

The Usefulness of the Scriptures

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Date: 03 May 2009

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[0:00] We worship Christ and honor Him as our prophet who teaches us when we open our hearts up to His word.

And He speaks to us tonight from 2 Timothy chapter 3 beginning in verse 16 and we'll read through chapter 4 and verse 8.

All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of His appearing and His kingdom, I give you this charge.

Preach the word. Be prepared in season and out of season. Correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and careful instruction.

[1:04] For the time will come when men 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.

They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations.

Endure hardship. Do the work of an evangelist. Discharge all the duties of your ministry. For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure.

I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day. And not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing. Last time we looked at 2 Timothy, we talked about the Scriptures.

[2:21] The Word of God. And we saw their source. And that's God Himself. They were breathed out by Him. He is the author of them. And we talked about their significance.

How they're able to make you wise unto salvation. And how they are useful. They are useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.

And so we began to consider how then we should use them. If they're useful, then we should use them. Right? And we use them by, first of all, receiving them as they are.

The Word of God. And abiding in that Word. Reading it. Hearing it preached. Listening to it read. And we believe the truth.

Or convinced of the truth of that Word. And we spent some time talking about how we should teach it to children. Just as Timothy's mother and grandmother taught him from infancy.

[3:22] And tonight we want to talk about the usefulness of the Scriptures and the church. Now this book is useful. It says it right there before us.

In chapter 3 and verse 16. But I have a lot of useful things at my house. I've got a shed out back and I've got a lot of useful tools in it. I've got hammers and saws and pliers and wrenches and chisels and all sorts of things.

I never use my chisels. I don't know why I bought them. But I've got all sorts of useful tools out there. But you know what? But they're only useful if I pick them up and use them.

As long as they're sitting in my shed collecting dust. They're not useful. They're not being used for the purpose for which they were made. And as long as we leave this book sitting on the shelf in our house.

As long as the church puts it away and tries to go with something that's more relevant or popular. It won't be useful. If you never read it.

[4:25] It'll be of no value to you. If you never hear it preached. You won't profit from it. So this is a useful word. But it has to be used. If we would find it useful.

And so we want to see how to use it in the church tonight. And that's what the first part of chapter 4 is about. Paul giving Timothy instructions on how to use that word in the church. We're going to talk about the method we should use.

And that's preach the word. And there's some other commands that go along with that. And we're going to talk about the manner of how it should be used in the church. It should be done with patience. And with careful instruction.

And then we're going to talk about the motive. Why it needs to be used. And there's urgency here. Christ is coming. People are turning away from the truth. And they need to hear the truth. So we're going to talk about the method.

And the manner and the motive tonight. Of using the scriptures in the church. And we start with the method. We need to hear the word preached. That's how we use it in the church. We preach it. In verses 2 and 5.

[5:24] There are nine commands. Nine imperatives. And they are urgent. The way they're written. The way it's structured. These are urgent. High priority commands. And they revolve around the ministry of the word.

Or the use of the word. In the church. These commands are given especially to Timothy. And therefore to other ministers of the gospel. But if we are to do these things in the church. Then they're important for the church.

And that's you. The people. And so these things. Are for the good of Grace Fellowship Church tonight. So how do we use that word? In the church. We preach it.

That's the first thing in verse 2. Preach the word. Herald it. Proclaim it. Make it known. Shout it from the rooftops. Preach it.

It's what John the Baptist did. It's what Jesus himself did. It's what his disciples did. It's what Philip the evangelist did. It's what Paul and Timothy. And many others in scriptures do. They preached.

[6:19] They proclaimed. And so must we. There's an urgent charge given to Timothy. Preach the word. We know that Paul says to the Corinthians. God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached.

To save those who believe. And so we don't dramatize the word. We don't dialogue the word. We don't chat about the word. We don't go to a marvelous Ephesus players production of the word. We preach it. Because that's what we're commanded to do. That's the means that God has promised to bless. We are to take the word. To explain it. And to proclaim it in the authority of Christ.

In the power of the Holy Spirit. We're to press it on the consciences of the listeners. In such a way that they'll feel its weight. And authority. And in a manner that they might remember it. And might go out the doors.

Having their lives changed. Because they've heard the word preached. It's so this medium. A lot of people if they would walk in tonight.

[7:19] And see someone just standing here talking. I'm not very exciting. Not very exciting to look at. I don't move around a whole lot. Maybe I should a little bit more. But the medium of preaching.

Is lost in an age of sound bites. And slick production values. And high tech productions. But this is the thing that God has promised to bless.

It is the thing that He has commanded us to do. To preach the word. To proclaim it. And so by His grace. We're going to preach the word at Grace Fellowship Church.

Until Jesus comes again. May God keep us faithful in that primary task of ministry. Preaching the word. And it's not just preaching anything. You notice. We can't just stand up here and preach. Our own message. Preach. Our own wisdom. No. It's the word. And Timothy doesn't need any modifiers attached to that. And you don't either. When you hear preach the word.

[8:19] You know what he's talking about. He's already talked about. The word of God. And the word of truth. And sound words and doctrine. He's just finished speaking of the scriptures. That are God breathed.

What do you think the word is? It's the word of God. That he breathed out. It's the word that's contained for us right here in this book. The holy word of God. That is what we are to preach. And not just our favorite parts of it. All scripture is useful for teaching and so on. And so we don't just preach the parts that feed our little soapbox or our pet peeves. We preach the whole counsel of God.

Preach the word. Some churches that haven't yet abandoned the medium or the method of preaching. Have abandoned preaching the word. If there is a message. It's not the word. They believe we need something more relevant. Current. More in tune to the needs of people that live in the 21st century. But dear people. We aren't to preach self-help and pop psychology. [9:20] And the wisdom or so-called wisdom of men. And my good ideas and sort of innocuous how-to messages. How to have a better life. Seven steps to a better you.

We need more of God's word in the church. Not less. And much of the preaching that you'll find today. Sadly is not the word. This word is useful.

It's useful for teaching. For correcting error. Directing people in the way they should live. Let's preach it that way. It's useful for. We could say discipleship and discipline. It's useful for training in righteousness.

And teaching. But it's also used for discipline. Rebuking and correcting. Bringing people back when they stray in their theology. And their doctrine. Or when they stray in their way of life.

And their sin. It's useful. We need to hear more of the truth of this word. We need to hear of the glory and power of our creative. Creator God. We need to hear more of His awesome acts of redemption for His people.

[10:19] The heroes of the faith that are here. The life and teaching of our Redeemer. Jesus. His atoning work for us at the cross. The work of the Spirit. And applying that redemption to our hearts.

We need that truth. To learn how to live a holy life as the word directs us. To learn how to commune with our trying God. To learn the place of the church. And the life of the Christian.

And on and on we could go of the truth of the scriptures. That we must hear. That we must proclaim. We've got God's word. Or why would we preach anything else? This is what's useful for the Christian.

So this is what we preach. Well that's the primary commands here for Timothy. And the rest are sort of underneath this one. This is how we're to use the word.

And the church we're to preach it. But then we're also, he says, to be ready. Be prepared in season. Season and out of season. If you're going to preach, you've got to be ready all the time.

[11:16] Good times and bad when it's convenient. When it's not. When you feel like it and when you don't. When the hearers feel like hearing. And when they don't. If this word is so useful, shouldn't we always be ready to use it?

Yes. It seems obvious to say it. And that means that for us, for your pastors, we need to be ready in season. I know that I'm going to have an opportunity to preach every Sunday.

And so we give a large portion of our time during the week. Preparing to be in season. To be ready. We know we've got this opportunity. But then there's going to be other times. Where we're not going to be in season.

And you all too, as a listener, know that you're going to get to hear preaching. At least two times every week. And you know that you need to be ready. In season and out of season. To receive the preaching of that word.

You need to come with your hearts ready. Be prepared having prayed and asked God to bless the preaching of that word to your heart. To open your eyes to understand it. Pre-committing to doing what God's word tells you to do.

[12:16] Come ready. You know that the word is going to be preached. Be ready for it. That's in season. But then there's out of season. There's times when we won't be...

Well, we're supposed to be ready out of season. There's times when we won't be expecting the need to preach. Or to use God's word. I remember getting stuck in an airport in Pittsburgh once. And he remembers it too. Because he had to be ready out of season. And I was coming back on a Saturday. And I was supposed to teach the adult Sunday school class. And I was supposed to preach Sunday night.

And I got stuck in Pittsburgh. And then I got a flight for noon on Sunday. And I thought I was going to be back in time. So I said, if you can just cover Sunday school.

I think we had a video for Sunday school. Then guess who got bumped off the noon flight in Pittsburgh? Me. And guess who got a call at lunchtime on Sunday? Him. And he had to be ready to preach that night.

[13:14] Out of season. Wasn't planning on it. But he was ready. And you were fed that night if you were here. We're to be ready in season and out of season. There'll be times when faced with

situations.

Just a conversation in the foyer. A counseling situation. A visit. When something completely and totally unexpected comes up. And we have to be ready to give the word in that situation. To take the word that God has written on our hearts.

And apply it to that particular setting. In season. Out of season. That's the work of the ministry.

There's unexpected phone calls. There are no off hours. And the word is to stand at the ready.

To always be ready. With the word. It's like a lifeguard on duty at a pool. There's no down time.

Whether he's having a good day or a bad day. Whether he's sunburned or not.

Whether he's tired. Or just as alert and happy as can be. All the time. He has to be at ready to jump into the pool. And to save a swimmer who's drowning.

[14:15] A preacher must always be ready. To proclaim the word. And you as the people of God.

Need to be ready as well. You will encounter people that need the word. And you need to be ready. To give them that word.

So we're to preach. We're to be ready in season and out of season. We are to correct and rebuke the next two commands. To correct someone. To show their error.

To bring it to light. And the word of God is useful for that. Just as light is useful for exposing darkness. And then to rebuke. To fix that error. One of these words is used up in verse 16.

It's useful for rebuking. The word is useful for it. So we should use the word to do that. That's the work of the spirit. Remember we just sang it. He thrusts us through a sense of sin.

And he works through his word to do that. You might be reading it. You might see some sin you've been struggling with. And the spirit comes. And he opens your eyes to see that sin. May he do it in the preaching of the word.

[15:15] But that word is useful for correcting. And rebuking. That means that preaching is often going to be pointed. And it might make you uncomfortable. It might make you squirm in your seat.

Because it touches on a particular area of your life. Some doctrine that needs correcting. Some sin that needs rebuking. That's the spirit coming in power to expose your sin.

Again, it can be in the preaching. Or it can be personal. The word is used in Matthew 18. When you go to your brother and show him his fault. Let's correct him. Just between the two of you, make sure you're ready to correct a brother in need to receive that correction, that rebuke when it comes.

This is how we're to use the word in the church if we're to benefit from it. Primarily for ministers. But you all need to be ready to correct one another. It doesn't say go to the pastor and get him to go to your brother that sinned against you.

You go to your brother. Just between the two of you and be ready to use the word to correct. To do it gently. Or also to encourage. The word is exhort.

[16:19] Appeal. Preaching shouldn't just be a dull recitation of facts. Repeating of the exegesis of the text.

So they have to do that before you come to preach. But it's an urgent appeal. It can be encouraging or challenging. It's a call to do something. To believe something. You should leave here with something to do because you've been appealed to.

And so, I appeal to you tonight. Don't ever despise the means of the preaching of the word of God. Or despise the word itself.

It's a most useful word. And we're to preach it. Which means you're to receive it. And so if you want the benefit of the word, then come and hear it preached. Come ready to hear it preached.

Do you want to be trained in righteousness? I want to know how to live the Christian life. Come hear the word preached. You want to be equipped for every good work in your daily life? Well, the word is useful for that.

[17:16] And we're to preach that word. Come and hear it. Do you want your kids to be saved?

Bring them to the preaching of the word. Some people might read verses 16 and 17 of chapter 3 and get the wrong idea that if they just read the word, that's all they need.

It's useful for all these things. So I'm going to read it. And I'm going to be a Lone Ranger Christian. It's going to just be me and my Bible. And I'm going to read the word. And that's going to be sufficient for me. I appeal to you tonight.

Don't take that route. God has given us the church for a reason. He wants you to hear the word preached. John Calvin makes this point. He says, Paul, after having spoken of the usefulness of Scripture, infers not only that all ought to read it.

You should. The word is useful. Read it. But not only that. But that teachers ought to administer it. The reading of Scripture is recommended to us in such a manner as not to hinder the ministry of pastors.

Therefore, let believers endeavor to profit both in reading and hearing. For not in vain if God ordained both of them. God's ordained the reading of the word. And I encourage you tonight. [18:25] Read this word every day. It's useful. As we said at the beginning, if you leave this on yourself and you never pull it out, it won't be useful to you. Read it. But also, come on the Lord's day and hear it preached.

Both means ordained by God for your good, for your benefit, for your profit. But then dropping down to verse 5, the commands continue, the exhortations.

But you, Timothy, you, minister, keep your head in all situations. Be sober-minded. Level-headed. Don't give yourself to the excitement that comes from false teaching and the intoxication of something new that's different than Scripture.

Be level-headed. In the face of danger, apostasy, false teaching, the looming second coming of Christ, don't lose your head. We need someone with a steady hand, a cool head, at the helm of the ship.

You know that when flight 1549 lost both of its engines over New York because of bird strike, flying birds, flying into both of the engines, the people in that plane needed a pilot who wasn't going to lose his head.

[19:32] Keep your head. They needed someone that wasn't going to lose their head, that wasn't going to panic and scream, we're all going to die. That's not the kind of pilot that you want in an emergency like that.

They needed someone prepared for the situation, cool-headed, and Captain Sully Sullenberger was the man for the job that day. He was ready. In season and out of season.

He didn't plan on crash landing in the Hudson River that day, but he was ready. And he was calm and his ability to keep his head in the worst possible of circumstances saved the lives of 155 people that were on that plane that day.

That's the kind of men we need leading and feeding our churches. Sober. Even-keeled. Men that can keep their head even though all others around them are losing theirs.

Timothy. He's in deep water. There's false teaching. There's people leaving the church. There's people leaving the faith. What am I going to do? And if he loses his head and he goes crazy, that's not going to do the church in Ephesus any good.

[20:42] So, be level-headed. The level-headed pastor sees these troubles coming and he doesn't just ignore them. He doesn't stick his head in the sand. He doesn't say an ignorant pastor who's unaware of what's going on.

It says one who's level-headed. He doesn't ignore it, but he doesn't panic. He says, we have a useful word for this situation. God has given this. And so we're going to take it and we're going to preach it.

And we're going to apply it. We're going to correct and we're going to rebuke. We're going to fix false doctrine. And poor patterns of living with this word. He calmly applies it.

And so the preacher must be ready. And he must be even-keeled and level-headed. But he also must endure hardship. And we've talked about that earlier. Paul's already given this command. If other people are turning astray and Timothy is straying the course, then he's going to suffer some hardship.

The people that are going to go astray aren't going to like that he's staying on the straight path. Endure that hardship patiently. And we must do the same. Do the work of an evangelist.

[21:46] How do we use the Word in the church? We preach the Gospel. The work of an evangelist. The evangelist is somebody who evangelizes, which is somebody who Gospels. They tell the Gospel.

And Timothy is to do that work. There was likely the office of evangelist in the early church. It was an office. Philip was an evangelist. It's a gift of God to the church in Ephesians 4.

And whether or not we should still have that office today is not the point of what Paul is saying or what we're going to address tonight. Except to say that it's the duty of a faithful minister of the Gospel to evangelize.

To preach the Gospel. To make Christ known. Right here in the church and outside the walls of the church as well. We've seen the responsibility of every Christian to hold forth the Gospel.

But it's the duty of the preacher as a minister of the Word to proclaim the Gospel of Christ. In fact, if a man claims to be a minister of the Gospel and he doesn't preach Christ and he doesn't preach the Gospel, he's not a minister of the Word.

[22:51] Timothy was essentially acting as pastor of the church in Ephesus. He was Paul's representative there and there were elders in the church in Ephesus, but they needed somebody to come in and to preach the Word and to do all of these things and to do the work of an evangelist.

Because preaching the Gospel would fix many of the problems that were going on in Ephesus. As he dealt with the problems, the false teaching, he can't forget the foundational, glorious Gospel of Christ as the Savior of hell-deserving sinners.

That's what needed to be heard. And whether we give the title of evangelist today or not, our pastors must do the work of an evangelist. Wouldn't a return to these most basic truths help the church at Ephesus and help any struggling church?

When we get to Revelation, we found out the problem was that they had lost their first love. They needed to hear about Christ again. They needed to hear that there was a Savior for sinners. And that's what you need to hear.

And it's what I need to hear. We need the Gospel. Not just unbelievers out there need the Gospel. We need the Gospel right here. And so the way we use the Word in the church is to preach the Gospel.

[24:03] God make us faithful in doing that work of evangelism. And then He sums it all up. Fulfill your ministry. Sort of a catch-all. Fulfill, complete your ministry.

Take that Word of God. In every season, every situation, public, private, use it for the good of the church that you've been called to serve and for the glory of God. You say there's a lot for preachers there.

What about the listeners? We've had a few things for the listeners, but here's a little bit more. You know, the preaching of the Word assumes that there's somebody there to hear it. Wouldn't do me much good to stand in here and preach to an empty room.

We were at a baseball game yesterday in Chicago. And then we're vendors walking up and down the stairs in between the rows of seats. And you know what they are? They're heralds.

They're not heralding the Gospel. They're heralding peanuts and hot dogs and cotton candy. And they're shouting, Hot dogs! And they're heralding. But wouldn't it be silly for them to be walking up and down the stairs of Wrigley Field right now when there's no game going on?

[25:07] It would be a waste of their time, their resources, and there wouldn't be anybody to profit from it. Now yesterday, there was a stadium full of people. And we profited from it.

Or they did. They give a lot of money for that stuff. But we profited because I didn't have starving children and all of the rest. You've got proclaimers and you've got listeners.

And you need both. So what about those listeners? Well, as we seek to preach here by God's grace, first, please pray for us.

Pray that we'd be faithful to proclaim that word. But then, will you come ready to listen? Do you want to learn how to endure trials that you face every day?

Do you want to learn how to control your tongue? Do you want to learn how to be humble before a holy God? Then come listen to James. Speak from the grave, as it were.

[26:03] But it's a living word that he speaks that comes to us in the preaching of the word, isn't it? Come ready to receive that word. If you need freedom from guilt and confidence of sins forgiven, come hear the gospel of free grace and Jesus Christ proclaimed here each Lord's Day.

Our preaching is not perfect. That's clear. We work to improve it by God's grace.

But it is the God-ordained means for your blessing. If you want to be blessed, come and receive it with all its shortcomings. And find the good in it.

Find the blessing in it. Find the word in it. The direction that God gives to you. Come expecting to hear something profitable. Not because it's us preaching it, but because it's God's word and it's useful.

Receive it with a humble, willing heart. And should the occasion come when you would have to leave Grace Fellowship Church for work or school or some other circumstance of life, when you look for a church, make it your priority to find one that preaches the word.

[27:19] Well, that's the method of using the word in the church. We're to preach it. We're to evangelize it. We're to correct, rebuke, and so on. But secondly, the manner.

How are we to use it? Well, we must do it with patience and instruction. It's the end of verse 2 there. Preach the word. Be prepared in season and out of season. Correct, rebuke, and encourage. With great patience and careful instruction.

In all patience and instruction. As we preach, correct, rebuke, and exhort, it's to be with patience. When you're dealing with false teaching in the church, people going astray, people who love to hear false teaching, it'll take time to bring them back.

They're going to kick against the goads. They're going to fight. People don't want to give up their sin. They don't want to give up their exciting new teaching that they've found. And if we're only willing to give one warning to people who've gone astray, and then we throw up our hands in disgust and despair, and we say, I'm done with them.

Then we're not going to win anybody. We're not going to bring anybody back. The ministry, even in its normal operations, requires patience. How much more during times of false teaching and division?

[28:28] It's the patience that a kindergarten teacher needs. And I think it takes a special person to teach kindergarten.

My mom's a kindergarten teacher. And I have my oldest child in kindergarten. And I can't imagine putting up with a, excuse me, teaching a room of 25 and 6-year-olds.

20. That's how many of them. 5 and 6-year-olds. I can't fathom it. Teaching them how to read and count and teaching them about money and how to tell time.

I don't think it's my calling. Imagine, though, a kindergarten teacher that has no patience. I told you that the letter A says A and A.

And I'm not going to say it again. And if you didn't get it the first time, you're done. I'm sorry. That's not going to be a very effective kindergarten teacher, is it? No.

[29:28] It's going to drive the kids crazy. They're going to lose their minds. My mom talks about asking kindergartners a question. And saying, you're talking about animals or something.

How many of you have a pet dog at home? And all of the hands in the room go, I don't have a pet dog. I didn't ask if you didn't have a pet dog. Ask if you did. I have a pet fish.

I don't care. But can you imagine a teacher like that? No, they're patient. And they're kind. At least my mother is. She put up with me. She's remarkable in and of itself.

But then 20 little ones like me every year. 20 new ones. And once you get them trained, sort of, then they're gone. But imagine a preacher.

A minister that has no patience. I told you once already, be humble. Why haven't you learned? I told you to not lust in your heart.

[30:27] Why haven't you learned? I told you God's Word is useful and you should read it every day. Why haven't you read it every day? That's not going to be an effective ministry, is it? Oh, patience.

And I don't mean to be derogatory. And I'm including myself here, okay? I'm not saying, here's the preacher and here's all the sheep. I'm a sheep right now, okay? Aren't we like kindergartners a lot of times?

We don't get things the first time around. We need to have our sin pointed out again and again. Because we keep going back to it. We need to be rebuked again and again.

We need to have the truth emphasized again and again. We need patient preachers willing to point us again and again. And it's a gentle patience. It's not a man that's willing to repeatedly hit you over the head with a two by four.

He's patient. He's going to keep hitting you until you get it. No, that's not the patience here. It's the patience of a shepherd. Every time the sheep goes astray, generous. The path is over here. The path is here.

[31:29] He gently brings them back. Patience. A quick-tempered preacher with no gentleness, though he preaches powerfully, will not be effective or pleasing to God. And so the ministry of the Word is to be done with patience.

And it's to be done with instruction. It's not the preacher's job just to say, do this! And expect everyone to do it and understand his preaching, correcting, and rebuking must be with careful instruction.

Showing them why what he's saying is true. Showing them how it comes from the Word. That it's not his idea, but that it's God's idea. Showing them why that truth is so important and why that truth has these particular implications for the way we live.

Being careful in that instruction. Showing them. And so the manner of using the Word is one of patience and one of careful instruction. But lastly tonight, the motive.

Why must we use the Word in the church? Why must we preach it? And we begin to feel a sense of urgency as Paul writes to Timothy, in the presence of God in Christ Jesus before God, who will judge the living and the dead and in view of His appearing in His kingdom, I give you this charge.

[32:42] In that word, I give you this charge, the NIV puts it at the very end of the verse. You know what? It's the very first word. I charge you. And whenever you hear that word, it's solemn.

It's weighty. It's significant. It's important. I charge you. And whatever follows isn't just fluff and I charge you, Timothy.

Have a good time at the game tomorrow. No, it's serious. Whatever comes after it is urgent and important. It's essential. I charge you before God and His Son Christ who will come to judge the living and the dead, the ministry.

The word is to be carried out before the eyes of God, always with the face of God looking upon us. He's the one to whom we answer. You answer to the church who calls you and who sets you over them as a minister, but in the final analysis, the judge is God.

We answer to Him. And Jesus will come in that last day and be the judge. And He's coming. He's going to appear again. And He's going to bring His kingdom.

[33:49] And I think there's a double meaning here in reminding us that we're to carry out our ministry with a view to the second coming of Christ. I think there's something there. It's all for the minister in a way, but there's two meanings here.

One is with respect to giving an account of our ministry. You remember what James said in James 3.1. Not many of you should be presumed to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

Or the author to the Hebrews, 13.17. Obey your leaders. Submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. And as we carry out our ministry, we have to remember that when we stand before God, we give an account for how we've ministered.

And that should affect us. That should lend urgency to us. We're going to give an account to God one day. Jesus is coming again. He's going to appear. And we're going to have to stand before Him and give account.

We're to execute our ministry from that perspective of being held accountable not just for ourselves, but for our ministry to your souls. I better be preaching faithfully then.

[34:56] I better be correcting. I better be rebuking. I better be ready in season and out of season. I better keep my head. Do the work of an evangelist. Endure hardship. Better fulfill my ministry. God's eyes on me.

But the other meaning of keeping the second coming of Christ in view, I think, is this. We're also to preach so that all who hear will be ready for that second day or that second coming of Christ.

We're to preach in such a manner that you know that day is coming and you know how to be prepared for it. We want you to know that Christ the Judge is going to come and that you will stand before Him and you will give an account for your life.

And so if you detect urgency from us when we talk about Christ coming again or your need to be saved from sin or how you're on the way to hell, don't think we're just a bunch of crazy men up here just a little too worked up about something.

If you're not urgent about it, you're the one who's crazy. You're the one who's not thinking clearly because the day of judgment is coming. You're going to stand before Him.

[36:00] And it doesn't matter if when Jesus comes back if you're dead and buried in the ground, if you're living when He comes back. He's going to judge the living and the dead. And we want you to be ready on that day.

And if you've lived a life of wickedness and rebellion against God, then you're going to be sent understand this, not just to the principal's office.

You're not just going to go get a spanking and it will be done. You're going to be sent to an eternity forever of suffering. But if you've repented of that sin and trusted in Christ the Savior, then you'll be called home to heaven for an eternity.

Again, not just a little reward, not just a little ice cream because you were a good boy, but forever. An eternity of blessing and unspeakable reward.

Preaching will prepare you for that if we're faithful to our ministry. So as we minister, we've got to keep in mind Christ is coming again and these people need to be ready just as I do. And so John Stott says, both those who preach the Word and those who listen to it must give an account to Christ when He appears.

[37 : 11] What a motivator to preach that sinners might be saved, that saints might grow in grace. Be ready to face judgment. When Jesus comes again, He comes as a judge, but He comes bringing His kingdom as well.

He's going to bring His kingdom in its fullness. He began to establish it when He came the first time. And even now, all who trust in Christ are citizens of that kingdom. But He's going to come again. And when He comes and brings that kingdom in His fullness, don't you want to be ready? Don't you want to be holy as He is holy? To be fit for His kingdom? That's what we want. And so we preach the Word. This is sort of like spring training for baseball.

I'm a baseball fan. And it used to be in spring training that the players would show up fat and out of shape. And that's what spring training was for, was to get in shape for the season. That's not to be our attitude with the coming of Christ. I can be fat and lazy, and when Jesus comes in His kingdom, He's going to make me perfect, and that'll be ready.

[38 : 12] Spring training today, players come already in shape. They come fit. They come ready to play. And they just need some things fine-tuned and start to work together as a team.

And that should be our attitude towards the second coming of Christ with His kingdom. We want to be fit. We want to be holy. We want to be like He is. And so when He comes again, there's not all this drastic change.

We're still not perfect. We never will be in this life. But just some things that need to be tweaked and worked on when we come into glory in His kingdom. He's bringing His kingdom, and that should motivate us to preach so that we might be ready.

That we might be more and more like Christ as that day draws near. And all of this, the end of this chapter goes together.

And we don't have time for it all, but Paul's going to go on. We're going to talk about Paul next week and how he did this. He fulfilled his ministry. It's there in v. 7. He's fought the good fight. He's finished the race.

[39 : 08] He's kept the faith. He's on his deathbed. He's about to be martyred for the faith. And he can look back over his ministry and say, Timothy, I've done this. And then look at how he views the second coming of Christ.

And v. 8. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day. And not only to me, but all to have longed for His appearing. Paul wants Timothy to be able to look back on his ministry and to say that. Christ is coming again, Timothy. And I want you to be able to look forward to that reward. And not just the minister, but all who have longed for His appearing.

And he's excited about the coming kingdom. V. 18. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Amen! He's going to take us safely home. We should look forward to that. And our ministry should prepare you for that. I want to be able to say what Paul says when I get to the end of my life.

[40 : 08] I'm looking forward to Christ coming again. Having been a faithful minister, pray for us. And then, will you be ready for the second coming?

It's why we preach and warn every week. Put your hope and trust in Jesus now. There's going to come a day when it's too late.

And can you imagine? Can you imagine facing the Savior who you have rejected again and again and again.

And now He comes offering Himself to you not as Savior anymore, but as Judge. And He comes to send you to an eternity of suffering because you reject Him.

Here He is. Right now, He's offered to you as Savior. Jesus. But one day, you will face Him as Judge. And if you have rejected Him as Savior, then yours will be an eternity of torment.

[41 : 13] Come to Jesus now. Today. So that you won't face that eternity of punishment. I want you to be ready. So I'm going to preach by God's grace.

That's how we use the Word. We're motivated by the second coming of Christ. But then, there's a time coming, Paul says. Verse 3. The time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. People like to hear some things and they don't like to hear other things. And some people aren't going to want to hear sound doctrine. Good teaching. It's healthy. It's good for them, but they don't want it. It's the very thing Paul's been talking about this whole letter to Timothy.

Sound doctrine. Hold on to it, Timothy. Cling to it. Don't let it go. And now he's telling him what to do with it. Preach it. He can't let go of it. Neither can we. Sound doctrine is so important. And it affects not just what we know, but it affects the way we live.

We have to have it. We can't live without it. We have to know who God is and who we are in light of that. But there's going to come a time when people won't put up with that anymore. They don't want sound doctrine anymore.

[42 : 19] Instead, instead, they will want to hear certain things. And they will surround themselves to suit their own desires, to suit their own lusts.

Excuse me. They will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. You know what? We often find that there's a great gulf between what we want and what we need. My kids tell me all the time that they need this and they need that.

And I say, no, no, no, no. You don't understand. You've got to learn some vocabulary. Need is a necessity. You don't need it. You want it. And there's a difference between what we need and what we want.

We need sound doctrine. But there's going to come a day when people don't want it. And brothers and sisters, today is that day. There's lots of people. And there were people in Timothy's day like that that didn't want sound doctrine.

And a lot of the things that we want, I don't, a lot of the things my kids want, I don't give them because it will be harmful for them. It will be dangerous for them. Some wants are harmless, but others will do great damage.

[43 : 23] And let me tell you that wanting something different than sound doctrine is dangerous. They're wanting something that will destroy them. They need something else entirely. They want to soothe their itching ears.

They want something pleasant. Something nice. Something to make them feel good. What they need is sound doctrine, but sadly, they don't tolerate it. They don't put up with it anymore. So instead, the word is heap up.

They heap up teachers for themselves that tell them what they want to hear. If they don't like to hear about sin, they'll find somebody to teach them who won't talk about sin. I think I've mentioned this before.

I heard a mega church pastor giving an interview once. And he's known for not talking about sin. And the interviewer said, why don't you talk about sin?

He said, well, I don't feel like I'm called to talk about sin. If you're not called to talk about sin, you're not called to preach. The word talks about sin and a mighty Savior from sin.

[44 : 31] And so if you're going to preach, you've got to preach that. Stop feeding them useless drivel that they so want to hear. Preach the word. You can't have a good life without that.

But you know what? People don't want to hear about sin. They want to hear about the good life. So they'll find somebody who will give them what they want. And they heap up those teachers for themselves. These teachers aren't called by God.

They're called by these men who want to hear whatever they want to hear. You know what it reminds me of is King Ahab. The Old Testament. Ahab, king of Israel, and King Jehoshaphat from Judah.

Israel and Judah were actually getting along. And Ahab wants to go up and he wants to fight Ramoth Gilead. And Jehoshaphat says, that's good, but let's ask the Lord first. Let's inquire of the Lord.

Good idea. And so Ahab parades out 400. Who needs 400 prophets at once? He parades out 400 prophets. And what do they say?

[45 : 29] Go, for the Lord will give it into the king's hand. 1 Kings 22. You know what Ahab's done? He's heaped up for himself people that are going to tell him what he wants to hear.

But to King Jehoshaphat, something smells a little fishy. It's like, something not right, he says. So he says, he says, is there, is there a real prophet of the Lord around?

And Jehoshaphat, this is remarkable. This is, this is like a commentary on 1st, 2nd Timothy 4. Jehoshaphat says, the king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat. Ahab says, there is still one man through whom we can inquire of the Lord, but I hate him. Because he never prophesies anything good about me. But always bad. He's Micaiah, son of Imla. The king should not say that, Jehoshaphat replied.

You're right, the king shouldn't say that, but you know what he had done? He had heaped up prophets that would tell him whatever his itching ears wanted to hear. You want to go up to Ramothgillai? Okay. Go. So, you know what happens.

[46 : 35] He didn't like him. He didn't want to hear him, but Jehoshaphat's here, the other king. I'm going to appease him. We'll call the prophet. And so he summons Micaiah. And even the messenger that goes to get Micaiah, this is remarkable.

The messenger goes to get him and he says, he says, look, as one man, the other prophets are predicting success for the king. Let your word agree with theirs and speak favorably.

Tell the king what he wants to hear, okay? Okay? But Micaiah, what an example for Timothy. What an example for any minister of the word.

He doesn't give in. He takes a stand and he says, as surely as the Lord lives, I can tell him only what the Lord tells me. He preached the word. The word of the Lord.

He didn't feed that man what he wanted to hear. He preached the word. The prophet Jeremiah got it exactly right. The prophets prophesy lies. The priests rule by their own authority and my people love it that way.

[47 : 33] People love to hear lies that make them feel good. The rest of that verse, Jeremiah 5.31, but what will you do in the end? Listening to lies, listening to people tell you what you want to hear, you're okay, you can have your best life now, all of that.

What good will it do you in the end? That's why we don't preach just the things that you want to hear, but the whole counsel of God. Now there's a lot of good things.

There are things in here that will soothe your ears and your soul, and we preach those. But we can't gloss over the things that are harder to hear. The things that say that we're sinners.

We can't skip that because we don't like it. It's the very definition of the seeker-sensitive movement. It's trying to meet people's felt needs. It sounds so good and reasonable on the surface.

More people will come if we give them what they're looking for. Okay? But if we only give them what they're looking for, then we'll love them right into hell.

[48 : 38] And that's why it's so urgent. The powerful motive to preach the Word is that if we don't, people are going to gather the wrong kinds of teachers around them. And they're going to turn away from the truth to the myth.

Verse 4. They'll turn their ears from the truth and aside to myths. And they'll have fun listening to neat stories and platitudes, but they'll never get life-changing truth. In the midst of a culture like that, and make no mistake, we live in that time.

In that kind of culture, we must preach the Word. We cannot compromise. The souls of men are at stake. There are people who have repented. They've turned from their sin. And they're seeking to please Christ.

But then someone comes along and they try to turn them astray, whether in doctrine or life. And what they eventually do, Paul says, is they turn away from the truth into myths. It's the opposite of repentance.

They've turned from their sin. They're following Christ. But then they turn away from the truth. They go back. They're going the wrong way. So we've got to warn them. We've got to preach the truth. God keep us from going backwards.

[49 : 42] And you know what the end of such people is. Those who heap up teachers who tell them what their ears want to hear, who ignore the realities that God gives us in His Word. The end of such people.

Well, you know what happened to Ahab when he ignored Micaiah? Micaiah said, I see Israel scattered like sheep on a hill. You're going to get destroyed if you go up to Ramoth Gilead. Ahab goes anyway.

And you know what happened? An archer drew his bow at random. But what did we learn this morning? Everything's in the will of God, right? He drew his bow at random, but God guided that arrow right into a crease in Ahab's armor.

And that man bled out in his chariot the rest of the day and he died. He didn't listen to the Word of the Lord. And he was judged. He was punished. He lost his life.

And ultimately, that is what will happen to you if you reject the Word of the Lord. Punishment and judgment. So may God give us boldness to preach the Word. And may give us all ears to hear and receive that Word.

[50 : 46] Pray for us that we might be faithful to fulfill our ministry. There's many commands here. It's difficult, challenging work. I can't do it. Not in my strength.

You pray that Christ would make your pastor sufficient for this. Pray that He would make you and me willing hearers that delight in the truth of God's Word.

May we gladly receive sound doctrine and all its implications by the power of God and by His grace. We've got this wonderful, useful Word. Let's not let it go to waste.

Let's use it by God's grace. Let's preach it. Let's do it patiently and with instruction and let's do it urgently and receive it as the God-sent message that it is.

Well, may He help us. Let's pray. Father, we give You thanks that You've given us Your Word.

[51 : 41] Lord, we pray that You would make us to be faithful ministers of that Word. Help us to preach it to be ready in season and out of season. In a world that is no longer tolerant of sound doctrine, we pray that You would help us to love that truth and to live it out in our lives.

Make us a people that receives Your Word and that profits from it. Give us grace then. Ministers and hearers of Your Word to use Your Word in this place in a way that's pleasing to You in the way that You have commanded, the way that You have ordained, the way that You have promised to bless.

And we pray that You would come and bless that Word without the Spirit coming and applying that Word in our heart. That Word in our heart. We won't profit. We won't benefit.

And so we beg Your blessing. We beg Your mercy. Do us good through the ministry of Your Word. We ask it for Jesus' sake and pray in His name. Amen. Amen.