

A God Glorifying Ministry of the Word

Our Identity in Christ

By Ty Blackburn

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Bible Text: 1 Peter 4:7-11
Preached on: Sunday, April 28, 2024

Providence Church
2146 Buford Hwy
Buford Hwy, Duluth, GA 30097

Website: www.providenceduluth.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/providencechurch

Turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 4, 1 Peter chapter 4. I know I'm so grateful for the Lord's blessing he gave us last weekend. If you weren't here, you'll want to go back and listen to Sunday morning Bible study and worship. Last Sunday, Rocky Wyatt was here from XL Ministries and it's tremendous encouragement to me, the elders, and to so many of you who've shared how much you were blessed during his ministry to us. And we're excited about what the Lord is, the opportunities he's put before us moving forward to continue to build really the spiritual infrastructure of our church through some training that's going to be coming your way and just very grateful to the Lord for what he did and is doing.

This morning we are resuming through our study of 1 Peter chapter 4, and we've been looking at this passage for a number of weeks, verses 7 to 11, and we come really today to one part of verse 11, a key phrase, and what we're going to talk about is a God, the title of the message is "A God Glorifying Ministry of the Word." A God-glorifying ministry of the word. We've seen, two weeks ago we were looking at this text, we looked at spiritual gifts and how the body is gifted by the Lord to minister and we'll see that again. We're going to read the entire passage, but we're going to focus in particularly on the spiritual gifts related to the ministry of the word and realize that the application of this happens to apply to not only those who are gifted with spiritual gifts like teaching or prophecy or exhortation, but it applies to all of us as Christians because we are all called to minister the word to one another. I shared with you when we first talked about this passage that we're all called to serve one another, we're all called to minister to practical needs, and we are all called to speak the truth to one another, to serve one another by preaching, as it were, to one another. We're all called in that sense to do that, to speak God's word. So this is going to have direct application to all of us.

1 Peter 4, verse 7.

7 The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. 8 Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Be hospitable to one another without complaint. 10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of

God. 11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Let's pray.

Our Father, we come this morning as always praising and worshiping you and as we've been singing in our time of worship this morning, you are a great and an awesome God, sovereign over all your works. You brought everything that we see into existence out of nothing by the power of your word. You truly uphold all things by the power of your word, sustaining and keeping everything that exists alive. You give us our breath. You care for every need of every one of your creatures. And we come this morning praising you because we who have come to Christ are your people. You have begotten us again, given a spiritual life, and we come as your children wanting to learn from you, to think your thoughts after you and we pray that you would use your word to do that this morning, to conform our minds to the mind of Christ, and that you might be glorified by more and more faithful living in the part of your people. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

So we're looking at a God glorifying ministry of the word and we see in this passage that he's calling us, we've seen there's a sense of urgency in the text, "The end of all things is near." Peter is saying that everything that needs to happen before the return of Christ has happened when he writes these words, and he's telling the believers to whom he writes, "You need to be ready for the Lord to come at any time. He could come at any time, therefore the time is short, and when time is short, it should change the way you live your life." I've asked you more than once, if you knew you had 24 hours to live, if you knew you only had 24 more hours to live, what would you do with those 24 hours? How would you spend the time? There's that sense of urgency in this text. The time of your departure is near. Be of sound judgment, be of sober spirit.

I'm going to try a different microphone. Let's just go with the pulpit mic. Okay, sometimes you gotta make adjustments when time is short.

But there is an urgency in the passage. He wants us to see that we need to really be thinking carefully and clear-mindedly about our lives. He's calling us to a sound judgment, to be able to discern what really matters. If we only have a limited time, what really matters? How should that affect our priorities? That's where Peter is calling us and basically, we've seen, he calls us, if you only have a short period of time, what should you be doing? And he says, essentially, Christians, the priority is to minister to one another for the glory of God, that is, to serve one another, to love one another, to pray for one another. These are the things that come out in the passage and part of what he says in ministering or serving one another is that we serve one another by using our spiritual gifts. He says in verse 10, "As each one has received a gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." We've all received grace gifts,

gifts if you're a believer. At the time you came to know Christ and were born again, God gave you at least one spiritual gift and he wants you to use that spiritual gift to bless others and as time is short, use that gift to serve the Lord in building up your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Now, he says there's two types of gifts in this verse as well. The New Testament speaks about spiritual gifts a number of other places. I'll just mention them, and you can look them up later. Romans 12:6 to 8; 1 Corinthians 12:7 to 11; and 1 Corinthians 12:28 to 31; and then Ephesians 4:11 talks about various types of spiritual gifts. And when you look at those lists, you'll see that Peter is kind of summarizing and distilling them down to basically two categories of spiritual gifts, that they all, and here's some of the examples of things like from Romans 12:6 to 8, prophecy, teaching, exhortation, serving, giving, leading, and mercy. There's seven gifts. Three are teaching gifts. Prophecy, that's a divine enablement to speak the word of God in a way that applies it to the heart to bring, to produce conviction. Spiritual gift of prophecy, teaching, the ability to communicate the word of God in a way that helps someone to come to deeper understanding and faith. It's kind of understanding the ways of God, the word of God. Exhortation is another teaching gift, but here the idea is you come alongside someone who is, you know, struggling and they've stopped making progress on the path and the word exhort means come alongside and to call forward. So, it's the ability to use the word of God in such a way that you produce encouragement and confidence to resume the journey for the believer. So, three different spiritual gifts related to the ministry of the word and there's others in that, shepherding and others in the New Testament. But you have also practical ministry gifts, like the gift of service. You see a need and you meet it. The gift of helps. The gift of administration. The gift of mercy. You come alongside someone who's hurting, the gift of giving, you provide resources to others in need.

So what Peter does is distill all of those various gifts down to two basic categories, the ministry of the word, that is speaking the word, or serving the needs of others. Speaking and serving. We see that distinction in verse 10, I mean in verse 11, "Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies." So, speaking gifts and serving gifts. What we want to focus on today, we talked about that in general two weeks ago, is speaking gifts, the word of God, the ministry of the word, because this is a profound statement here when he says, "Whoever speaks is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God." He's talking about the way that the word of God is to be ministered in the church of God and this is very instructive for us to understand how we should evaluate potential churches, but also how we should live ourselves and how we should minister the word to one another in the body of Christ.

And so, we're going to look this morning at this aspect, and I mentioned before that you'll see in other places in the New Testament that the New Testament assumes we're all going to be involved in teaching and speaking the word to one another. Let me just give you a couple of examples to show this point. The Great Commission, we're all called to make disciples of others. We're called to help people. And how do you do that? How do you make disciples? "Baptizing them and teaching them to observe all that I've commanded

you." So to make disciples, you have to tell people about Jesus, and you have to keep on teaching them more and more and more, and we're all called to make disciples and to be disciples. And so you see in the New Testament this sense of kind of a... The ministry of the word starts with the leaders of the church, but it continues and echoes again and again in the "one anothering" passages. In fact, a key word in the New Testament is the phrase, English phrase, "one another." It's one word in Greek, it's two words in English, "one another," but in Greek you find this word all over the New Testament, and you find that phrase in your English Bible, "one another," all over the New Testament.

We found it three times in our passage this morning. He says in verse 8, "keep fervent in your love for one another," that is, love one another, be hospitable to one another. And then, verse 10, "serving one another." So we're supposed to love one another, we're supposed to be hospitable to one another, and we're supposed to serve one another. You find about 50, actually a minimum of 50 different "one another" passages in the New Testament. The New Testament sees the believer, the follower of Jesus, in relationship with a body. The New Testament cannot envision a Christian life apart from the church. A careful reading of the New Testament, this becomes obvious. So those who say they follow Jesus and yet are not connected to the church, they have cut themselves off from something that Jesus sees as vital to our well-being. And as a part of that, we're not to be passive participants or passive spectators. We come to the church to be active participants. We're called to serve one another and these "one anothers," if you look at them, you'll find things like love one another is about a dozen times in the New Testament but you'll find things like, you know, show hospitality, one that we saw, but teach one another, encourage one another, exhort one another, admonish one another. The word admonish one another, Colossians 3:16, Romans 15:14, means to teach and to correct one another.

So the New Testament sees that we need to be correcting one another and being corrected by one another. That's an awkward thing. It's especially awkward in a society like ours that has a cardinal value of basically saying, "Whatever is right to you, that's fine. And, you know, I'm going to let everyone do as he wills," basically. That's kind of the mantra of our society but that's not the mantra of God's word. God calls us to be people who realize we need correction. We all need to be helped with the word of God. And so, we're called to teach one another. So in that sense, this passage applies to everyone, but especially to those who have the gifts of teaching, even more so, but to all of us.

So now, let's talk about a God glorifying ministry of the word. In the passage, I think we see three attributes of a God-glorifying ministry of the word. So three points this morning. First, that if we're going to glorify God in our ministry of the word, we must speak with urgency. We must speak God's word with urgency and we see this from the context. The end of all things is near, therefore be speaking. The idea is time is short. You must be speaking the word of God to one another. You must be speaking it as the oracles of God.

The word is absolutely fundamental. It is our life. Earlier, Neil was mentioning the fact that God created all things by his word. Think about that. He created everything that is

out of nothing, but he did it by speaking. He spoke. He could have just thought, but he actually spoke and his voice, his speaking created. And we're told in Hebrews chapter 1 verse 3 that the Lord Jesus Christ seated at the right hand of God even now sustains all things. He didn't just create all things, he sustains all things. He keeps them in existence. How does he do that? Hebrews 1:3. He sustains all things by the word of his power. His word not only creates all things, his word sustains all things. He's continuing to speak and to govern his world by his word.

How does he create believers? How does he save people? Well, Peter's already told us this in his letter. If you turn back over to chapter 1, how does someone become a true follower of Jesus? Look at chapter 1 verse 23. Speaking of these believers in Asia Minor to whom Peter writes, he says in 1 Peter 1:23, "For you have been born again." That is, the way you become a Christian is you have to experience the new birth. God has to cause you to have a new heart. He gives you new life. The Bible says we are dead in our trespasses and sins, Ephesians 2:1, spiritually dead to God. We come into the world dead, and to know God, we must be born again. Jesus said this to Nicodemus, remember, in John 3, "Except you are born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God." And Peter says, "you have been born again," but what's the means of being born again? "Not of seed which is perishable, but imperishable, that is through the living and enduring word of God for all flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord endures forever and this is the word which was preached to you." He says, you became born again by someone preaching the word of God. It was the speaking of the word that brought life to your soul, if you know Jesus. Someone had to speak to you the word. That's God's means. The same way it was his means to create the world, to sustain the world, to give new life, the new creation.

He speaks and not only that, he continues to sustain us through the word. Read on down if you're there in chapter 1. Look at chapter 2 verse 1, what he says next. The word doesn't just cause you to be born again, it sustains your life. He creates and he sustains with his word. Chapter 2 verse 1, "Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation." He says, now that you've been born again, look at God's word like a baby looks at milk. Long for the word of God in the same way a baby longs to be fed. The word of God is every bit as vital to us as followers of Jesus as life-sustaining milk is to that infant child. Without it, we die. It is of the greatest urgency.

So he says, long for, and the verb there is an intensified form of a word which means long for. It means yearn earnestly for the milk of the word. And this phrase, milk of the word, speaks of, it's actually an interesting phrase. We looked at it some months back when we were in this passage, and it's the word *logikon*. You can hear the English word *logic* in there. It's rooted in the Greek word *logos*, that is, the word. And it means of the word but it also has the idea of the reason or the thought process in the word. So he's saying long for the milk of the word will shape the way you think. Come to the word and yearn for it. Yearn to sit under the preaching and teaching of the word. Yearn to study the word for yourself so that your mind might be conformed to God's mind, that you might reason

logically not the way the world does, but the way God does. To see things rightly. And how vital that is. We desperately need the word of God.

One of the things I think is just incredible, at least to me when I first saw this, heard someone point this out, that when man, before he sinned, I mean, think about man in Eden. The world is perfect. Everything is in absolute harmony. The world is exactly as God intended it to be. Man is exactly as God intended him to be. There is no hint of anything to defile, anything sinful. And yet, even there, before sin entered the world, man needed the word of God because the first thing, this was the observation, the first thing that God did after he created man was he spoke to him. So it wasn't that he could just create man and let him go on his own. No, God immediately speaks to him. Genesis 1:28, he says, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it." He gives him his instructions. Chapter 2, verse 15, he tells him, "Listen, you can eat from any tree of the garden. You may eat freely, but not from the tree in the middle of the garden." Man needed the word of God to show him his place in the world and to guide him along the path of life and if that was true before sin entered the world, how much more true is it now?

We desperately need the word of God. God made us to need to hear from him regularly. And I love the image of this, and you make a note of this verse, and I'll just tell you what it says, and you can look at it in context. Deuteronomy 8:3, Moses is telling the nation of Israel, as they get ready to enter the Promised Land, God's going to stop giving you manna soon because you're going to go into the Promised Land and you're going to take possession of fields that you didn't plant and you're going to enjoy the benefit of houses you didn't build, but during this time, these 40 years, God has fed you with manna from heaven and the reason he did was so that you might know that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. He says it was an object lesson. God feds you from heaven. I mean, think about this. The Lord could have, he could have invented, what is it? Food trucks. They could have just had a bunch of food trucks going along with them from Egypt to Canaan. Is that really too hard for God to do that? It's like, "Man, I wish I'd thought of the food truck. We could have done this." No, the Lord knows what he's doing. He didn't give them food. He wanted to give them food from heaven. It would have only been for about a year and a half if they had obeyed and gone into the Promised Land. It was the 40 years because, remember, they wouldn't obey. They didn't trust the Lord. But he intended to give them food from heaven to teach them that they need their food from God. And not only just food, it was teaching them, Deuteronomy 8:3, that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

We need the word of God more than we need our daily food. We need to be fed from him showing us who he is, what he's done, who we are in belonging to him. We need his word and it's such a beautiful picture of this, Jesus quotes that verse, Deuteronomy 8:3, when he's tempted in Matthew chapter 4. Remember when Satan comes to Jesus? Jesus has been fasting for 40 days. The text says he became hungry. After you've fasted for that long, you can fast 40 days, even a little more than that, and survive, obviously but when the hunger pains return, usually about the time 40 days is up, you need to eat because your body is now going to close in on dying if you don't start eating. And those hunger

pains had returned. Satan shows up and says to Jesus, "If You're the Son of God, turn these stones into bread." Jesus could have used his own power to do that, but he was living in dependence upon the Holy Spirit. He was living as true man, not using his own prerogatives as God in his earthly ministry and so Satan was tempting him to set aside the work and meet his own needs. And Jesus says this. He quotes Deuteronomy 8:3 to Satan. "Of course I can turn these stones into bread." He didn't say that, but that was obvious. He says, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. I am living as true man, and My greatest desire is not bread, it is the word of the living God. That's what I need more than I need bread."

And so the Lord has made us to need his word, and then he's made it so that we hear his word from other people. Not only that, but I mean, well, actually, every time you hear the word, you've heard it from somebody else, because even the Bible, the way God gave us his word, he didn't just supernaturally, you know, zap it into a book. This is God, fingerprint of God, sign it at the end, autograph from God. He didn't do that. He chose to speak through human beings. He chose to call Moses, and then after Moses, Joshua, and after Joshua, a host of men, upward of 40 different human authors and God put his word in their heart, and God guided their thoughts so that the things they wrote were the very word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16, "For all Scripture is God breathed." that is, everything that is written is the idea, that word grafe, that which is written, graphic. That which is written is God breathed, that what they wrote down was breathed out by God through the human author. But we had to hear his word from other people. He ordained this when Moses was leading the people of Israel. Remember one time God speaks out of heaven in Exodus 19 to 24. You see the Lord speak out of heaven and the people are terrified and God says, "Well, yeah, they're right." And they said, "Please don't let God speak anymore. Moses, tell Him we don't want to hear from Him directly." And God says to Moses that, "They've said what is right. I'm going to intend to speak through you. I'm going to give My words to you, and you're going to speak to them, because I always intended it that way in the first place."

And so he gives his words to the prophet and the prophet speaks. But think about that, just the amazingness of that. To hear from God, you have to hear God speak through another human being; someone who's made in the image of God has to speak to you the word of God. This is God's plan. That's in the Bible. And then in the church, he intends for us to speak the word of God to one another. Here we are gathered around as some man speaks to you the word, and you're hearing the word of God from just an ordinary guy but God has ordained this way. This is his means. And it's a beautiful wonderful picture. In fact, I love what John Calvin says about this in the "Institutes." He points out that it would have been, it would have shown our reverence if God spoke out of heaven and we obeyed him but it's even more wonderful when he speaks through a human being. He says this, this is the quote, "When a puny man," listen to this, "When a puny man risen from the dust speaks in God's name, at this point we evidence our piety, we evidence our piety and obedience toward God if we show ourselves teachable to His minister, although he excels us in nothing." He's saying for us to listen to someone else speak the word of God who excels us in nothing, humbles us in a wonderful way and we humble ourselves under God's word, not the person. It's the word of God. And the beauty

of that, I think the Lord was even just preparing for our pride because we are all so proud, aren't we? It's hard to humble ourselves under other people but the Lord has intended for us to all be in submission to the word of God spoken through others.

This is the way of the Christian life and it is an urgent need. We desperately need it. We need it more than we need our food. That's the urgency. So when we speak, we understand that our brothers and sisters all need the word of God spoken to them. It's a matter vital to their well-being. So the Lord lets you see another brother or sister struggling with some sin or some issue, what are you supposed to do? You're supposed to go to them. The Scripture says if your brother sins, go to him, show him his fault, Matthew 18:15. It doesn't mean you go lording it over him, you go humbly, but you go and you speak the truth. And it's always good when you go to be somewhat tentative, because you may not have interpreted what happened. Maybe you see someone have a conversation and what they said seemed to be unkind or ungodly, and you go up to them afterwards and you say, "Hey, tell me about the conversation that you had, Bill, with Jim a minute ago. Seemed like that was kind of heated. What happened?" And you find out a little bit, you listen, you listen, and then you say, "You know, I just want to share this, brother. It seemed like you were exhibiting sinful anger. And I just want, I love you and I care about you and I just want to say that and encourage you to think about that. And you may need to ask, it looks to me like you need to ask Jim, whichever way, ask Bill or Jim for forgiveness." That's love. That's kindness.

We need that. The reality is we can't see our own flaws like other people can. It's like you can't see, you know, I can't see if my hair's standing up right now. If my hair was off like this, my wife would be trying to signal me some way, like, you know, doing something to tell me. But I can't see what I look like right now. You can. You can't see what you look like, others can. And so if we have something on our face or we need to tend to something, somebody else needs to tell us. It's God's wisdom and God's way and there's something beautiful about the humility that comes from learning to listen to our brothers and sisters and receive correction gladly. He's saying you've got to speak to one another. Peter's saying this must be an ongoing thing. In fact, the Greek present tense, those who are speaking the word do so as the very words of God. Those who are using their speaking gifts are to do so as the very words of God.

So that's the urgency, the first attribute of the right God glorifying ministry of the word. The second, we not only speak with urgency, we should speak with accuracy. With accuracy, our second point. Speak the word of God with accuracy. Peter's use of the phrase that the NASB, New American Standard I'm reading, says "the utterances of God." The NIV translates this phrase, "the very words of God." The ESV, King James, New King James, and a number of other translations translate it as "the oracles of God." That as you're speaking, you're to speak as though you're speaking the oracles of God. You're to speak as though you're speaking the very words of God. You're to speak as though you're speaking the utterances of God, God himself is speaking directly as you speak.

That's the idea and if that's the case, that implies that we take it very seriously when we're speaking. You know, we come to a brother and we say we want to share what the Scripture says, he's saying if you're speaking the words of God, you want to do that accurately. I mean, if you claim to say, "Thus says the Lord," don't you want to be accurate? You want to speak the very words of God. It's a technical term he uses for direct communication from God. The phrase highlights the objective reality that God is speaking and so when we say to someone, "The Lord has put on my heart this issue," we should be rightly interpreting the Bible and speaking it clearly and accurately.

So we speak with accuracy. This should be true in our ministry, and certainly it should be true of the leaders in the church, as pastors and Bible teachers should give great care to speaking with accuracy. The passage that you can look at is 2 Timothy. You turn back toward the front of your Bible, past Hebrews, you'll come to the pastoral epistles in 2 Timothy chapter 2, important verse, verse 15 speaks of the need to be diligent to speak accurately the word of God because we can mess this up. We can misinterpret the Scripture. The Bible talks about twisting the Scriptures to our own destruction and here Peter says, I mean, here Paul says to Timothy 2:15, 2 Timothy, Paul writing to Timothy says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." Timothy is a young pastor and Paul is telling him, "As you handle the word, you need to be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a workman that need not be ashamed." And what will make you unashamed is if you correctly handle the word of truth, accurately handling the word of truth. The word literally means to cut it straight. It's a Greek word, orthotomeo. Orthotomeo. The word orthodontist, orthopedic, orthodoxy, orthodox means straight, orthos means straight. So, orthotomeo, orthos, straight, and tomeo, cut, to cut it straight.

The approved workman is the one who cuts it straight, who divides the word accurately, who interprets the word correctly and he says, if that's going to happen, you have to be diligent. You have to work hard at it. In fact, look at the things he says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman." To handle the word, you've got to work at it. It's not just that you open your Bible and say, "Listen, I've got something for you," and you just open your Bible, and, "Okay, here's the word of the Lord to you." You know, "To Titus, my true child in a common faith, grace and peace. I just looked at that and said, that's my word to you." That's not what he's saying. He's saying you need to study the word, understand the word and apply the word. Study the word to understand it accurately and apply the word correctly. That's cutting it straight and it's going to take effort. It takes energy. It takes practice. You get more and more skilled at it the more you do it.

But it's work, in fact, just to see this image, I mean, the "be diligent to present yourself," be diligent is a word which means to hurry. It's actually a word, we transliterate this word spoudazo into "to speed." The idea is to hurry, to get right to it. If you're hurrying, you're focused. I mean, you know, you're trying to get something done in a hurry, you need to be focused, and you focus in on it so you can do it. He's saying, "Really focus in on presenting yourself to God approved as a workman." So, hurry up and get to work and work hard is the idea. It reminds me of what he says in 1 Timothy 5:17 when he talks

about the work of the ministry of the word. He says in 1 Timothy 5:17, "The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching." He's saying that "work hard" translates a word which means to work to the point of exhaustion, that the study of the word, the delivery of, the correct delivery of the rightly studied word is something that is to be done to the point of exhaustion. It's not a light thing to study the word. We need to study the word with intensity, with fervency. In fact, then after that, he uses the image of, "you shall not muzzle the ox while he's threshing," basically saying the ministry of the word is like an ox. Think about an ox working in the garden. He gets up, and he goes to work, and he works, and he works, and he works, and he works until he's taken home. That's the kind of attitude we need to have in the way we work at the word, to understand it.

What does that mean? It means that when you study a passage, you study a verse, you need to understand it. You need to labor at understanding it. You take a verse not out of context, you take it in context. You read a verse and you think about how the words themselves relate to one another. You think about the syntactical relationships with other sentences. How does this flow in the paragraph? What's the author's thought process that leads him to say what he's saying now? I was doing that when I was telling you, when he talks about the end of all things is near, he's saying it's urgent, therefore, it speaks to how we should see the word urgently. You see, context is king when it comes to interpreting the Bible and you've got to labor at that to exegete the passage. That is, to hear what God really is saying, you have to study hard to show yourself approved as someone who understands what the word says and it's a matter of life and death.

So as students of the word, we need to be diligent, hardworking students. This means pastors, yes. Bible teachers, yes. Christians, yes. Every one of us need to be students of the word. In fact, you know what it means to be a disciple, the word disciple? It's the word *manthano*, *mathetese* is the noun. Comes from the verb *manthano* which means "I learn." A disciple is by definition a lifelong learner. The disciple follows his teacher, Jesus the master, the teacher, the rabbi. He keeps teaching, we keep learning. The Christian life is not you get saved and then you just sit back and relax until heaven. No, you keep learning and you become more and more faithful with the word. The word, the need of people around you is urgent, our needs are urgent, we need each other to be studying the word of God.

This is one of the things I'm really excited about with what Rocky's going to be doing for us, XL Ministries. I mentioned he was here last week. We had men's conference on Saturday, women's luncheon on Sunday, and we had over 40 men and over 40 women sign up to, or basically express that they wanted to be a part of our, what we're calling, leadership training. Now, it's actually, it's a little bit of a misnomer. In fact, I want to talk to Rocky about that. Patty and I said that it seems a little more than it is. Leadership training sounds like you're signing up to now be a leader in the church. It's not exactly that. It's basically you're learning how to lead as every Christian should lead to be able to lead other people to follow Jesus. Everybody should want to take part in this training. It's actually just good solid Christian training but it is training you how to lead, and one of the key, it's basically we're going to meet together once a month and we're going to work,

you have to work two or three hours a week on homework and the homework is aimed at helping you, first of all, with Bible knowledge, general Bible knowledge, memorizing the books of the Bible and their themes and the outline so that you can handle the word of God more skillfully as a Christian. You understand what, you know, Jonah is talking about or what Joshua is talking about because you've studied it. Now you handle the word better. And then also systematic theology, that is, what's the Bible say about particular issues? Systematic theology tries to take everything the Bible says about a particular issue. Like, say, the doctrine of the Trinity. What does the Bible say about God being three in person, one in essence? Systematic theology, we need to learn that.

So, I want you to consider being a part of that, because as you grow in your ability to handle the word and understand the big picture of the word, it's going to make you more effective and something else I'm going to do this summer is teach on exegesis and exposition. Looks like we're going to do this on Wednesday evenings this summer, starting in June. And those are two key words. Exegesis is a word which essentially means to lead out the meaning of. To exegete, ex means out of, ago means lead, it's those two words together, to lead out the meaning of. The correct understanding of the Bible is you don't read into it, you lead out what's there. You understand what God put there and you understand it rightly. That's exegesis. And I'm going to teach eight weeks on, well, four weeks on exegesis and four weeks on exposition. How is it that you go about really studying the word? What does it mean to understand the historical context? What does it mean to understand the literary context? How do you understand syntactical relationships, that's the way sentences relate to one another? How do you diagram that, get the main point of a passage? That's sound exegesis and we all can grow an understanding of that.

And then once you have led out the meaning, now you have to share the meaning with other people. Now, in their context, it's like exegesis, someone wrote a book on preaching called "Between Two Worlds," and it's a good analogy. He basically says that in exegesis, you enter the world of the original audience and the author of the text. You know, when we're exegeting 1 Peter, that's why I talk a lot about what was going on in the first century. What were they dealing with? What were the issues they had? Now, if we understand that, we can then understand what it means, 1 Peter meant to them. That's to lead out the meaning. Now, exposition, you take the meaning that's led out and you apply it in the present day. How does this meaning relate to the issues you're facing as an American in the 21st century? What are the issues that this speaks to, this passage, this topic? How does it speak to it? That's exposition.

So exegesis, exposition, we all need to learn more about that, because we're all called to do that and like I said, you don't have to say when you're talking to somebody, "Hey, Jim, I've got a concern, and I've got three points I want to go over with you. Point number one, A, B, point number two." No, we don't do it like that. It's more casual. It's more common. But still, we want to apply the word with accuracy. This is what the word really means here. This is how I see it. Tell me what you're seeing.

So that's accuracy. We need to handle the word with urgency and with accuracy and finally, the third point this morning is we need to handle the word with authority. Back to our passage, "whoever speaks is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God." Time is short, we need urgency. We need to understand that when we say this is what God says, we need to really be sure that this is what God says, accuracy. But implicit in this, I think strongly present here is the idea of authority. In fact, in the original, it's shorter. In the New American Standard there's some words that are italicized; that tells you that those really aren't in the original text, they're added to give you the sense of it. But literally in the Greek it says, "whoever speaks as the utterances of God." Whoever speaks, when you're speaking in the body to minister to someone, be speaking as the utterances of God. When you are bringing the word to bear, do so in such a way as you are speaking conscious of the fact that God is speaking through you.

Now, you've got to be handling the word correctly, accurately but best you can, as you understand it, you feel like the Lord's moved you to come talk to this person, you're speaking to them, try with all of your heart to be trusting in the Lord at that moment. "Lord, speak through me, and as I share this, speak with authority." This is particularly counterintuitive in our day. The one thing that 21st century people hate is authority. "Who are you to tell me anything," right? But that's not the way it works in the Kingdom of God. We are people who are under authority, and particularly under the authority of the word.

This term that he uses, it's translated "utterances of God" in the New American Standard, or "oracles of God" in some of the other translations, it's a technical term which means a direct communication from God, a declaration from God. One of the commentators writes, "This phrase highlights the objective reality that God is speaking when the believer gifted to speak speaks as he ought." It's not subjective, it's objective. He's saying this word emphasizes it. And now there's a subjective element, we have to test these things, but he's saying when you speak and you see the word has said something, speak with God's authority. This is saying there should be a "Thus says the Lord" element when we are communicating the word to one another. It's not that we say, "I think maybe God's saying this. Hey, I don't want to, you know, ruffle your feathers, but I think maybe this is what the Lord is saying." Now sometimes you have to say that because really we don't know. It's not so clear. Or we haven't studied to the point that we know it. But when we know what God says, we're to speak it with his authority, unashamedly.

Now that seems, at first glance, to not be humble. But at first glance, it seems that way, but as is often the case, what seems to be true at first glance is not true. It is not humble, according to God's word, to act like what he has spoken clearly about may not be that clear. In fact, there was a friend I had who talked about something he had read about called the hermeneutics of humility, and a false teacher named Brian McLaren kind of coined this term, the hermeneutics of humility, that is the idea that we never really know for sure anything that we study and we just need to humbly realize that. It's basically postmodernism masking itself as Christianity, that is that you can't know anything so be humble and acknowledge that. God says you can know things, and if you say you can't know things, how is that being humble before God?

Now of course there's an element where we always have to be corrected. There's this balancing tension. Humility does realize, as we say something, we could still be wrong in part of it but it's like saying, "I'm telling you, the only way that you can get to heaven is by believing in Jesus Christ. I am certain of that. I'm not going to apologize for that because God's word clearly says it. His atoning death is the only way for sinners like you and me to be made right with God. There's no other way." That's what God has said with clarity, with absolute specificity and it's not humility to act like that's a possibility. Humility before God trembles at what God says. Isaiah 66:1 and 2 says, he talks about, you know, God says, "Do I need a temple," basically, "for you to build a temple for Me to dwell in? How can I dwell in a temple? I fill eternity." But he says, "But to this one I will look." He's basically saying where is God going to show up? Where is God going to make his presence known? Where is God going to come into our lives? He says it's not that you build a temple, it's not that you have some structure, it's this, "To this one I will look, he who is humble and contrite and who trembles at My word." God will dwell with the person who trembles at his word. When God has been clear, to tremble at his word means to say God is clear. We may not like it at first glance, that's often the case with what God says. His word is often offensive to us because we want our way but it is not humility to act like there's not clarity when there is clearly clarity in the word.

And so there should be a, "Thus says the Lord." That means that we should have the ability to say, "Listen, you need to hear this." You should say that to me, "Ty, you need to hear this." And there's this balance, I said. So when I get up in the pulpit, my goal is to have studied the word so well that I know that I'm telling you what the text really says, and I can speak with authority that there will be a "Thus says the Lord," and you'll hear it. But you have a responsibility as a listener not just to take the fact that, "Okay, normally he's okay, and so I'm going to trust that he is today." No, you're supposed to be listening today to say, "Is this really there in the text?" That's what it means to be a Berean. Acts 17:11. I love that. The Bereans were compared by Luke, who writes Acts, he says the Bereans were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, and the Thessalonian Christians were very noble-minded. I mean, they're like at the top of the class in the early church. The Corinthians are at the bottom, Thessalonians are at the top. Now, God's working in all of them but above the Thessalonians are the Bereans, who don't get a book, but they get a mention in Acts 17:11. There, Luke says about the Bereans, the Bereans were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica. Why? Because they searched the Scriptures daily. They received the word with eagerness, first of all, and then they searched the Scriptures daily to see if what Paul was saying was true.

So we should have both, we should come to church on Sunday eager to receive the word, eager to receive what God is going to set forth before us. Not coming with a mindset of, "I've got these needs, I want to hear a message about this," because it really doesn't matter what you or I want to hear, it's what God wants to say. And we come and we put ourselves under that message, and we listen humbly, ready to obey, not just to be hearers, but to be doers of the word, but we also listen critically. Not overall, we're humble, we're ready to receive, but we also realize that the person who's speaking could be wrong and this is why 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verses 20 and 21 are a great balance as well, as

long with Acts 17:11. 1 Thessalonians 5:20 says this, "Do not despise prophetic utterances, but test everything, hold to that which is good." So when someone speaks the word of God, you're not to despise it. Why does he say that? Because we tend to despise when people start meddling in our lives and the word of God has a way of meddling in your life, in my life. There are oftentimes I'm preaching a message and I'm thinking, "Man, this is just, this is going to be such a downer for everybody." And I have to repent of that thought because this is what God has given us and we will rejoice in it and be glad. Even if I didn't want to hear this message, God wanted me to hear it, and I will rejoice and be glad in it and understand that he's changing me. It's like that milk that I need to change me. And he knows this, he has a long-term view of how he shapes his people. The regular ministry of the word shapes our lives and so we need to be under the faithful ministry of the word and we need to be faithful in ministering the word to one another, and the most challenging part of that, actually I don't know, it's almost equally challenging. It's so challenging to be ready to receive reproof, isn't it? That's hard. But it may be just as hard to give reproof. Now sometimes when we're angry, we're ready to give reproof, but that's not godly reproof. "Let me give you a piece of my mind." That's how we feel. You're not ready to reprove yet. You need to get the log out of your own eye before you even go.

It's hard to go and confront somebody, isn't it? But if we love them, we will. And it's true of those who teach the word and so, I'm grateful, I'm telling you right now, I want you to come to me and reprove me when you see that I'm off or something, or you think I might be even. Come and let's talk about it. I'll be blessed, and you'll be blessed, by talking it through. I mean, a wise man loves reproof. And speaking of that, in the fall, I need to just say something about, there's a message in the fall I preached about, and I mentioned the issue of transgender surgery and I was passionate about the lie that that is. There's no such thing really as transgender surgery. You can't change your gender. You just can't do it. You can deface what God has made, you can hurt people, but you can't change their gender. But in the course of that sermon, I said some things and was overly descriptive in some ways that some people came to me and said, "Look, I think you crossed the line." And I mentioned that, I was praying about it, thinking about it, and I'd taken too long to get back to it, but I wanted to, in the course of this conversation, the Lord just reminded me, here's a sermon just about this. You're asking people to come, and I'm telling you, I think I missed the mark. I don't think I sinned necessarily. I didn't say anything sinful, but I wasn't wise and I regret that. And I appreciate the feedback, because I'm now thinking, I should always write out, something like that should be written out exactly what I'm going to say on that. Every word.

But that's good. That's what the body of Christ is for. What a beautiful thing that we can share with one another and help one another. And knowing that the word of God has to be spoken, it's not a one-directional thing. It's all of us sharing the word with one another, receiving the word from one another, becoming more like Jesus and becoming doers of the word. That's the beauty of what God is doing. He saves us, he regenerates us by the gospel, and he keeps perfecting us through the word and if we're not hearing the word from others or sharing the word with others, we're missing out on all that God could be

doing. Let's not do that. Let's become committed to being better students of the word and more faithful ministers of the word for the glory of our Savior.

Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for the preciousness of the word of God, the power of the word to give life. Lord, the beautiful image you give us in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, that salvation is just like the moment you spoke into the darkness and said, "Let there be light," and there was light on day one of creation, it's just like when you look into the darkness of the human heart, of the sinner who's not yet come to faith, and you say, "Let there be light," and the light is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ, and someone is saved and that happens not just through you speaking, but you speak mightily through the human voice of another person speaking to them about Jesus. What a privilege that is to be able to be instruments in your hands to speak your words after you and then we keep getting the blessing of speaking your word to one another and helping each other grow. Help us, Lord. Forgive us for our pride. Forgive us for our complacency. Make us urgent, zealous, and obedient students of your word that we might be more and more like Jesus, and that in these days that are becoming darker, we might shine brighter and brighter and brighter, that more and more people might be saved. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.