

The Attackers: Jesus' Emancipation Proclamation Is Conditional: Protasis Demands Persistence in Learning His Word: Categories of Positive or Negative Volition; Roman Emperors from Jesus to John: Tiberius & Sejanus

Then Jesus began to speak to those Jews who had believed in Him resulting in salvation and eternal life, “If you persist—maybe you will or maybe you won’t—in inculcating My Word.”

9. The protasis of a conditional sentence demands an apodosis. The protasis is the subordinate clause while the apodosis is the main clause.
10. The relationship between the two in this case is cause and effect: “If” indicates “cause” while “then” indicates “effect.”
11. The apodosis is introduced by the word “*then*.” It does not appear in the text, but may be inserted for clarity. What follows is the necessary consequence should the protasis be fulfilled.
12. It is introduced by the present active indicative of the verb **εἰμί (eimi)**: “you keep on being.”
13. The next word is the adverb **ἀληθῶς (alēthōs)** which is translated “truly,” but the better choice is “certainly.”
14. And what they will certainly keep on being are His disciples, the masculine plural of the noun **μαθητής (mathētēs)**.
15. The word disciple is usually considered to be someone who followed Jesus. This is true but it is far more than that. It comes from the verb **μανθάνω (manthánō)**: to learn something to the point of understanding it.
16. A disciple is therefore a learner, a pupil, but more than that, a student who willingly accepts instruction and then makes it a rule of conduct. This is the believer who is certainly a true disciple.

John 8:31 - Then Jesus began to speak to those Jews who had believed in Him resulting in salvation and eternal life, “If [3CC] you remain, persist, and persevere [μένω (*ménō*)]—maybe you will or maybe you won’t—in inculcating My Word, then you keep on being serious students who are certainly Mine.”

17. PRINCIPLE: Believers who maintain interest and are advancing in their study of the Word are certainly serious students of Christ.
18. PRINCIPLE: Believers who have no interest in and are not advancing in their study of the Word are certainly not serious students of Christ.
19. The main verb of the verse is the ingressive aorist of **μένω (*ménō*)**: to remain, persist, and persevere.
20. The definitions of these three English words amplify the impact of *ménō* in this verse:
 - (1) **Remain**: to continue unchanged. This emphasizes the believer’s steadfast loyalty to the idea of spiritual growth through consistent study of the Word.
 - (2) **Persist**: to go on resolutely in spite of opposition, importunity, or warning. The emphasis here is on maintenance of status quo spirituality despite the hostility the devil’s world focuses on bona fide students of the Word.
 - (3) **Persevere**: to persist in an undertaking in spite of counterinfluences, opposition, or discouragement. This emphasizes the aspect of the long haul. Counterinfluences both external and internal challenge the believer’s character and behavior. Opposition comes from the categories of momentum testing. Discouragement causes a loss of confidence, a reactor factor that occurs when the believer is distracted by counterinfluences and opposition.

21. The Lord's emphases here have to do with following Him, the Living Word, to be consistent in following His teachings, and to do so regardless of any of the various exigencies to the contrary offered by the devil's world or the sin nature.
22. I hasten to remind you that between our Lord's silent years and the completion of the canon by John, the Roman Empire and its province of Judaea were ruled by a series of tyrannical emperors.
23. The Julio-Claudians, starting with Tiberius who we will use as an example, were unstable rulers who often governed on whim and executed assumed enemies based on fear and rumor.
24. Tiberius (A.D. 14–37), Augustus's step-son, initiated a reign of terror over the empire. He instituted the practice of *delation*, or accusation. Alleged crimes by the rich were punishable by monetary fines and confiscation of property. Anyone could function as a *delatores*, or informer, and receive a payoff, the remainder going into the national treasury. The rich were in essence paying their "fair share."
25. In the latter part of his reign, Tiberius secluded himself on the isle of Capri primarily to hide his repulsive countenance. His condition consisted of painful skin sores that became puss-filled. At age 70 he had the ultimate case of acne. Tiberius delegated plenipotentiary power to run the Empire to Lucius Sejanus, himself a tyrant, who carried out the execution of those accused of treason.
26. The heir apparent to the throne was Tiberius' youngest son, Drusus. Sejanus conspired with Drusus' wife, Livilla, to murder her husband.
27. Years later, when the paranoid Tiberius learned of this crime, he wrote to the Senate demanding Sejanus be removed from power and executed. The Senate complied immediately.

28. Whenever a person without capacity is given power and authority his arrogance, previously secluded, becomes evident. Tiberius and Sejanus are prime examples, evidence provided by first-century Roman historian Tacitus in his *Annals*:

Parts of Tacitus' *Annals* bear an eerie resemblance to George Orwell's famous novel *1984*, in which history is continually rewritten to coincide with the government's latest policy. By the end of Tiberius' reign, it had become a capital crime to have been a friend of Sejanus. Those charged with this crime of friendship with Sejanus wrote pathetic letters to the emperor asking how they could be found guilty of treason against the emperor for mirroring the emperor's own conduct. The ultimate end was the silence of a police state. Tacitus wrote concerning the height of Tiberius' treason trials: "Never had there been more anxiety and terror in Rome. People were secretive to their own families, and they avoided meetings, conversations, and the ears of friends and strangers alike; even the inanimate walls and ceiling were looked on with suspicion." Such paranoia was not entirely irrational since paid informers sometimes hid behind walls with writing implements to record subversive statements and even family members betrayed one another to collect imperial rewards.¹

29. This was the political environment in which Jesus' public ministry occurred. To avoid the accusation of treason, the Lord had to know the prevailing political environment while remaining loyal to His mission to fulfill the Mosaic Law and remain impeccable in His pursuit of the cross. Here is an example of one of His challenges which was proposed by both theologians and politicians:

Matthew 22:15 - Then the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap Him in what He said.

¹ Carl J. Richard, *Why We're All Romans: The Roman Contribution to the Western World*, (Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 183–84.