

## The Main Duty of the Church (Pt.2)

2 Timothy 4:3-5

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Transcript:

Well, I'd like to invite you to take your Bible this morning and turn to 2nd Timothy, Chapter 4. Our last time together we were looking at the commands that are giving here as we talk about the main duty of the church. 2nd Timothy, Chapter 4.

We looked at the first two verses and today we're going to look at verses 3-5, but I would like to begin at verse 1 and read down to verse 5.

It says, I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead and by his appearing in his kingdom. Preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you be sober in all things. Endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Some years ago, Leadership Magazine produced an article. It was titled Reading Between the Lines. Or another title that they gave was What the Pulpit Committee Really Means. And it has some humorous statements, but it also has some pretty truthful statements about the expectations that churches place on pastors. Listen to a few of these statements. It says that we have 246 members on the roll. That means that Sunday morning worship is 20 or in our case, 13. We want to reach the unchurched in our area. Well, that means that we want a pastor who will evangelize us. Church members are active in community affairs. It means that good luck finding volunteers to teach Sunday school. Another one, we're seeking someone to revitalize the church. That means the church needs to be painted. Another one, we'll be glad to review your performance periodically, means you can expect to get a phone call every Sunday afternoon. Another one, we like a hardworking pastor. That means you'll get one day off a month. Another one, we want to build a strong youth program means our last addition to the crater role was in 1959. And then the last one, we'd like our pastor to be a family man means we hope your children can help set up chairs and your wife can type the bulletin. Those are humorous statements but I've been in the church for a number of years and most of them prove to be pretty true. I know in the churches that I've pastored, some of those things were much a reality. Of course not here. Of course not. But you know, the reality is, is what the priority of the pastor's responsibilities are. And his priority is the ministry of the Word and prayer. It doesn't mean other things are forsaken. It just means that those other things are not priority as to the ministry of the Word and prayer that priority is what a pastor is to do. I know for most pastor he's to be the evangelist, he's to be the greeter of visitors, he's to be the

caregiver to members when they are sick or in the hospital facing surgery, he's a spiritual counselor, he's the officiator of weddings and funerals, and the list goes on. And all that is so true. In fact, when I was in seminary, I remember when I pastored my first church, I remember thinking, well it would have been nice to know how to officiate at a wedding. You didn't learn any of that stuff. So what I did is I watched others do it. And I learned that way. Until eventually I developed what I felt comfortable with. But you know, many don't see the importance of the word in prayer. Those are the two main things that hang on me all week. It's time in the Word and quality time in the Word, and I'm not in there just kind of wasting time, getting involved in other things. I mean, there's only so many times you can straighten your desk. After a while, I just give up, and it just piles up. But you know, there's all kinds of ways to keep you out of it, to keep you out of prayer. And I remember, maybe a couple years ago, I had this app on my phone, and I don't even remember what it was called, but since I put it back on and it allows me to keep up with prayer requests and things like that but what I love about it is that at different times of the day it'll shoot a prayer request right up on my screen and that reminds me to be praying for different people here, different people that I'm praying elsewhere and I know like when you look at Daniel in the Old Testament Daniel had three times when he went into his house and he was facing a certain direction and he prayed. And those were set times that he set aside. Even the psalmist talked about early in the morning seeking God. He talked about doing it midday. He talked about doing it in the evening. And then you read the Apostle Paul's writings and he talks about praying without ceasing. That means doing it all the time. Constantly having an attitude of prayer. And that's really the charge in this passage. The charge in this passage for Timothy is to preach the Word. He's to preach the Word. He's not the do-it-at-all in the church. He's not Mr. Fix-It. But he's to give himself to the ministry of the word and prayer. And this was actually the response of the apostles in Acts chapter six. That's where we get that phrase from. When they were presented with a physical need in the church, Acts 6-1 tells us that the Hellenistic Jews were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. Now, This was an important issue. It was a very important issue, but I want you to see how the apostles responded to it. If you're with me, just turn to Acts 6 and look down at verse 2. It says, So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples. Okay, so the needs brought to them, and so they turned around and said something to the congregation about it. And here's what they said. It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge over this task, but we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." See, they weren't saying that the need wasn't a real need. It wasn't important. They weren't saying that at all, but they were saying, listen, if we try to meet this need ourself, it's gonna pull us away from the priority of the ministry, which is the ministry of the Word and prayer. And so the solution that they came up with, they said, you need to choose seven men, and here's the qualifications for these seven men, and once you find them, bring them to us and we will examine them, and if they meet those qualifications, we will appoint them to the task. And that's exactly what they did. It took care of the need. It kept the priority what it was.

So the other night I was on one of the social media websites and this video popped up, they call them shorts, and it was by Paul Washer. And I don't take anything as coincidence because what he had to say in that little short was on this passage in Acts 6. Listen to what he says. He said, you know the greatest, most dangerous moment in the history of the church? Do you think it was Caligula? Or do you think it was Nero or do you think it was Constantine? No, it was a group of widows. Acts chapter 6 records the greatest, most dangerous moment in the church. And the ministers of the gospel could have laid aside the ministry of the Word and prayer to do something marvelously important, caring for widows. But they assigned it to godly men, and they kept on with the Word. This is why deacons are so important. This is why elders are not only to raise up elders according to 2 Timothy 2:2, but also to raise up deacons so that they can do this kind of work so that the men of God can devote themselves to the administration of God's Word. Why was this a dangerous moment? Well it was a dangerous moment because it could set precedence that the ministry of the Word and the ministry of the prayer is not important and that other things are more important. And again, notice they didn't neglect the need. They didn't treat it as unimportant, but they said, there's another way that this can be met. And you can help us with this, because you know people within the congregation. So I want you to look in the congregation, and I want you to pick out seven men. So that's the first qualifier. They had to be seven of them, they had to be men. And then they had to be men that were qualified. And here's the things you were to look for. They had to have a good reputation. They had to be full of the Spirit and full of wisdom. And if you find that, then you bring that to us, because it says here, whom we may put in charge of this task. So they brought them back to the apostles, the apostles examined them as well, and then they put them in charge of that task. And again, the ministry of the Word and the ministry of prayer was protected. It was kept at its rightful place. I wish we could say that that's true today. Because in a lot of churches, the ministry of the word and the ministry of prayer is not as important as it should be. It's not at the top, it's somewhere in between two, three, four lines down. Because there are other things that are so much important. I remember at one church, it was so important that a certain chair was sitting up there on the platform and it had to be in a certain spot. And if you moved it, then you had a committee come into you and they wanna know why you moved it. Or if you had, for the first time, computers, which we did at that church, and this is when, before Windows was becoming popular, all that stuff was just starting up. Yeah, it hadn't been that long ago. See, I'm not that old. But I remember one time people getting upset because we locked the door. We locked the door because we had a \$1000 computer sitting in there. It made sense. You know what I mean? Do you leave your doors unlocked at home? Nope. Do you leave your cars unlocked? No. Leave anything else you have that needs to be locked up unlocked? Well, usually no, because there are people that don't respect it. Don't respect what you have but those became things that were more important. I remember the first time at another church we changed some things around in a bulletin. Man, you'd have thought we pulled a page out of the Bible. So what did that tell you when that kind of stuff's going on? Well, those things are more important. Now, I've pointed this out before in other occasions, let me just point it out again, but over in Ephesians 4, 11, and 12, it talks about the gifted men that God has given to the church, and it tells us why He gave those gifted men to the church. He says, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of ministry. Who are the saints? Raise your

hand if you're a saint. If you're a believer, you're a saint. If you don't raise your hand, you're an ain't. Right? So if he says here that these gifted men are given to the church for the perfecting of the saints, for the maturing of the saints, how's he going to mature them? How's he going to do it? How are you going to mature? Through the Word of God. And by the way, the title that's given there, where it says he gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, and then pastors and teachers. Well, pastors and teachers is one phrase that should be pushed together. So you have pastors and teachers and, in Greek, it's chi, and it's like a hyphen. It can be a hyphen. So when you push them together, you remember those kids programs when they got a word here and they got a word here and they push them together you know and they sound a word. Well you push these together and you have pastor hyphen teacher. Literally it's teaching shepherd. So that tells me right there what their role is, what their job is, how are they to perfect the saints by teaching them the word of God. Your diet should be the word of God. So when you come to church that's what you should be getting. The word of God, not opinions? Not even political comments, not magazine articles, books by other people. Nothing wrong with some of those things as long as the priority is the word. But his title alone tells us that that's what his ministry is. He is a pastor-teacher or a teaching shepherd. That's the main gift in ministry that he possesses. And that is how he is to shepherd the flock. And so when you come into 2 Timothy, it's written to a young pastor, just as 1 Timothy, same individual. This is Paul's son in the faith. He joined him at Lystra who had been raised in the Scriptures. You'll notice in the previous chapter, he says in chapter three and verse 15, and from childhood you have known the sacred writings which were able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. Timothy had been trained up in the Scriptures. He had had the Scriptures as a young child from his mother and his grandmother teaching the Scriptures to him. His father was Greek. His mother was a Jew. And so they were seeped in the Old Testament Scriptures and they taught their kids the Old Testament Scriptures. You know, when the father was absent or the father wasn't there, the father neglected his duties. You had to pay somebody, you had to pay a priest, to teach your children the scriptures. That's how important it was. Long before any schools, schools were schools of the Bible. And even when schools began, they did that so that kids could learn how to read the Bible. Not the kind of junk you have going on today. So as we looked at this last time, we began the first two verses with the charge. He says, I solemnly charge you, we talked about this charge being serious and it's serious because who is before? He says, I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and I pointed out last week that the phrase itself is speaking of Jesus, that he is God. So it could read back this way, I solemnly charge you in the presence of God, even Christ Jesus. So that's who it's before, it's before Christ, and it's also, it's serious because of what he's going to do. He says he's going to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom. So it sets up a very serious charge for young Timothy. Whereas in the previous chapter, he had to tell him not to be afraid, not to be fearful. In fact, that was in chapter one where he told him in verse eight or verse seven, God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord and of me, his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the

power of God. And it may be that Timothy's age, maybe other things contributed to it, but Timothy was fearful. And maybe he was fearful for his life because he's seeing how Paul's being treated, because he was with Paul on his missionary journey. His first one. So we see that it's a very serious charge because it's before Christ and because Christ is the judge and he's going to judge the living and the dead. We also see that it's very specific when he tells him in verse two to preach the Word. He is to proclaim the Word as an official spokesman for the King. And who is the King? The Lord Jesus. King of Kings, Lord of Lords. And he's to proclaim all the Word of God.

When he says preach the word, he's speaking about the entire content of scripture. And as he's to do this, he's to be ready in season and out of season. He's to reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and with instruction. And so after Paul calls him to preach the word, he now informs him about the opposition that he will eventually face because of that preaching and that teaching. And now in verses 3 and 4 we talk about the climate. What is the climate? What's the climate going to be like? What's the culture going to be like? You know, this is so relevant to our day. This was written over 2,000 years ago, but it speaks like it was written in our headlines. Look at what he says. Verse 3, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths or lies." Doesn't that describe the churches in our culture today that have compromised the truth? All because they want to be accepted and they don't want to be persecuted. So just embrace everything sinful going on and bring it into the church in the guise of equality and love. Because that's what's happening. And I'll tell you what, we're going to find more and more churches that are preaching the truth small like ours. Just because a church has a lot of people doesn't mean it's a God-blessed church. You know that, right? It could be a church that has pastors and ear tickler tickling their ears, telling them what they want to hear instead of what they need to hear. Well, he tells us that this climate, all this is going to change. He says the time will come. The word time here is kairos. He's speaking of seasons, periods, eras of time. It's not referring to chronological time. It's referring to epochal time. As I said, seasons. The season is going to come. That period or that era of time is gonna come. This is the same word that Paul uses in the previous chapter in regard to dangerous times that will come. Look at that in chapter three. He says, but realize this, that in the last days, difficult times will come. What's gonna mark those difficult times? He says, men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers or abusive, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, or in other words, unforgivable, malicious gossips, that's slanderers, without self-control, brutal, that is not lovers of what is good, but haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness although they have denied its power. He says, avoid such men as these, have nothing to do with such people. But yet many of those people are close companions, they're friends, we spend a lot of time with them, but talk nothing about the gospel to them. What, do you think they're gonna go to heaven by that behavior? Do you think that they're okay? Do you not understand that they're sitting in a house that's on fire, and you're there to pull them out? You say, well, I, you know, I'm not comfortable doing that. I don't want them to

reject me. Listen, if they know that they're sitting in a house of fire, they're going to thank you for pulling them out, not reject you. They're not going to go, oh, leave me alone! Leave me in here so I can burn! You're not gonna do that. Jesus also gave a similar warning early in His ministry over in Matthew 10 and verses 16 through 18. Listen to what it says, Matthew 10. Every time I turn a page in my Bible, it jumps two chapters. So Matthew 10, 16, notice what it says. Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves, but beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues, will even be brought, you will even be brought before governors and kings for my sake as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. Go down to verse 21, brother will betray brother to death and father his child and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. Yeah, that's future. Near the end of his ministry, as he shared the Last Supper with his disciples, he gave another warning. That's in John 15, 18 through 21, and also chapter 16, the first two verses. Listen to what he says. He says, if the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own, but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, a slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they've kept my word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for my name's sake, because they do not know the one who sent me." Again, this is future. Feel like your life is hard now? This doesn't compare to what's coming. You need to get your feet grounded in the word. If you're allowing your trials to cause you to crumble, you're not settled where you should be. Your hope and your trust should rest on Scripture. And I'm not just saying that as a cliché, I'm saying that as you go through these troubling times, you need to know where to go in the Bible to find your encouragement, to find your strength. And I'll tell you right now, your strength doesn't come from other people. It doesn't come from your spouse, it doesn't come from your kids or your grandkids. Your strength comes from the Lord. He says, be strong in the Lord, Ephesians 6:10, right? And in the power of His might. Even when we're told to rejoice, we're told to rejoice in the Lord. In the Lord, it's in the Lord. Because I'll tell you right now, if you're focused on the circumstances, you're focused on other people, that will bring you down. Because people do things that let us down all the time. People that you look up to, people that you respect. Some of them fall and when they fall, they fall hard. And you put them up on such a high plateau, a high pedestal there that when they fall, you fall. So because of what lies ahead for Timothy. He needed to be fearless. He needed to be uncompromising. He needed to preach the Word. Because the time would come, and maybe it wasn't too far off, when he would have less and less opportunity to preach and less and less response to the truth that he proclaimed. So the climate is going to change. It's going to become more dangerous. And how is that going to be so? Well, look at what he says there. Time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. They're not going to endure it any longer. They're not going to put up with it. Here's your word that you hear all the time. Tolerate. What are we always being told by the culture? Tolerate them, right? Don't push back. Don't say anything about their sin, but tolerate it. Just be quiet, don't say a word. And some people are taking them up on it. They're quiet, don't say anything. They don't confront the culture. They don't confront sin in the church. But here he says, they, who are the they? They will not endure sound doctrine. They will not tolerate sound doctrine. They will not

put up with it. They is referring to unbelievers. Because here's the difference. True believers want the Word of God. They want to be saturated by it. They want it to control their lives. They want it to be fully in their mind and in their heart. They want to live in obedience to Christ. They want to please Christ in all that they do. Unbelievers don't. You know, it amazes me that years ago, churches started turning their direction, and they started making churches out of what unbelievers wanted. What would make an unbeliever come to church? And so this one guy, he went through the neighborhood, his name was Rick Warren, and he began to interview people in the neighborhood and asked them what do they want in a church, and he compiled a list and then went back and started that kind of church, and today it is one of the largest Protestant denominations. It was recently in the Southern Baptist Convention until they ordained a couple women and the SBC kicked them out. Justin Peters, I agree with him, he's an apologist, points out false prophecy and so forth, but he made a statement, he said, you know, the SBC ought to break them back. And the reason why, here's why he said this, is because there are so many other churches that are doing the same thing and you didn't kick them out. So if you're not going to kick them out, then you need to bring them back. Because that's hypocrisy. And probably one of the biggest reasons they got kicked out is because of how big they are and because of how quick news travels in a big church and little churches and news doesn't travel like that. And I remember somebody telling me some time ago that here in the state that there were not any churches within the convention that we were in that had women pastors. You know what, I found just within 10 minutes several that did have them, just by doing a search on the internet. And so I wrote that person back and I said, what about this church? Here's the link. His wife is a pastor with this her husband. What about that? Here's another church over here. What about that? You could hear crickets at that point. Not a response. But this book has to be priority over everything. And I don't know why in the world we can't just do what it says. I mean, I know we're sinners saved by grace, but I don't know why the church just can't be the church as the Bible says. But we have to put our little two cents in there and we say that, you know, what we have to say and what we need to do in the church trumps anything you read in Scripture. And usually when you try to take a church that's done that and pull them back to where they need to be, you'll hear a statement like this, well we never did it that way before. Well maybe you should have did it that way before because that was the right way to do it. And the way you're doing it now is not the right way to do it. But you get so involved in it and you've been doing it so long that you think it's got to be right. And isn't that exactly what's going on in our culture today? They talk so much about sin, as it being truth, as it being something to embrace. And they do it for so long and they speak of lies as if they're truth that after a while everybody thinks it is true. Because they've said it for so long.

Well, they're not going to put up with or tolerate sound doctrine. And this is, again, a warning to Timothy that in these dangerous seasons, many people would become intolerant of the confrontive, demanding preaching of God's Word. And when he says that they aren't going to tolerate sound doctrine, sound means healthy. Doctrine is just teaching. They're not going to tolerate healthy teaching. And the opposite of that is of course unhealthy teaching. It's contrary to sound doctrine. Listen to what Paul said in 1st Timothy 1:8 and following. He says, but we know that in the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this, that the law is not made for a

righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, and for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers to sound doctrine. All those things are contrary to sound teaching. And we already saw in 2 Timothy 3 what's going to characterize those times. All of that is unhealthy. All of that is contrary to sound doctrine. Actually, I found a place in the Old Testament. Let me have you to turn there with me. It's in 1 Kings chapter 22. And in 1 Kings 22, I believe that there is kind of like a parallel. And the parallel comes from how Ahab, Ahab was the king of Israel. And one of the prophets who were around during that time was Melchiah.

Well, 1 Kings 22 records an incident where Ahab and the king of Judah, that is Jehoshaphat, they were about to go into war with the Arameans at Ramoth-gilead. And Jehoshaphat first wanted to call for the prophets and to make sure that if they go into Ramoth-gilead and they go and attack the Arameans that they're going to win. But the king of Israel, he allowed them to do that. And here's the funny thing, and Joseph had called onto it. They all gave the same word, and the word was, go, you're gonna win. Josephette said, isn't there any other prophet? And the king of Israel said, yeah, there is, but I hate him. He's always prophesying doom about me. He never has anything good to say about me. So I hate him. If you want to know how wicked Ahab was, just look up at chapter 21 and look at verse 25. It says, Surely there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife incited him. He acted very abominably in following idols according to all that the Amorites had done whom the Lord cast out before the sons of Israel. He was a wicked king. Wicked king. So they bring Micaiah, and it says in verse 13, then the messengers who went to summon Micaiah spoke to him, here's what they're saying, before they get to the king. But now the words of the prophet are uniformly favorable to the king. Let your word be like one of them, and speak favorably. They're telling him what to say. But Micaiah said, as the Lord lives, what the Lord says to me, that I will speak. That should be how every pastor responds to scripture.

Look at verse 15, when he came to the king, the king said to him, Milkiah, shall we go to Ramoth Gilead to battle or shall we refrain? And here's a little bit of irony. He said, go up and succeed and the Lord will give it into the hand of the king. And then the king said to him, How many times must I adjure you to speak to me nothing but the truth and name in the name of the Lord? So he said, I saw Israel scattered on the mountains like sheep which have no shepherd. And the Lord said, These have no master. Let each of them return to his house in peace. And then the king of Israel said to Joseph, Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me but evil? And Micaiah said, Therefore hear the word of the Lord. I saw the Lord sitting on his throne and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right and on his left. The Lord said, Who will entice Ahab to go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead? And one said this, while another said that. And then a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord and said, I will entice him. The Lord said to him, How? And he said, I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And then he said, You are to entice him and also prevail. Go and do so. Now therefore behold the Lord has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets and the Lord has proclaimed disaster against you. You know what the other



prophets did? One of them, Zedekiah, he went over there and slapped him in the face. He slapped Micaiah in the face. How did the Spirit of the Lord pass from me to speak to you? You know, that's just jealousy. Micaiah said, Behold, you shall see on that day when you enter an inner room to hide yourself. And then the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, return him to Amon the governor of the city and Joash the king's son and say, Thus says the king, put this man in prison, feed him sparingly with bread and water until I return safely. And Micaiah said, If indeed you return safely, the Lord has not spoken by me. If you return, the Lord hath spoken by me. You see how the king responded to him? The locking up in prison. Barely give him something to eat and drink. Till I come back safely. Well, you know what you read the rest of story and the prophecy that Milka gave came to pass 100%. King Ahab was killed in that battle. One of the archers shot a arrow and it caught him right between his armor and he told his cherries that he told his men right there with him. Take me out, take me out and took him out. He was over there on the sidelines standing there till he finally died. Then they took and washed the chariot, the blood off the chariot, and the dogs licked up also the blood off the chariot. That's the same way Jezebel was thrown out of a window and the dogs licked up her blood. They did it so fast by the time they got there, there was nothing left to her but bones. She was a wicked, wicked woman as well.

So I look at the story like that and I see really a lot of parallel, a lot of parallel to the times in which we live. Because there are a lot of good men out there that are proclaiming the truth, and they don't have big churches either because most people coming to church aren't coming for the right reasons. They come to church to make friends. They come to church to hear a cute story or something that will encourage them for the day and for the week. And you know, beloved, this is God's book. This isn't mine. You know, and as an expository preacher, if I'm preaching through the book of the Bible, I don't choose what I'm preaching. I have nothing to do with it. If I was a topical preacher, then yes, I would be choosing my topics. But I'm not a topical preacher. I preach topically every now and then. But you'll notice if I'm doing something different, I'm hanging out in another passage somewhere, and all my information's coming from there. Isn't that what you want? Don't we want to know what the word of the Lord says, what it means, and how to apply it, how to live it? Every prophet was to be true to God's Word, and the only one during that time was Melchiah. This is also why Timothy was to preach the Word, because the times were evil, and the people were not going to tolerate healthy teaching. In fact, they're not doing it today. That's why we have so many changes in churches, and some people think the changes are good, but in a lot of cases they're not. And they'll do anything just to draw a crowd, and we've talked about that too. I'm not interested in just drawing a crowd. Yeah, I'd love to see more people here. I'd love to see people getting saved. I'd love to see believers being built up in the Word of God week after week. But beloved, if we're out there talking to them about the gospel, God's going to, just as He draws people to Himself to save, He's going to also draw certain people to the church, where He wants them to be.

Notice what else he says. Not only are they going to tolerate sound doctrine, but he says that they're going to want to have their ears tickled. That's a pretty interesting word. It basically means not scratch my ear. It means put in my ear what I like to hear. Put in my ear what

makes me feel good about myself. It's like in this movie line, I say this around my house and only my kids know it, but there's an old Aladdin cartoon movie that came out years ago when my first three were younger and one of the characters in there, he made this statement, he says, tell me more about myself. I can't get around that phrase because that is the epitome of pride. Tell me everything is gonna puff me up. And some people come to church for that. And that's why many pastors don't preach sermons, they preach talks. They're like motivational speakers. Well, they're going to heap up for themselves teachers. That's going to happen according to their own desires, their own lust, their own cravings. They're going to set themselves against doctrine. They're going to be dominated by their own private and personal cravings and those cravings are going to be for personal gratification. Warren Wiersbie says that time would come, and it has been here for a long time, when most people would not want the healthy doctrine of the Word of God, they would have carnal desires for religious novelties. And again, we know it's happening because of the itchy ears. You know, when Paul came to Corinth, that was the one thing he pointed out that he did not do. Listen to what he said. When I came to you, I did not come with excellence of speech or wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and a power that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. I didn't come tickling your ears.

Again, Wiersbie says, because of their itching ears, they would accumulate teachers who would satisfy their cravings for things that disagree with God's truth. The fact that a preacher has a large congregation is not always a sign that he's preaching the truth. In fact, it may be evidence that he is tickling people's itching ears and giving them what they want to hear instead of what they need to hear. So they're accumulating for themselves, teachers after their own desires teachers after their own lust and itching ears and they're heaping up these teachers and they will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables or myths or lies. So they're accumulating and they're rendering by Kenneth Wiest of accumulating or heaping up. It's accumulating in piles. They've got piles of these kinds of teachers in the church.

John MacArthur writes, instead of receiving sound doctrine, such churches fiercely reject it, wanting rather to have their ears tickled with unbiblical notions that raise their comfort level, justify or overlook their sins. They also reject as unloving anyone who presumes to hold them accountable to doctrinal beliefs and moral standards they deem outmolded, old-fashioned or outdated, and irrelevant. Consequently, the preacher whom they least like to hear brings the messages they need most to hear.

You see, it's like in the days of Jeremiah. Jeremiah 530, listen to the lament of Jeremiah. It says, an astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land. The prophets prophesy falsely, the priests rule by their own power, and my people love to have it so, but what will you do in the end? Or like in the days of Ezekiel. This is not many years later. So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as my people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them. For with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts

pursue their own gain. Indeed, you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument, for they hear your words, but they do not do them. Now you know what that means. You know, when your kids were younger, how many times did you say the same thing to them? They hear your words, but they don't do them. Not all of them anyway, right? Perfect model of righteous kids sitting right there.

J. Vernon McGee says, I wonder if our contemporary society has come to this place. Although we are startled, amazed, and overwhelmed by the number of people today who are listening to the teaching of the word compared to the total population, that group is a very small percentage indeed. There are very few church members who will endure sound doctrine. They don't want to hear it. What do they want?

Well Marvin Vicent answers that. He says they shall invite teachers en masse. In periods of unsettled faiths, skepticism, and mere curious speculation in matters of religion, teachers of all kinds swarm like the flies in Egypt. The demand creates the supply. The hearers invite and shape their own preachers. If the people desire a calf to worship, a ministerial calf maker is readily found. That's certainly true. Someone has said that the modern pulpit is a sounding board that is merely saying back to the people what they want to hear. But we find this stuff in history as well. Take Clement of Alexandria. He describes certain teachers as scratching and tickling in no human way the ears of those who eagerly desire to be scratched. Seneca says, some come to hear, not to learn, just as we go to the theater for pleasure, to delight our ears with the speaking, or the voice, or the plays. I have to be careful with that because there's a Bible app that I use when we listen to the Scripture being read and there's a gentleman that's got a really good voice as he reads. And sometimes you can get lost in just enjoying his voice and not even pay attention to what's being read. This is really a picture of our day. Someone said, some people go to church to close their eyes and others to eye the clothes. In other words, they don't go to hear sound, healthy doctrine. They don't want to hear the word of God. They want to substitute. And again, Wearsby says, "They want religious entertainment "from Christian performers who will tickle their ears." And I can tell you right now, we're gonna listen to this stuff. We need to know what these performers believe. Because I can just tell you in my time, I've seen several of them deny the faith, literally come out and deny the faith and leave their commitment that they made to Christ. And it's like the Christian radio stations just totally ignore it and they still play their music. Why? They denied Christ. Take their music off. Don't honor them with playing that.

So they want this kind of thing. They have a love for novelty in churches. They love emotional movies, pageants, foot-tapping music, colored lights. Where as he says, the man who simply opens the Bible is rejected while the shallow religious entertainer becomes a celebrity. And verse four indicates that itching ears soon will become deaf ears as people turn away from the truth and believe man-made fables, tales, myths. But that's just like in the book of Acts, in Acts 7, when Stephen preached to the Sanhedrin, told them that they were stiff-necked and uncircumcised of heart and they always resist the Spirit of the Lord. And it says in verses 57 and 58 that they cried out with a loud voice, they stopped their ears, they ran at him with one

accord, and they cast him out of the city and then they stoned him. They killed him, they murdered him because they didn't want to hear what he had to say.

In Zechariah 7 verses 11 and 12 it says that the people refused to heed the word of the Lord. It says, but they refused to heed, they shrugged their shoulders, they stopped their ears so that they could not hear. Yes, they made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts has sent by his Spirit through the former prophets.

That's the climate, Timothy, that you're going to be dealing with. You know what? That's the climate we're dealing with.

We've got to be faithful to keep preaching the Word. You know, that's the only thing that's going to transform a life. It's the Word of God. Not some cute story that we can come up with.

Notice in verse 5 as we bring this to a conclusion, as we see the commitment, Paul's saying in spite of the culture, in spite of the rejection of the word, Timothy, you're to fulfill your ministry. How do you do that? Well, you're to be sober in all things, you're to endure hardship, you're to do the work of an evangelist. Fulfill your ministry.

First, you need to be sober. That means to be watchful. This is the sixth imperative in this passage. Remember, I told you that when you start back in verse two, you got preach, that's an imperative. And then being ready, end season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, all that. Those are commands. Well, here's another one. Be watchful, be sober. The word literally means to be free from intoxicants. But here it was used metaphorically of being level-headed, being well-balanced, being in control of your faculties. Because see, that's what happens when you're intoxicated, you're not in control of your faculties. So in the midst of a changing world, in the midst of a changing church, and even a changing gospel, which is really not the gospel, but a distortion of it, Timothy is to remain committed to the changeless truth of God's word. So be sober in all things. And he says, endure hardship or afflictions, suffer hardships. You know, for many years Paul suffered. You know, when he was saved there on the road to Damascus, and you remember he was blind for a period of time, till God sent Ananias to lay hands on him so that he might receive his sight. Some believe that Paul had eye issues. Some believe he wasn't very attractive at all. He wasn't very persuasive in his speeches, that is, being drawn by being a good orator or anything like that. And he was even small. He was not good looking. And the funny thing about that is that's what churches are looking for now. You know, it used to be a day when they cared about what you believed, because what you believed would be what you would teach. That's changed. However, in 2 Corinthians 11, listen to some of the things he suffered. And here he is using some sarcasm to the Corinthians, verse 23. Are they servants of Christ? I speak as if insane. I more so. In far more labors and far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death, five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Five times? Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I've spent in the deep. I've been on frequent journeys in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers

from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren. I have been in labor and hardship through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and in exposure. And apart from such external things, there's the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.

Some say they want to be like the Apostle Paul, but they don't want to be any of this. He suffered. And one writer says this, There is no such thing as a faithful ministry that is not costly. A painless ministry is a shallow and fruitless ministry. So he needs to be sober in all things. He needs to endure hardship. Third, he needs to do the work of an evangelist. Notice he doesn't tell him to be an evangelist. He says, do the work of an evangelist. As you're preaching and teaching the whole council of God, you also need to evangelize. You also need to be giving out the gospel. And so he says fulfill your ministry. That carries the idea of giving full measure to bringing it to completion. Carries the idea of eagerness, wholeheartedness.

Here's how Paul summed it up for himself, Colossians 1.25 and following. He says, Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God, which was given to me for you to fulfill the word of God, the mystery which was hidden from ages and from generations, but has now been revealed to his saints. To them, God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end, he says, I also labor, striving according to his working, which works in me mightily." This is what he worked after. He wanted to teach every man in all wisdom that he may present every man perfect in Christ. And so that preaching also entailed warning every man. And again, the world doesn't want to hear it. But God says to do it. And we need to have the attitude the apostles have. We will obey God rather than man. God says to preach the gospel. Go and obey God and preach the gospel. Say, but I'm afraid. Go and preach the gospel. Say, but I don't know how. Open your mouth and speak. So, well, I don't know where to start. Why don't you start where he started with you? Talk about how you came to know the Lord. What was going on in your life? When Jesus invaded your world and turned it upside down, what were you doing? I know exactly what I was doing and I still know what I was doing. I haven't forgotten it. The word is to be preached regardless of the season. We're to be faithful to it. And even as the days get more difficult, our commitment to the truth is not to be changed, and it will not go unchallenged.

I want to encourage you today, renew your commitment to the Word of God. Renew your passions. Maybe you believe all the right things, but you've left your first love. You know, Ephesus did that. The church at Ephesus had everything. They had right doctrine, they had the right preachers, they had good preachers. They had Paul at one point, they had Timothy. I mean, they had others, but they had some of them that we know about. If you're not a Christian. Why not? I said, well, Christ hasn't drawn me yet to become a Christian. I have a profound response to that. You want to hear it? Bologna. That's bologna. If you're sitting here this morning and you're listening to the Word of God, that's a draw. You got here today, right? That's a draw. If you haven't shared Christ with someone in a long time.

change that. You know, it's interesting, you know, we left here last Sunday and I took them by one of the fast food restaurants. I realized as I was talking to the lady there at the counter in the drive-through window that your presentation of the gospel has to be as fast as your food coming to you. I learned that right then and there. But you know, she was like she wanted to hear it.

On the back of your bulletin, I have a few quotes for you I want to read to you before we close. They're by Martin Lloyd-Jones. They're all about the pastor. He says, a pastor is a man who is given charge of souls. He's not merely a nice, pleasant man who visits people, has an afternoon cup of tea with them, and passes the time of day with them. He is the guardian, the custodian, the protector, the organizer, the director, the ruler of the flock. The church is not a place where people are to be entertained or where people come to sit and listen, either to singing or to the accounts of other people's experiences coupled with a brief, light, comfortable message. The church is not meant to be a place in which one man does everything and nobody else does anything. The church is not a place in which one man alone speaks and the others just sit and listen. The church should be the most exciting and thrilling place in the world and if she is not we are somehow or other quenching the spirit. I leave you with that. Let's be true to God's word. Let's pray. We thank you, Heavenly Father, for this time we've had in your word, and we thank you for your truth. We know your word reaches deep down, and the very soul is quick and powerful, it's sharper than a two-edged sword, it's piercing even to the vision of soul and spirit, and of joints and mirror. It's a discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart. Nothing is hidden from your sight for whom we will give an account.

Lord, draw every heart to yourself this time. Save those who are not saved. Wake up those who are. They understand and realize that there is a battle going on and you have called us to march into that battle. You've armed us with the scripture and you've told us to go and be faithful, but to trust you as we do it. I pray we'll do just that. We thank you for all these things and your precious time. Amen.