

1 Timothy 4 (Part 2): 6-16 •

Exhortations to a Young Pastor

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Open your Bible, please, to 1 Timothy, Chapter 4. I was looking on the calendar, and it has been since August 8 that we did our last study in 1 Timothy. I apologize for that delay in getting back to the study. But as you know, Sue and I were sick for a number of weeks, and we're back. Yeah, here we are, and we're back, ready to get into the Word, so excited to do that with you.

Let's go ahead and read through— we are going to pick up the verses in verse 6— and then we are going to read down through the end of the chapter, and then we will open up in prayer. So, follow along with me. I am reading out of the ESV. It says: *“⁶If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. ⁷Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; ⁸for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.*

“⁹The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. ¹⁰For to this end, we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

“¹¹Command and teach these things. ¹²Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. ¹³Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. ¹⁴Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. ¹⁵Practice these things. Immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. ¹⁶Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing, you will save both yourself and your hearers.”

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we dig into the Scriptures today, we need Your grace, always need Your grace, Lord. Always, always, always need Your grace to apprehend and lay hold of the truths that are given us here in the Word of God. So we pray for Your Spirit. We pray for insight. We pray for understanding, and we thank You in Jesus' precious name, amen.

All right. Last time we were here— it seems like forever ago— but the last time we were here in 1 Timothy, we were talking in the first five verses of the chapter about a prophetic warning that the Apostle Paul gave concerning the latter, or later, days.

And he talked about the fact that there would come a falling away of many people from the true truth. The true truth. How do you like that? Isn't that a great phrase? The “true truth.” I made that one up, by the way. You can write that down. In other words, what the Word of God has to say related to the Gospel, and he said that they were going to begin to take on a more performance-based approach to being saved.

He even told us that these teachings would be demonically inspired, and that people who had... not good intentions would propagate them, and so forth. These people who no longer have any sense of understanding right from wrong, and that was just the first five verses. Now in these final verses of the chapter Paul is going to speak more directly to Timothy. And this is where we get a little better understanding of the role of the pastor/teacher, the leader in the church, the kind of a person and leader that he is to be. The kind of calling that is upon his life.

And he begins, once again, here in verse 6. If you look with me again in your Bible, he says: *“If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus.”* It's interesting, this phrase. He says, “If you put these things...,” and he is talking about everything he has said thus far in this letter. So we would have to go back and reread the whole first part of the letter to remember what “these things” are. But I find it particularly intriguing that in verse 6, he says, “if you put these things before the brothers,”-- is that what your Bible says? If you have a different translation? I looked up the Greek, and it literally means to put something under, to undergird, if you will. “If you put these things under...,” you could actually translate it that way; “If you put these things under the brothers, you will be a good servant.”

And the reason I like that is because the truths that a pastor (and a teacher) is called upon by God to pass along are very much like building a foundation under your Christian life. And that is why I like that phrase, “If you put these things under the brothers.” In other words, if you help to establish the foundation of their faith, you will be a good servant of the Lord, because people need a good foundation. If your foundation is messed up, your whole house is going to be messed up. And there are a lot of Christians walking around with doors that just don't close, and windows that won't open, and all kinds of cracks along the ceiling line, and so forth, because their foundation isn't very good.

And so I like the fact that Paul is talking to Timothy about his responsibility as a pastor/teacher to make sure that the people have a good foundation of their faith, to know and understand what the Word of God has to say. Because when you have a good foundation, oh, there's so many problems that it solves.

The sheer number of questions that I get in my email inbox every week shows me over and over and over and over again, that people have a shaky foundation. And that is one of the reasons they have to ask the questions they do. Now, some questions are genuine. They're legit. They're great. Well, all the questions are legit. Don't get me wrong. But some questions would be solved by just having a good foundation. A good foundational understanding.

I had a guy write me. I answered the note just today before I came here. It was a guy who wrote me, and he was really distressed about his marriage because it's not good. He admitted to a lot of things that he had done wrong in his marriage, but he made a statement in the note that showed me there was a foundational issue. He said, "I haven't really lived my life the way I know I should have. And so I'm fearful for my salvation."

So I had to write him back and say, "Now, wait a second, let's establish something here going forward. Our salvation is predicated upon the fact that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins. And your faith and confidence in what He did on the cross— that is what secures your salvation. Not your perfect life. Not the fact that you've lived your life the best way you possibly could. That does not secure your salvation. Let's understand that."

See, that's a foundational issue. Do you guys get that? And when the foundation is strong, it doesn't mean you are not going to deal with issues in life. You will. I grant you, I guarantee you, you will deal with issues in life. But when your foundation is strong, the enemy can't get in and say, "I don't even think you're saved." And believe me, he loves to whisper that particular little suggestion.

And when somebody's foundation is not strong, when there are cracks there, when it's incomplete, man, I tell you, they just get sucked right into that narrative. And if the enemy can get you to go down that rabbit hole, he can keep you in the dark and make your life miserable.

So there is a whole thing about a foundation; a solid foundation is so important, because I have seen firsthand how any deviation— slight though it may be— from the foundational understanding of what the Gospel is and means, can have devastating effects, just absolutely devastating.

This departure that I'm already mentioning here is one that I have been seeing happen over and over again, where people will talk to me about, they understand that they are saved by grace through faith, but they believe that they have to continue to live a holy life to keep themselves saved.

You guys ever hear that? Anybody ever told you that one? I hear it all the time. I hear it literally every week. And I had a sweet young gal write me recently and say, I got saved a few years ago, but somebody told me right after I got saved, well, you have to live a holy life to stay saved.

And she said, so, I started living this life of legalism to try to keep myself saved. And she said, I realized I couldn't do it. And she started getting into the Word. What a thought, huh? And realizing that that is not, in fact, what the Bible teaches.

“(Now) *to him who is able to keep you from (falling) stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without (spot) fault and with great joy.*” That's the end of Jude (24). “*To him who is able to keep you...;*” He will keep you. You don't keep yourself, okay? But see, that is one of those little foundational deviations, so Paul is telling Timothy here to continue to lay that foundation of biblical truth. Put it under the brothers. It is one that can't be shaken. It is so important.

Now, as we move on to verse 7, we discover that our growth is not just based on the things we emphasize, but also on the things we avoid. Look at verse 7. He says, “*7Have nothing to do with (irrelevant, that's actually not what it says. It says irreverent, silly myths) irreverent, silly myths.*”

The New King James Version– I like their rendering. They say, “*profane and old wives' (tales) fables.*” Isn't that kind of fun?

He says: “Rather train yourself for godliness; ⁸for while bodily training (or he is talking about physical training) is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. (And he says) ⁹The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance.”

These few verses that we have read here are all about how we spend our time. How you spend your time. How do you spend your time? Paul is specifically exhorting Timothy here that, rather than spending his time chasing down myths and fables and whatever else, to spend his time instead pursuing godliness. I don't know, apparently myths and fables were popular topics back at that time. I don't really know for sure. But, in any time period– doesn't matter what time

period you live in— in any time period, there is something to distract us away from what we really probably ought to be focusing on. There is always something going on in the world that is going to be in-your-face sort of a thing, getting our attention, keeping us from focusing on the Lord Jesus and the Gospel.

And in our case, it is pretty much whatever the media tells us to be focused on: “Here's what you need to think about today.” There is always something to be disturbed about, isn't there? But you know, we are only given so much time on this earth. As much as we might not like to think about it, we only have so much time, and we can either waste it and fritter it away thinking and focusing on things that in the final analysis don't matter a hoot. Or we can focus our attention on the areas that are really important, which Paul says here to Timothy is, developing godliness. He said, that is more important than chasing down all these other things.

And the reason Paul says that is a wise choice; you will notice at the end of verse 8— I love how he gives his reason for saying it. Here's why; he says: Because it “*holds promise (not just) for the present life, (but) and also for the life to come.*” I always love this verse because it seems like it is an excuse not to worry about exercising too much. But that is not what it is saying. But I like to think that is what it is saying. Because I'm kind of a non-runner.

But he says, godliness. Godliness is not just good for now; it is going to be good for later too. Isn't that good? That is important to know. So, when I say that word “godliness,” what do you think of? What comes to— I'm not asking you to shout out an answer— but what comes to your mind when I mention godliness?

Interestingly enough, the root of the Greek word that is used here for godliness means, I should say, it speaks of devotion, okay? It speaks of devotion. So it speaks of being devoted to God as part of what godliness is. But I'll tell you a word that I like better than godliness because I think people struggle sometimes to give a good explanation to what godliness is. I like Christlikeness better, because it gives me a better target to aim for because I can just say, I want to be like Jesus. I want to be more like Jesus every day, and that's Christlikeness, but it's also godliness. It's the same thing.

So, we need to train ourselves in Christlikeness rather than being taken up by all the distractions that are potentially there in our life. But, to be fair, because I have to be fair, I'll tell you right now that if you do determine in response to what Paul is saying here, to live and to pursue a Christlike life, I just want you to know, it's not going to make your life easy.

It is important that you understand that. In Paul's Second Letter to Timothy, he is going to say this. Let me put it up on the screen for you:

2 Timothy 3:12 (ESV)

...all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

He doesn't say, "may be" persecuted. He says they will be. They will be. And you know, frankly, that is one of the many passages in the Bible that challenge us to count the cost as a follower of Jesus Christ.

You want to live for Him? You really want to live for Him? Are you ready for the fallout that comes from living for Jesus? Okay. As long as you count the cost. And that is something that a pastor/teacher has to do fairly often, is to challenge the people who are listening to him to count the cost.

Jesus did it all the time. Count the cost. People would come to Him and say, Jesus, I want to follow you. He'd say, well, you know, foxes have holes in the ground and birds of the air even have nests that they can go to, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head (Matthew 8:20). You still want to come?

He would then talk about taking up your cross. Denying yourself. (Matthew 16:25) You still want to come? You know, there's a challenge to the whole thing of being a disciple, isn't there? There is a cost involved. Did you hear me? There is a cost involved. Salvation is free. Discipleship is very expensive. Salvation is free. Discipleship costs. Jesus talked a lot about the cost. Unless you take up your cross, right? That's costly.

The good news is there are so many blessings that also come along with making up our mind, being determined to live for the Lord and to live the kind of a life that we are created to live. There are benefits that we can enjoy that the world can only dream about. Christians know what it is –if they will allow themselves to know it– they know what it is to be satisfied. Do you understand the significance of that word? This world holds very few satisfying things, if any. Because everything passes away. Even once you find something that is satisfying, it is going to go away. I will guarantee you right now. Aren't you glad you came to church today to hear that good news? It will.

So what is going to have any lasting satisfaction in your life? Your relationship with Jesus Christ will have lasting satisfaction. Nobody can take it away. Nobody can remove it. You can ignore it. You can neglect it. You can even forget about it, but it can't be taken from you. Joy, love, being at peace with

God, that's a benefit. And honestly, we don't even know what the benefits are going to be in the next life.

Paul talks in this passage about how godliness is good because it is not only good for now, but also for the next life. Well, I'm glad he said that because that is good news for us. I mean, when we start hearing things in the Bible about the next life, we're all like, "Well, really? I didn't know that." Because we don't know anything about the next life. People are totally just blank on the thing. What's it going to be like? I don't know. I have people write to me sometimes, Pastor Paul, what's life going to be like in heaven? I don't know, better, that's my answer. Take the best possible scenario on earth and make it a million times better. There you go. There is my deep theological answer. You like that?

Verse 10, Paul says, "*for to this end...*" (What end? Being Christ-like) "*we toil and strive.*" Again, instead of striving or toiling for other things, or to get focused or highly centered, we toil and strive that we might walk closer with the Lord, and so forth. And then— I love this latter part of verse 10— he says, (and this is great) "*because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.*" And Paul is saying that the reason that we toil and strive as pastors and teachers and leaders to encourage people, ourselves included, to be more like Jesus is because our hope is set on Him and all the promises. Think about it, you guys. If you don't believe in the promises of God, why are we doing all this?

Why am I taking up my cross and denying myself? That is a completely contrary theme of the world. The world doesn't say, Deny yourself. The world says, grab all the gusto you can, because you're going out in a burst of glory, or whatever. And here we are, Christians. We're living our lives in a completely different way. And why are we doing this? This would be grievous were it not for the promises of God. We live the way we live because we know that there are promises about a better life, a better day to come, and so forth, and so on. If all of that isn't true, Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow you croak, right?

Don't people in the world say that? Some of you used to live with that philosophy, but you don't anymore. And that is what Paul is saying here. He says, we have our hopes set. Our hope is set on the living God. And that is why we toil. And that is why we strive. But you know what? There is another statement here that he makes that I just love.

And that is where he talks about Jesus. Did you catch it? He talks about Jesus as "*the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.*" What does that do for your theology? What it tells me is that Paul is clearly declaring here in this

passage that Jesus died to save all mankind. Now. That doesn't mean all mankind is going to be saved. That is the sad part. To believe that is called universalism. And it is a false doctrine. Not everybody is going to be saved. That doesn't mean Jesus didn't die for those people. He says it right here. Jesus, “¹⁰*the Savior of all people.*” If you need to highlight that in your Bible, by all means do.

“*Especially,*” he says, “*of those who believe;*” and we know that it is through our faith, our belief of what Jesus did on the cross, that we are saved. But Paul is telling us, everybody has a chance to come. And the reason I think this is very important to see is because most of you probably are aware that there is a teaching that is circulating, and it is very popular, and it has been going around the body of Christ for many years, about the fact that Jesus only died for those who would receive him.

It is not true. And it says it right here. And if you need to see it somewhere else, I'll show you somewhere else. On the screen. 1 John, Chapter 2, verse 2:

1 John 2:2 (ESV)

He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

“*He is the propitiation* (that word means the one who takes away the wrath of God) *for our sins and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*”

So let's put that one to rest, shall we? Jesus died for everybody. Not everybody comes to him. But He died for everybody. He is the Savior of the world. Unfortunately, there are people who reject His saving work. And that is why we pray. That is why we pray.

Now in the final verses of the chapter, Paul is going to give some directives in a short rapid-fire style that he kind of does when he knows he is getting toward the end of a letter.

And the first directive in verse 11 says, “*Command and teach these things.*” And this is more of what it means to be a pastor/teacher. He says, command and teach. Most of the time a pastor/teacher is going to teach, but occasionally sometimes he has to command. And we are not all that accustomed to hearing that word “command” when it comes to modern-day, New Testament Christianity, because we tend to get hung up on the word “command” because it seems to suggest legalism.

But it really does not mean legalism, because the Greek word literally means, to insist on something. And there are times that a pastor/teacher has to insist. We encourage, we exhort, but sometimes we have to insist. And the reason we can insist on something to another believer, the reason I can say to someone as a pastor/teacher, “Listen, I insist that you follow this directive from the Lord,” is because, you see, that person has the Holy Spirit of God living within them.

You get me? I can't say that to an unbeliever. I can't insist on anything to an unbeliever because they don't have the Holy Spirit living within them. They don't have the Spirit of God empowering them and enabling them to live that Christian life. They don't have Him there. And so if I were to say, I insist that you follow the Word of God, you know what I'm going to do? I'm just going to put the law on them. I'm putting a burden on their shoulders that they can't possibly bear.

I had a guy write to me recently who was all upset because he says this world is just going down the tubes, and even my neighbors, they live like pagans and heathens. And I was like, how did you expect them to live?

How do you expect unbelievers to live? I expect unbelievers to live like unbelievers. I expect them to live like the world until they get saved. Then I expect something different. I have a right to expect something different when somebody gets saved because now they have the Holy Spirit of God living in their life, and they are now able to do what the Word of God says because He is the one who enables them. Let me show you a passage from 2 Peter, Chapter 1, verse 3:

2 Peter 1:3 (NIV84)

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

“*His divine power has given us (meaning believers) everything we need for life (and what?) godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.*” How do we have that power to live that life of godliness? Through His divine power.

And that is talking about the Spirit. The Spirit who lives in you and me who have come to know Jesus Christ and made Him Savior of our life. So we can't forget. Don't get upset when your neighbor, who is a heathen, acts like a heathen. That is the way heathens act. Share the Gospel with him, bring him to Christ, pray for him, and then let the Holy Spirit do the transformation. He is good at it. We kind of stink, to be completely honest, although there are times

we do need to insist. You know what we forget? Look at Philippians 2:13 on the screen. It says:

Philippians 2:13 (ESV)

...It is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

It is God who works in you. It is God who works in you, through you, through His Spirit, who enables you.

And this is just one of those truths that is a foundational truth. And if your foundation gets messed up, then you start working for your salvation. But no, our foundation is going to be strong. It is going to be stable. It is going to be true. It is God who works in you. Both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

He goes on verse 12. Look with me in your Bible. *“Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example.”* And then he names what areas in which Timothy ought to set an example. Even though a pastor/teacher may be somewhat youthful, he still carries the charge of God to be an example.

I started this church when I was 33 years old, and I think back on those years and the calling that God had on my life back then to be an example. And I'm like, Lord, what were you thinking? Not that I feel like I am enabled greatly to be this wonderful example today, but, oh, we grow so much in our walk with the Lord, don't we, over the years?

And yet he says, look at these areas. He says Timothy is to be an example in his *“speech* (literally the words he uses), *in conduct* (obviously, that's just the way he acts), *in love* (and that's obviously both for the Lord and for the people of God) *in faith* (in God and), *in purity*. And the word purity, by the way, means not living a life of sin.

Now, please understand, a pastor/teacher is just as prone to sin as you are. But what Paul is telling Timothy is that he is to be an example of someone who owns up to sin, who recognizes in front of the people, “I'm a sinner just like you.” And he is an example of someone who is resisting sin. He's not a paragon of virtue to the point where he never sins. He's a man who says, I sin just like you. But we need to resist the power of sin in our life.

Verse 13: *“Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation* (your Bible may say preaching, and that is a good translation, actually, and) *to teaching.”*

And the word for teaching, by the way, there means instruction. Your Bible may say doctrine, but I like the word teaching, actually, better. And these are the things that a pastor/teacher is to be devoted to. Did you catch it? Let's put them up on the screen just so we can remember:

Pastor/Teacher should be devoted to

- Public reading of Scripture
- Preaching
- Teaching

We talked when we started this book, and we said, if you're looking for a church, you should be seeing these things. You should see the pastor/teacher of that church should be devoted to these things. Devoted. In other words, this is the top of his focus, okay?

Public reading of Scripture. You know, this was going on in the Old Testament. They did it a lot. We know that it was going on in the early church. Preaching, which is exhortation, to exhort. And then teaching, which is instruction, didactic instruction. Those are the things that should be going on.

And it's my hope that we do all three of these things every time we get together as a body here at Calvary Chapel, Ontario. We read through the Scripture chapter by chapter, verse by verse. I endeavor to teach what is in that particular passage. And hopefully I'm properly exhorting you to follow it and consider the passage. But those are the things that should be present in every single church you go into. Everyone.

I probably don't need to tell you, however, that it is not. I got a note in the last 24 hours from a guy from Australia. I just took a little... hopefully he doesn't mind. Here is an excerpt from his note to me. He says:

"I live in Melbourne, Australia, and am connected with a local church where I volunteer in both kids and young adult ministries. I love my church so much, but I am yet to find a church who teaches the Bible verse by verse and book by book."

And I'm thinking to myself, why? Why is that so hard to find? Some churches will claim to be teaching through the Bible, but what they mean is, we have an adult Sunday School class that meets before service, and there are seven people who come to that, and we're going through the Word. Now, I am not talking about an adult Sunday School class.

Some of you may know that back in the heyday of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, Pastor Chuck had a wonderful assistant pastor by the name of Romaine. He was a little gruff at times. He was kind of Chuck's bulldog. But he would tell you what was going on, on his mind.

And a lot of times pastors would come to Calvary Costa Mesa back when it was so many thousands of people coming every Sunday. And they'd come to visit because they were hearing about what was happening there. So they'd come to visit, and they'd grab Romaine, and say, tell us something that's going to help our church.

And Romaine was just one of those guys. He was very short and to the point. He just said, teach the Word. And he said it over and over again. Pastors would say to him, well, everybody does that. And Romaine would say, do you teach Genesis all the way to Revelation? Every chapter, every verse? And he said they would just sit and stare at me. They would just sit and stare. Well, you know, we have an adult Sunday school class. No. Isn't that interesting?

Here it is in the Word: *“Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture.”* To preaching and teaching, devote yourself to these things. Yes, there are a lot of other things for a pastor to become involved with and distracted by, but these are the things he is to focus on.

Paul goes on verse 14: *“¹⁴Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.”* And Paul here is making reference to what we would call a biblical ordination ceremony, where a man's gifting is confirmed through the laying on of hands by the elders and a prophetic word spoken through spiritually-minded elders, and so forth. And the message is very simple. Do not neglect your gift. You have been given it by God. Don't neglect it. See, he just said just a moment ago, be devoted to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and teaching. Now don't neglect these things because God will gift you to do them.

Don't neglect them, right? Because you see, pastors and teachers can get distracted. In fact, they can even get bullied into hiding or abandoning their gifts from God. He is not to allow that to happen. As with all believers, hey, don't bury your gift. Remember the parable, don't bury your gift (Matthew 25:14-30). You've been given a gift. Don't bury it. Use it. That is what he is saying here.

Verse 15: *“¹⁵Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.”* I have to tell you that the sentence structure of this verse is interesting in the Greek. And it is actually rendered differently in the different

translations, although they basically mean the same thing. Let me put them up on the screen for you:

1 Timothy 4:15

ESV: *Practice these things, immerse yourself in them...*

NASB: *Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them...*

NKJV: *Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them...*

NIV: *Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them...*

This is ESV on the top, what we just read: “*Practice these things, immerse yourself in them.*” But look at the New American Standard Bible: “*Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them.*” The New King James says, “*Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them.*” And the NIV says, “*Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them.*”

Obviously, they are all saying the same thing, but they are saying it in different ways, which gives us an emphasis of the strong element of exhortation that Paul is giving to Timothy. Don't get distracted, pastor/teacher, church leader. Don't get distracted. Make these your focus, be immersed, absorbed in these things. Gets the message across, doesn't it, when you see it in different translations?

Finally, verse 16: “*Keep a close watch on yourself.*” This is Paul's exhortation to Timothy saying, you are a pastor and that means you are a shepherd. And that means you are supposed to watch out for the flock. But guess what? You can't do that if you are not watching out for yourself first. So keep a close watch on yourself. How can you do that? Well, just make sure you're living your life the way God wants you to live it, according to the Word.

And then he goes on to say, after saying, keep a close watch on yourself, “*and on the teaching.*” And that means the ministry of the teaching of the Word. And again, you see here that Timothy's primary calling is to teach and to instruct through the Word of God, telling the people what God's Word says. But notice the order, keep watch over yourself first before you keep watch over the flock, okay?

That means that the pastor/teacher has to allow the Word to affect his own life. He has to take it in personally. If he is just giving it out and not receiving it personally, then there is a problem. Now, Paul is not saying that Timothy or any

other pastor/teacher needs to have everything in the world dialed in before he can share the Word of God.

I have had people ask me in the past, so, do you ever just feel weird about teaching God's Word when you know that you yourself struggle with it? I'm like, no, because, number one, people would be absolutely dumb to think that I have it all dialed in the first place. Second of all, it is God's Word. It is His truth that I'm sharing. And it is true whether I am living it or not, frankly. But, thirdly, good grief, if we're all going to wait around till we have everything in the Word dialed in before we share it with anybody, nobody is going to share anything, if I have to have this completely in my own life.

It is one of the reasons I try to stand up here in front of you week after week and convey to you in no uncertain terms that I am just like you. I am struggling to walk with Jesus Christ, and I don't always find it easy. In fact, I find it very challenging, and I fall down and skin my knee just like you do. And I have to get up just like you do, and brush myself off and say, all right, here we go. We're going to do this again, right? Jesus, help me. That's where we are all living. That's where we are all living. So let's live there together.

So, you will notice that he gives a promise related to this, watching himself, watching what he's teaching. He says, "*Persist in this* (your Bible may say persevere), *for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.*" Rather dramatic language, is it not? Listen, Paul is not teaching in this last verse of the chapter that our salvation comes through our own effort of persistence, and so forth.

Again, foundational aspect. When your foundation is right, these kinds of verses aren't going to mess you over. My foundation is secure. I am saved by grace through faith, and this not of myself, it is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8). That's our foundation. All right. So what is he saying? He is saying God uses His Word, and God uses those who bring His Word, as instruments in the process of bringing salvation to other people. And so what he is saying to the pastor/teacher is be careful how you are handling the Word of God, because it will mean salvation for someone if they can grasp and understand it.

And, frankly, this is one of the reasons why there are a lot of things in life that come with a warning label on them. Have you ever noticed that? It says it right on the side. Of course, it doesn't necessarily stop people from eating. The Surgeon General has been telling people cigarettes cause cancer for, how many years now? And people are like, give me a Camel here. And it doesn't really matter, does it? But the warning is there. You have been warned.

Do you know there is a warning on teaching the Word of God? Check this out, from James, Chapter 3, verse 1:

James 3:1 (ESV)

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

See, that is what Paul is talking about when he says, be careful, be careful, be careful in your own life and how you are teaching others, because, listen, God is going to hold you accountable because He has chosen to use you.

And I'm telling Sunday school teachers, God has chosen to use you. Bible study leaders, God has chosen to use you. Those of you who share Jesus at work, God has chosen to use you. Now be careful. Handle the Word correctly. Tell people what is right and true.

Oh, and can I give you just a quick piece of advice? Never, ever give your opinion. Your opinion doesn't matter. At least once a week, somebody writes to me and says, Pastor Paul, what's your opinion on homosexuality? I tell them, I don't have one. I believe what the Word of God says. I don't have an opinion. An opinion is just my thinking. And my thinking, in the grand scheme of things, means nothing.

Do you understand me? Do you understand what I'm saying? When anybody asks you what your opinion is on something, tell them, I don't have an opinion. Let me tell you what the Word of God says because that's all that matters. If you get drawn into an opinion battle, then all they're going to do is come back and say, well, my opinion is..., and now you've simply pitted your opinion against theirs, and who is to believe what? You see that now you're just talking opinions and when we're talking opinions, who cares what your opinion is?

It might be interesting, but there is no authority to it. There's no strength behind it. It is just your opinion. What's your opinion? I don't have one. I happen to believe the Bible. Let me tell you what the Bible says. That's not an opinion. And if somebody has a problem with it, it is not just God's opinion. They have to deal with Him as the one true God.

So, anyway, the Word of God— even teaching— comes with a warning sticker. So, we are going to stop there and pick it up in the final chapter next time. Let's stand together. Actually, there's two more chapters left: 5 and 6.

We are going to have some folks up here to pray for you, with you, if that is a need this morning. Let's pray.

Jesus, we love You so much. We love You. We love Your Word. We love Your truth. We love the stable foundation that You give us when we embrace Your Word and take it into our hearts.

We need You every day, every minute of every day. We need You. We need Your Holy Spirit. We need Your power. We need Your grace. We need You to transform our lives. Thank You, God, for giving us Your Word. Continue to teach us Your ways, for we ask it in Jesus' precious name. And all God's people said, amen.

God bless you. Have a good rest of your Sunday.