teach no other doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:3). Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus put emphasis on "*sound doctrine*" (1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1). Salvation of ourselves and others rests upon our continuing to take heed!

2 Timothy 3:14 expresses it so well: "**But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.**" May what is reported of first disciples be said of us: "*And they continued...*" (Acts 2:42).

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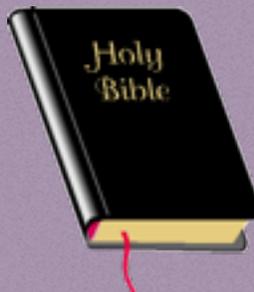
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