

A Noble Servant's Foundation for Ministry

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Date: 14 April 2024

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[0:00] I wonder how long God's people have been singing that one. Well, I have made the decision here to do a series of expositions in 1 Timothy chapter 4.

Now, this may be more for me than for you. So selfishly, I need this. And I hope it will be a blessing to you. But it's already been a blessing to me.

I'm studying through the week and being reminded of my calling to be focused as a pastor and as a servant of the Word of God and of Christ to honor Jesus by honoring His Word.

Particularly as I stand among you and before you to preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am commanded, I am mandated by my calling before the Lord to preach Christ and Him crucified, buried, and raised again.

That is, to preach the truth of God's Word. So I don't have the luxury. I don't have the privilege. I don't have license to say whatever I want to say.

[1:12] I am constrained in a good way to preach the gospel of God contained in the Bible. Now, that sounds so rudimentary, and it is.

And that sounds so basic to what you would think all preachers understand. And yet, you and I both know that it is a sad fact across our land that many, many, many men ascend, and women, ascend the pulpit and do anything but preach the Bible.

We preach all kinds of things but the Bible. And God help us. At Grace Church, we are endeavoring to be faithful to God's mandate to preach the truth of the Lord to God's people.

And so, over the next weeks, I don't know, four weeks or so, I want to move through 1 Timothy chapter 4 and bring to us some of what Paul is trying to tell his young protege, this young pastor Timothy, about keeping the main thing the main thing.

So the title of my message, A Noble Servant's Foundation for Ministry. This is the foundation that I stand on, that Greg, my fellow pastor, stands on as we minister God's truth to God's people.

[2:40] Let me begin reading in 1 Timothy chapter 4, verse 1. And even though I won't be preaching a message in the first five verses, that's another sermon for another time.

I'm going to begin this morning in verse 6. Let's take in the greater context. 1 Timothy 4, 1. But the Holy Spirit explicitly says that in later times, some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons by the hypocrisy of liars who have been seared in their own conscience, who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God created to be shared in with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving. For it is sanctified, made holy by the word of God and prayer.

In pointing out these things to the brothers, you, speaking of Timothy specifically, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.

But refuse godless myths fit only for old women. On the other hand, train yourself for the purpose of godliness.

[4:18] For bodily training is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

It is a trustworthy saying and deserving full acceptance. For it is for this we labor and strive because we have fixed our hope on the living God who is the savior of all men, especially of believers.

He goes on in verse 11 to just simply say, command and teach these things. And we'll get to more of that in some subsequent sermons, God willing.

Now let me ask you, in light of what we've just read, what does God mean when he talks about you and I being good servants of Jesus?

While Paul wrote this specifically to Timothy who is pastoring at the church in Ephesus, he's very young, he's getting started in the ministry, Paul is his mentor, and Paul is trying to encourage him, in these words, to be a faithful minister of the gospel in keeping with what Timothy has seen in Paul's own life, as Paul has ministered to God's people.

[5 : 39] This is also a letter that is intended to be read to the congregation and congregations. This will be shared among other churches and God's people.

And of course, we know this was written for us. We don't read 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy and Titus, what we know as the pastoral epistles, dealing with pastor's responsibilities, and say, well, those three books aren't for us.

It's good for us to know what Greg and Jeff need to do, but 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus don't really have anything to do with us. Well, I just read from Titus today when we took the Lord's table together. And it is very much for us.

You need to know this as well as I do because of this very reason. You also are servants of Jesus Christ. You understand? You're ministers of the gospel. You don't have the responsibility of standing up here doing what I'm doing now, but you have the responsibility of serving Christ and serving one another in the truth.

And so 1 Timothy is a book for you as God's people. We need to know this together. What does it mean? God says and talks about you and I being good servants of Jesus.

[6 : 53] And God gets to define what good means, doesn't He? What does it mean for us to be that? In this passage, Paul lays the foundation then for all true, true, genuine, faithful, biblical ministry done within God's family, that is, the local church.

So this is for us. And if I had been preaching through this verse by verse from the very first chapter, you would be seeing Paul lay out some very strong strategies and responsibilities for the congregation, a local body of believers to adhere to, to keep themselves unified in the main thing. That's what Paul's concern is here. So this passage concerns the good, what God would define as the excellent or the noble or the worthy, faithful servant based on God's own evaluation.

We are all interested in being faithful as we serve the Lord in this life. How in the world are we going to take all of you from different backgrounds, personalities, and everything else, and put you literally on the same page to serve the Lord together as Grace Church Williamsburg in a faithful, meaningful, effective way?

How does that happen? It happens by all of us adhering to the truth of Scripture and God's calling on us as a local assembly of believers.

[8 : 24] That's how it happens. And that happens through the faithful preaching and teaching of God's Word to God's people, calling us to be that faithful people together.

Now, Paul's teaching, even though it's aimed specifically at a pastor, Timothy, it takes in how each of us is to serve Jesus by serving God's Word together.

We are servants of the truth, are we not? Servants of the truth. And the truth carries us forward and helps us understand who we are, who God is, and how we're to relate to Him and to one another.

Now, here's how we'll all build on the foundation of truth together. It's one of the reasons that I wanted to break away from Genesis just for a little longer. I promise you, if God gives me breath for life and I can come back into the pulpit, we'll pick up at Genesis 4 here in a few weeks' time.

And then we'll get to talk about how we start murdering each other. And boy, that'll be fun. And how the world just goes into a downhill slide so that God says, their heart was only evil continually and I'm going to wipe them all out except for eight of you.

[9 : 36] Now, look forward to that. All right. Today, this is what we want to do. Let's look at what I'm going to refer to as five expressions of godly faithfulness in a noble servant's ministry, both to God and to God's people.

And again, while we're talking mainly about how Paul is addressing Timothy as a pastor to focus his ministry, found his ministry, ground his ministry on these essential things, Greg and I take that to heart and understand that.

This is for us as a church because you are servants as well. You are serving the Lord and serving the word of God. The first expression out of the gate that deals with this faithfulness that we should all be sharing in together, this wonderful expectation that we should all have toward each other in dealing with God's word.

The first one is this. Teach the truth. Teach the truth. Again, sounds very basic, very rudimentary. I wish that more and more and more churches across our land would take this to heart and make this truly the foundation of who they are as God's people.

Teach the truth. There are all kinds of ways that we are distracted from this and pastors face this every week. I have a life through the week just like you do.

[11:01] I have to pay my bills. I have to clean the house. I have to mow the grass. There's a myriad of things just like you guys have. There's a lot of distraction that would take away from me and from my fellow pastor Greg, from the two of us, making the foundation and focus of our weekly ministry, being in God's word ourselves, and then being prepared to bring that word to you.

One of the reasons that we have deacons in our church, wonderful godly men who are a tremendous asset for us and help, is so that Greg and I can be kept free to do this very thing, what I'm preaching to you today.

One of the main roles and functions of deacons is to help the pastors stay focused on the preaching and teaching of the word of God in prayer. And these men that we have helping us do that faithfully and wonderfully and with much love for us and for you and for the Lord.

He says, teach the truth. That's what he's telling him. Look with me at verse 6 of 1 Timothy 4. In pointing out these things to the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus.

We are dealing with, right out of the gate in verse 6, Paul telling Timothy about the content of sound teaching. in pointing out these things.

[12:27] That refers both to chapter 4 verses 1 through 5, which I read at the beginning, and then most likely to the entire content of the letter as we would see compared with chapter 3 verse 14.

I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you soon. But Paul goes on to say, if I'm delayed, you'll have this information that you need to move forward in your ministry.

I hope to get to you soon, but if I'm delayed, and he was delayed. In fact, he was delayed. I am writing these things to you in this letter to help you understand moving forward in ministry.

Now, it should be encouraging to us, friends. It should inspire us, it should comfort us to know that the Lord, the Lord Himself, has already chosen and prepared the very instruction He wants His people to receive and live by.

Now, did you hear what I said? What you need, what you most need as a congregation, as God's people joining together as Grace Church, this local expression of faith in Christ, what you need has already been prepared for you.

[13:43] Greg and I don't have to make it up through the week. We don't even have to be clever men. Mike, aren't you glad? My brother knows me. I'm not a clever man.

We don't even have to be clever. Here's what we have to be. Faithful. Faithful. Faithful to do what God has called us to do to be prepared to minister God's Word to you.

And that's your calling. to do whatever God has called you to do throughout the week and being faithful to Him so that you are ready to minister the Word to each other.

If you're caught up in secret sin, you're not ready. If you're caught up in unconfessed sin, you're not ready. You're not being available to the Holy Spirit to use you to minister God's Word to each other.

Greg and I can only do so much of this toward you, but look at all these faces looking back at me. Now we think about releasing this army sitting before us to minister to itself.

[14:51] Do you see the wisdom in that? That's not my wisdom or Greg's wisdom. That's God's wisdom as we minister God's Word to one another. Again, I say that the Lord has chosen and prepared all of the instruction He wants His people to receive and live by.

In this case, a good servant a good servant by God's definition is one who teaches that which the master teacher, Jesus, has already prepared for His learners.

He's already prepared it. Where do we have it prepared for us? In Scripture. Right? We're not going to find this anywhere else.

This is where He's prepared it. This is what Paul is referring to as sound doctrine. Now, why point out these things? Why do that?

Because this apostolic, apostolic means of the apostles, this apostolic teaching makes for sound doctrine.

[15:54] And as such, this instruction builds up, edifies God's people. It doesn't just encourage you. It doesn't just give you a boost.

God's Word teaches you the truth. It teaches you how to know God, how to walk with God, how to treasure Christ. So it does more than just encourage you.

It builds you up spiritually. You become more spiritually mature by being in God's Word and coming to know the Lord in that way.

This is an exciting thing for me. I love talking about this and preaching this because it just gives me an opportunity to brag on the wisdom of God for God's people.

Sound doctrine builds up God's people in a robust, steady faith. Apart from the Word of God, that's not going to happen. You, me, churches who neglect the Word of God neglect spiritual growth.

[16:56] In fact, I'd go further and say that they neglect salvation because no one's going to be saved apart from the truth of the Word of God that reveals Christ to us.

We live out of what we believe. We live out of what we trust. We live out of what we desire most and what we worship, don't we?

In other words, we most follow what is most in our hearts. What you treasure most in your heart is what you're going to give most of you too. I hope that's the Lord.

Well, it won't be the Lord apart from His Word. It won't be. Now, this is something that Paul does next. If you can see it here midway down the screen. Paul connects this pure content of God's Word, this sound doctrine of God's Word with its work in our hearts.

In other words, friends, this isn't just knowledge for knowledge's sake. We're not just, Greg and I aren't doing this to try to just put content out there or puff you up in the content.

[18:07] There is a very strong reason, rationale for the way that this sound doctrine is spiritually used of the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts, to transform us.

And that's what Paul is talking about. I'm going to show you that. He wants us to live out what God is working in us through the good, clean truth of Scripture rooted in our souls.

Notice, rooted in our souls. Well, where do we see this? If you'll turn back to chapter 1, he starts this whole thing off with Timothy. Chapter 1, look at verse 5 with me.

He's making a contrast here with what the false teachers in the church of Ephesus have been teaching the people. Paul is very concerned about the reports he's received about these men who are teaching false doctrine.

It's happening in the church. God's people are sitting under it. And so, in verse 5, Paul says, But, in contrast to all the nonsense that's being taught by these other men, the goal of our command is the way the LSV translates this.

[19:20] That's a literal rendition. The goal of our instruction, our teaching, our command is what? What is the goal? Love. Love from a pure heart and a good conscience and an unhypocritical or sincere faith is the way the New American Standard would say it.

He's connecting again content of Scripture with the work it does in our hearts. Paul shows us that the goal of instructing God's people in these things is that your hearts would be pure, your conscience is good, and your faith sincere.

I'm going to put that up here so you can see that here at the bottom of the screen. That's what he's after. Why is he so concerned with that? Because this is the kind of heart that love issues from.

The goal of our commanding. See, it's already been mandated for Greg and I. The goal of us doing what we're doing with you right now, the goal of that is love, not knowledge.

It isn't knowledge for knowledge's sake. It's knowledge that builds you up in an understanding of who God is that your heart may grow in love. As you know him, you love him.

[20:39] You cherish him. You desire him. You conform yourself to him. You repent of things that you know displease him and grieve him because you love him.

And so you're not, you're no longer in a state of just keeping rules or I don't want to be punished. Hey, look, sometimes that's a good thing, right?

I don't want to get a spanking by the Lord. That's not fun. All right, that's fine, but let's go beyond that. Let's say not only do I not want to get punished, but I want to do this because I know it pleases God and I love him and I want to please him in the way I speak and behave.

The Lord is pleased with you and I in Christ, isn't he? Forevermore. If he wasn't, we'd go to hell. The Lord's pleased with us and his son, but is the Lord pleased when I sin against my wife?

Is the Lord pleased with that, that behavior? No. Why would he be? It's sin. That's what put his son on the cross. I'm trying to make the distinction here that you can't sin your way out of the love of God, can you?

[21 : 48] God will always love you and place his love on you, but God's not always pleased with how we speak and behave. When we make decisions that's sinful and selfish, we can expect if we're God's people, he's going to discipline us.

Right? We're going to get a spiritual spanking. Can I see your hands? How many of you have ever had a spiritual spanking? I'm going to raise my hand first. Now, I just want to ask you, how does that feel? No, you're shaking your head.

Don't go there. That's right. That's what it's meant to do is discourage us from continuing in sin, isn't it? That's what we're dealing with. Paul says, no, look, the goal of our instruction, of everything that we teach and preach through this sound word, these clean words from God, the goal is love.

To build you up in love for God and for one another. So this is what we would say is unhypocritical or sincere Christian living because your hearts are being guided to worship God in truth.

We worship in spirit and truth. Love for God and love for one another will flow from your pure hearts, your good consciences, your genuine faith.

[23 : 03] As the truth of the Lord conforms you to Jesus, what do we constantly say around here at Grace? All of this that we're doing in the way of ministry, in the way of serving one another, in the way of evangelizing our community and moving and shaking through the community in the terms of serving the Lord, all of this is aimed at conformity to Jesus.

We are all trying to deal with the reality that we need to be conformed to Jesus Christ. That's the main thing. Conformity to Christ. We don't stop with just knowing about God.

We want to become more like Him. Paul calls that godliness. God-likeness. And that's what he's about to tell us about here.

Faithful service to God involves faithful service to God's people. You have heard us say, other people have said it, it's not unique to me or I didn't invent it, that Christianity is not a spectator sport. It's not an individual sport either. We are saved into a community of faith. We are saved into a family. That's something that's hard, I think, for Americans especially to get their minds around and then to live out.

[24 : 26] Well, look at this one with me. How about the recipients of this sound teaching we've been talking about doing the work in our hearts? Well, he says very clearly, once again, 1 Timothy 4, verse 6, in pointing out these things to whom?

The brothers. That would be the brothers and the sisters, not just the men, not just the male people in the congregation. To the brothers, to believers. That is, to spiritual people who understand and obey the truth of God.

If you were to turn to 1 Corinthians 2, 14, you would see that scripture outlining the fact that unbelievers, unspiritual people cannot understand the things of the Spirit because they don't have the Holy Spirit to help them understand it.

But as believers, we do. The context of this letter is that of setting in order the structure and priorities of the church as God's family.

That is, as a spiritually gathered worshipping community. That's the point. So when God's people come together, the emphasis should be on teaching them the truth of God that they might know Him and obey Him.

[25 : 38] You say, Jeff, why do we take the tact that we take on Sunday mornings and why do we get down into the Word, why do we dive down into the Word and unpack it and take it apart and dissect it and put it out and reassemble it for the people to want?

Why do we do that? Because this is what God's Word calls us to do. We're here to teach believers how to follow God and worship God.

You say, well, Jeff, what happens if unbelievers come in and sit down in our midst? They should be mystified. They should have no idea what's going on here. Why?

Because they're not saved. They're not born again. They don't get it because the Holy Spirit doesn't live in them. Hopefully, what they will see in here will be beautiful to them even though they have no idea what to do with it.

What I don't want is an unbeliever to come in here and sit down in our midst and be perfectly comfortable. Why would we want that? Why would we want an unbeliever to leave here comfortable in their sin?

[26 : 43] Oh, God, help us. What we would want them to do is come in and say, I don't, whatever these people have, I don't have it. I don't have it. This is not me.

And what we hope will happen is this, but I want this to be me. Will you tell me how this can be me? Right? And what do we do? We throw our arms around them and we say, absolutely, because I was once you.

I'm not better than you. I have come to faith in Christ. There's the difference. I'm a sinner just like you and you can be saved from that sin just like I was.

You can be kept saved from that sin just like I am. You have joined a community of people who are intent on bringing that hope to our community.

And when we gather on Sunday to do this, we're just simply reminding and energizing ourselves to go out and do that more. We're going to take this out there for them to witness it. That's what we're after.

[27 : 53] That's what we're looking for. This is the priority that Paul is bringing forward to Timothy and telling him, we cannot have that, know that, and operate within that apart from the truth of God's word.

So feed them the truth. The Holy Spirit will use the truth to inform their souls and energize their souls for this kind of ministry and this kind of work as the family of God.

I say again, when God's people come together, the emphasis should be on teaching the truth of God that they might know God and obey Him.

We can grow as we know. Alright? As we know what? Not what? Who? As we know Him in Scripture.

We're reading Scripture, we're expositing Scripture, we're dealing with the Bible so that we may know the God, the author of this book and worship Him and love Him.

[28 : 54] Then we want to keep what He tells us. Notice also that God, our Father, wants us, wants us as His children to have these things taught to us by the men that He set apart for this purpose.

Greg and I, we share in that responsibility. and that great privilege. In other words, God wants us to learn of Him and so God has instituted and called out and put together all that is necessary for a local body of believers to grow up in Christ.

You see, the Lord's provided all of that and it's here in the Word of God. We don't have to go outside. I don't have to go out with Greg and seek out a marketing firm and ask them, how should we be the church?

Tell me how to CEO Grace Church Williamsburg. Don't you do that, Jeff Jackson. Spank you. Don't do that.

What we need to do is turn to God's Word and be faithful so that you have an expectation when you come together that you're going to hear God's Word. We have an expectation that when we come together you're going to be ready to receive God's Word and become doers and not hearers only.

[30 : 15] Now to that degree, folks, God will make us strong. Strong in Him. In Him. Not in each other. In Him. Our unity flows from knowing Him.

The strength of our bond in unity is from a shared love for Christ because we are in His Word and we are being taught how to know Him and treasure Him and love Him and follow Him.

I do believe the Scripture is sufficient. Listen, in John chapter 6 verses 44 and 45, if you don't have to turn there, I'm going to put it up here for you.

Look what it says here at the bottom of the screen. Jesus said, No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him and I will raise him up on the last day.

Now notice this next verse. It is written in the prophets and they shall all be taught of God. Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.

[31 : 23] Now we've brought all the content of Scripture, the teaching of the prophets, the apostles, everything coming from Scripture, pointing to Jesus Christ, being made true in Jesus Christ and as we know the Lord Jesus, we are able to live out this truth.

Together, we're put on the same page of treasuring Him and following Him. Friends, a faithful, good, noble servant lays down God's ways before God's people that they may learn from Him. right now, you're not really learning from me. You're learning from God as I exposit His Word. So to the degree that I'm true to God's Word, you're learning from Him.

Now if I start veering off from God's Word, now you're learning something from me and we're probably in trouble at that point. So I'll come back over here, see, and anchor myself and off we go. A good servant can't teach, cannot teach what he does not know. So what does that mean? Well, Timothy himself must be, notice, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of sound

doctrine and pointing out these things to the brothers.

[32 : 40] You will be a good servant of Christ Jesus being nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.

So that's the next point. A good servant must himself, look, feed on the truth. How often are we to nourish ourselves in this truth?

How often are Greg and I to nourish ourselves? How often are you to nourish yourself? In the New American Standard, it has constantly nourished.

That's the NASB. Constantly is not in the original language. It's inserted by the translators. Why? Well, they've done this because the verb nourished is in the present tense grammatical structure which simply means it's a continuing ongoing action.

So as they put constantly in there, they're cueing on nourished as the verb to communicate the idea that would have been evident to anybody reading this in the Greek at that time.

[33 : 46] This is a constantly ongoing nourishing aspect that you're called to in relationship to God's Word. It's not a one and done. It's not a once a week.

It is a consistent ongoing feeding, being nourished. Listen, how many of you go days without eating food?

I'm looking around. I'm not seeing it. No offense. I don't look malnourished, do I? Okay.

None of us look malnourished in here. This is the idea that Paul's communicating to us here. We have to feed on God's Word constantly.

All right? On what are we to nourish ourselves? See, we don't have to guess. A good servant will be continually, that is, in an ongoing manner, taking in the words of the faith and of sound doctrine.

[34 : 51] For heaven's sake, he spells it right out. We feed ourselves on words. Words. God's words. We feed on truth.

In chapter 1, verse 9, look at verses 9 and 10 with me. Paul says, knowing this, that is, knowing that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and godless, for those who kill their fathers or mothers for murderers, for sexually immoral persons, for homosexuals, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and for whatever else is contrary to sound teaching.

Contrary to sound teaching, according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted. In those verses, Paul is saying that the law is made for the lawless, unrighteous people, like the list says in those verses, and then he adds this, in effect, for all those who live lives contrary to sound teaching.

Teaching, that is, that would be different from or not according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God. How do we know what's contrary to sound teaching? It's contrary to what we have as the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, the truth of Jesus.

That's the same gospel Paul says that he has been entrusted with. Now what's happening here? Just in a quick word, we would have already covered this if I'd been preaching through 1st Timothy up to this point, you would have been sick of hearing this.

[36 : 43] Paul is dealing with countering false teachers. False teachers have invaded this church. Young Pastor Timothy is facing these guys.

These men are calling heresy, calling truth heresy. They've got it exactly backwards. And Paul is telling Timothy, have courage.

Stand on the truth. Stand up to these men. He's going to come to the place where I read you in verse 11 where he's going to say to Timothy, because Timothy's somewhat intimidated by these guys who talk a good talk.

They're intimidating men. He's going to say, command and teach these things. Timothy, stand your ground. Don't let anybody look down on your youthfulness. Speak the truth, son.

Be faithful to your ministry. These are strong words. Why? Because cancer, poison, is in the midst of the congregation and it needs to be excised.

[37 : 43] Christ. That's why the Lord takes this very, very seriously. This is the downfall of every church. This is the reason churches split.

Now you might say, well, I know, and I do too, I know plenty of times where I've heard that it was never about doctrine. It was about the color of the carpet. And so half the people got up and left and went to form their own church so that they could have blue carpet instead of orange.

Well, I've heard that too. I've actually been in a number of cases where things like that were done. It wasn't about doctrine. People didn't split, people didn't argue and fuss because they were fussing over the truth of scripture or trying to come to an understanding of that.

That's not why they left. But let me say this to you. At the bottom line foundation of why churches have trouble, it's always about doctrine. Probably the lack of it.

Or because they have the wrong doctrine. they've been convinced that they're consumers, that they can come in and sit down and dictate how the church pastors function and what they say and what they do and how they, what they can't and what they can and how you're not consumers.

[39 : 00] Not like that. I hope you want to consume the word. but this church family is not built on making sure that you leave here happy clappy.

If you leave here happy clappy, I hope it's because you love the Lord and God's convicted you and you see the need for repentance and you know that you receive forgiveness and grace and boy, you can rejoice in that. But not because I've stroked your sin and made you feel better about being in it.

God helped me that Greg or I would do that. No. This is about sound doctrine. If you look at chapter 6 verses 3 and 4.

If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, that is what does he define sound words?

Those of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the doctrine conforming to godliness he's conceded.

Understanding nothing but having a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words out of which arise envy, strife, slander, evil suspicion, constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.

[40 : 22] He's talking about the false teachers. He's talking about the false teachers and their followers. You see these men slip into the churches like this and they look for people, they look for cliques. It is amazing to me.

You can have a church of 5,000 people. I've been in that church. You can have a church of 5,000 people and you can have a person walk in who's in a disgruntled, disenfranchised state of mind and heart and they will find another person like them and 5,000 people.

They'll find them within weeks. They find each other and then they do this. They bite and they snip and then they start to find other people and they start to say things like, hey, did you notice the other day when Jeff said this?

Did that sound a little condescending to you? Because it did to me. I mean, I know he's probably not like that all the time, but I mean, did you catch that? And now you're standing there going, if I say no, I didn't catch it, then I'm not sharp.

They're sharper than me. But I don't want to believe that about Jeff. I'm conflicted. Exactly. And that's exactly how it starts. That's exactly how it starts.

[41 : 34] These are shrewd people. And when I tell you what's behind it, you won't be shocked and you won't be surprised that this kind of stuff goes on all the time. Has it gone, Greg, has it gone on in the time that we've been a church for five and a half years?

Have we ever experienced that kind of stuff behind the scenes? It happens. We're a church. We're not immune.

Paul warns if anyone advocates a different doctrine and doesn't agree with sound words of those of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing.

Notice the highlights. in 2nd Timothy 1 13. I just want to show you that this is not some one-off thing.

This is a constant concern for Paul as he writes to this young pastor and warns him to stand the ground of sound teaching. Hold to the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, Timothy, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

[42 : 48] In the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Retain the standard of sound words. It's here at the bottom of the screen.

Sound words refer to those teachings of Jesus ministered through Paul and through the apostles. That's how we receive them. We receive the teachings of God and Jesus through the prophets and the apostles as they've written it down in scripture for us.

And everything that we need for life and godliness is contained here. So the idea is look to Jesus Christ for your spiritual nourishment as a church. Now notice what Paul says back in chapter 4. Notice what Paul says at the end of verse 6. Which you have been following. Well that's encouraging. Apparently Timothy indeed had been constantly nourishing himself on God's truth. So Timothy, Paul knew Timothy was prepared to stand. He just needed the encouragement to do it. It's as if Paul is saying gather some other like-minded godly men around you, lock arms with those men, and stand against these false teachers, these liars, these hypocrites who are seared in their consciences with the lies of Satan.

[44 : 09] But stand, you must. This pattern of diligent study is different from what I might call crisis Bible reading.

Alright, what's that? Crisis Bible reading. Or we might label it casual Bible reading. There's nothing wrong with reading the Bible devotionally.

You don't always have to sit down with the Bible and have all of your study tools around you and spend hours. You can read the Bible devotionally. You can read the Bible to just read the history and take in the flow.

That's fine. That's all good. What do I mean by crisis? Crisis Bible reading is when you must have an answer for something going on in your life so the Bible comes out of hiding.

It gets dusted off so you can get your answer. Then it goes back into hiding until you need it again. No. What does he say? You have been following.

[45 : 08] You have been in the constant state of nourishing yourself on the word. You've understood. You've obeyed. You've consistently lived out the truth of the Lord. You are a man prepared and ready to stand in this moment and see that the truth prevails.

Boy, I tell you, that's a sobering challenge. It's like, Jeff, when do you get a day off? You don't. You hear me?

You don't. If I take a vacation, I don't. I don't take a vacation from the Bible. Okay? Now, don't be offended.

I take a vacation from you. All right. Come on. You raise kids. You know what it's like. Every once in a while, you've got to have a babysitter and say, I need some space.

Look, ministry, this is what he's going to tell him. This is what he's going to tell him. We don't get time off from the word. We don't get time off from being convicted.

[46 : 16] We don't get time off from being called to repent. That's our life. Until we go to heaven, that's our life. Just look forward to the day when that's not going to be your life anymore.

Because you'll be complete. And you'll be with him. And there'll be no tears and no sin. You won't need to repent. But you're not there yet. This is what we're talking about.

Teaching doctrine. Jesus Christ taught Paul his truth. So that Paul is passing on what Jesus entrusted to him.

So look. Where is it? At the bottom of the screen. Paul's teaching. Paul's teaching. His doctrine is God's content for conforming us to Jesus.

That is godliness. So look to Jesus for your spiritual nourishment. That's again, this is what we need to do. You have been following.

[47 : 21] You have been faithful. You have been doing what you needed to do. Cultivate the habit. Cultivate the lifestyle. This is who you are, Timothy. Be who you are.

Know God. Follow his ways. Be constantly nourished. Learn to reject what is contrary to the truth. Learn to be discerning. That's where he goes next.

Look at this one. Reject untruth. But refuse, verse 7, refuse godless myths. Fit only for old women. On the other hand, train yourself for the purpose of godliness. What does a good servant reject or avoid? Because that is part of it.

Well, he says, have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. That's the way this translation works it out. Worldly fables can be understood as man's myths.

[48 : 22] They're untrue. They're unhistorical. They have no basis in fact, no basis in reality. Homer Kent, commentator Homer Kent, had a great take on this.

Listen to what he said. These myths had no spiritual value and are of the type that senile women tell the children for entertainment. Boy, there's a picture. A senile old woman telling kids stuff that they're kind of going, I don't know about that.

Yeah, even them. It's that kind of stuff. It's so unbelievable that even kids are going, really? Wow. People have a tremendous capacity for irrationality.

People have a tremendous capacity for creating and believing bizarre things that defy or distort reality. Now, here's what I promised to tell you.

Satan is behind all these distortions in life. Every false doctrine that's ever come down the pike has Satan as its author. This is spiritual warfare.

[49 : 28] All of the falsehoods and lies of men come from Satan. Every one of them without exception. Here is a truth that we would all do well to remember.

It's just a little maxim, a little axiom, a little truth saying, and here it is. Look at this. The devil is not against doctrine. He is against true doctrine. The devil wants you to have doctrine, preaching, instruction.

He just wants you to have the wrong kind. reject what is contrary to God's teaching and wisdom. Have nothing to do with it. Don't waste valuable time with it. Reject it altogether.

Run the other way. Don't stand there and argue with it. Get out of town. Listen, I once heard Dr. MacArthur say, truth has nothing to gain from a dialogue with error.

Now, think about that. Truth has nothing to gain from a dialogue with error. Have you ever tried to talk to somebody who only wanted to argue their point? Truth has nothing to gain from a dialogue with error.

[50 : 39] If all they want to do is argue with you, turn around and walk away. You're wasting your time. So now, knowing that man's wisdom is empty, having rejected what's false and distorted, what are we to do?

We're to turn our attention to a very different pursuit. And that's of disciplining ourselves for the purpose of godliness. Here's where it all starts to really come together.

Pursue truth. The second part of verse 7. Refuse godless myths fit only for old women. On the other hand, train yourself. Strong words.

Train yourself for the purpose of godliness. This is, and here it comes, boy, discipline and determination. The Christian life is not happy-clappy.

It's not rosy-posy. It's tough. It's hard. You're in a war. What do you expect? Spiritual warfare. You have an enemy that prowls around like a roaring lion ready to rip you to pieces.

[51 : 47] Yeah. You have a world that hates the god you love. Don't be shocked when it doesn't come up and put its arms around you and thank you for being godly.

Yeah. Worldly fables. Worldly ideas. The musings of men.

These are the ways that Satan propagates his lies. Well, the idea of pursuit here against all of this, the idea of pursuit is that of pursuing godliness.

Discipline in the NASB or train is the way, the word that the LSB uses, train or discipline, is the Greek word *gumnazo*. *Gumnazo*.

It's where we get our English word gymnasium. And it means to exercise vigorously. So to be a good servant, you have to be disciplined and determined to persist in your goal.

[52 : 54] Persevere in your spirit or your pursuit of the right. Now, what is the purpose of all of this? If we're going to put out that kind of holy sweat, what are we doing here?

What's the purpose of all that discipline effort? And it's very straightforward, isn't it? You've seen it. Godliness. Godliness. Godliness. Godlikeness. A disciplined pursuit of doing what is right in God's eyes is a lifestyle of being like God.

Wow. This is godliness. Godliness means that conduct of life which is according to the standard of the word of God. So we're to go after God's truth.

We're to train up ourselves in it. And a good servant will live in God's word to live out God's word. Now listen, you cannot live out God's word if you're not living in it. It's got to get in you in order to come out, right?

So put it in. Pastor John Stott has said, in contrast to godless myths, scripture is the most godly book that has ever been written.

[54 : 00] It's a book by God about God. It might even be termed the autobiography of God. Since in it he talks to us about himself. Consequently, we can't become familiar with this godly book without becoming godly ourselves.

Isn't that good? Nothing evokes the worship of God like the word of God. You want to be a more faithful servant? You want to be spiritually mature? You want to be a person who worships God

more often in the issues of life?

You need to be a student of the word. No way around it. Paul builds on his metaphor of exercise. He builds on his metaphor of discipline in verse 8.

And he says, exercise for the body is a good thing, but godliness is even better. And why is that? Because exercise for the body is what? It's limited.

Limited in its benefit to the here and now while God's truth, that spiritual exercise that you undergo as you take in God's word, that's beneficial for now and for hereafter.

[55 : 04] which is great. If you look at verse 8 with me, 1 Timothy 4 verse 8, bodily training is only of little profit, but godliness, godliness is profitable for all things since it holds promise for this present life and also for the life to come.

Train yourself, verse 7, train yourself for the purpose of godliness, godlikeness. being like the Lord. This is again why we talk about being conformed to Jesus as we minister the truth to each other. Now this is a really interesting way of pulling it all together as Paul comes to this idea of the point being pursuing godliness.

Worship and obey God in this life as well as worshipping God with a wholehearted effort. Strive. Strive. Move forward. I mentioned it a minute ago.

Just as you feed your physical body and you take in water for your physical body and you nourish it in that way to give it the fuel that it needs to function, in the same way, nourish your spiritual life in godliness with the water and the food that God has provided for you in the Bible.

[56 : 23] That disciplined effort and focus is going to require you to commit to work at it and in it. And so now we're speaking to all of us as we are tempted toward ease.

It's just a lot easier to let the Bible sit there and be involved in other things and I'll go to church on Sunday and Jeff will give me what I need. That's a bad idea.

That's a bad idea. Why? Because hopefully I'm giving you good stuff here from the scriptures because you need to protect yourself through the week and you need to be growing in the Lord through the week.

That's obvious, isn't it? Yeah. So it comes down to your faithfulness before the Lord. Your faithfulness. This is my faithfulness.

Your faithfulness is receiving the word implanted and you do that through the week to prepare you for what happens on Sunday. Everything that you're doing through the week is building up to where you'll be here Sunday and you'll be prepared to receive.

[57 : 27] Now, most of you know who've known me for a while, Suzanne and I have developed a routine many moons ago, especially when we had kids, where Saturday from about 3 p.m.

until Sunday morning, we were in hibernation. All right? We learned to protect that time. Now, as I've gotten older, it's all of Saturday.

I don't recover as fast as I used to. So all of Saturday is pretty much protected for me so that I'm ready on Sunday. I don't, I don't, if I work out in the yard, you know, even then I'm kind of careful about what I do and how I do it.

I don't want anything taking me in. You guys heard this. Did you listen to the sermon yet? You did? Did you hear my example in the first? Okay. Yeah, that was, I know, Maribi's going, yeah, yeah, we're going to talk about that.

No more dreams. No more dreams. Yeah, I know. That was crazy, crazy. But the point of my example from last, now all the people who weren't here are going to go, we've got to go listen what that is.

[58 : 30] Don't. Listen. The point of what I tried to tell you last week in that crazy, stupid dream that I had was there's such a priority in my life for being prepared to be in the pulpit on Sunday morning that I don't want anything getting in the way of that.

I don't want Jeff getting in the way of that. I'm just like you, man. I got stuff I want to do, too. But I can't let that get in the way of being faithful to God and loving you well.

Now, is that just for me? Is it not? Is it not incumbent upon you as a follower of Jesus? That you would never let anything get in the way of you being faithful to Christ and loving each other well? We tend to think of our privations as just that. I'm being denied something. But how much are you being denied if what you're saying no to helps you be more faithful to Christ?

Now, we just need to think about that. That is a question for people who are concerned about holiness and spiritual maturity. Where am I?

[59 : 53] Pursue the truth. Yeah, well, we've talked about that enough. All right. Let's do this one. Labor in the truth. Labor in the truth. It is a trust. Verse nine.

It is a trustworthy saying and deserving full acceptance. For it is for this we labor and strive because we fix our hope on the living God who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.

A lot to unpack here as I end. Listen, labor in the truth. To what extent should good servants labor in the truth?

Now, this is what I was telling you earlier was I was trying to say to, you know, there's no day off, man. Look. To the point of weariness and exhaustion.

Does it really say that? No, that's what it says. It's a trustworthy saying and deserving full acceptance for this we labor and strive. Labor and strive.

[60 : 52] Labor is the Greek word kopiao. Kopiao. To labor to the point of weariness. To exhaust oneself in toil. It speaks of sustained, disciplined effort.

That's how you grow spiritually. You won't grow without that. To the point of suffering and agonizing. Striving. Agonizomai.

It's where we get the English word agony. It means to engage in a struggle. Why do we labor and struggle in this manner? Why do we do that?

But we labor and strive because we desire to live godly in Christ Jesus. We desire to live godly in the Lord because we have our hope fixed on Him.

As we have our hope fixed on Him, we are motivated to live for Him. He's our hope. He's defining who I am and how I live and what I prioritize and value.

[61 : 49] I just want to be more like Jesus, man. As heavenly-minded people, we live to please the God of heaven and earth. So our hope is well placed.

He alone is the Savior. What does the Scripture say? He alone is the Savior of all men. So we're pointing all men to Him. He alone is the Savior of all men. So we point all men to Him.

And more precisely, more specifically, He's the Savior of all those who believe. What do we do with that? Listen, brothers and sisters, what does Paul mean as he writes this in the context of his instruction on being a faithful servant to God in His Word?

What does verse 10 have to do with that context? Well, keep in mind, we labor and strive in spiritual things for spiritual reasons, for spiritual purposes. What is that?

For godliness. To be godlike. And that's great gain. That's great gain for now, and that's great gain for later in eternity. Often enough, though, here's what happens, and here's where you and I can get discouraged.

[62 : 55] Often enough, we don't see the spiritual fruit of our hard work for Christ, do we? I once had a very wise pastor tell me in a meeting with other young pastors, and he was mentoring, he told us, just prepare yourself.

God will hide from you most of the effectiveness of your ministry. He will hide it from you. That's a good word.

I didn't expect to hear that. He will hide it to keep you from being puffed up and thinking that you can pull this off. But nevertheless, God will be working. You stay faithful to the Word, and God's Word will work.

So what does Paul mean by all of this? Our hope is not in what we can see, it's in what we know is true about God and His ways.

We know God is faithful and His Word is true. Amen? So we are witnesses to the fact that God is faithful to graciously save all people.

[63 : 59] Did you hear me? I'm just reading the Bible. What does it say? Who is the Savior of all men? Look, I can't, I'm not going to factor that out.

He is the Savior of all people, even for those people who refuse to know and worship Him. Say, wow, boy, is that really true?

Well, look, but in what way is this salvation true of unbelievers? Because that's who we're talking about when we say all men. We're talking about unbelievers in that statement, aren't we?

Well, here's what we know from the rest of Scripture. We know it's not true that every person believes and worships Christ and that every single person is eventually going to go to heaven.

Do we know that's the case? We know that to be the case, right? They're not. Because Scripture teaches us that, right? We do not believe in and we reject universalism.

[65 : 05] The idea that everyone is going to end up in heaven eventually, whether they believe in Christ or not. People who reject Jesus will be rejected by the Father in the judgment.

All right? So let me clarify it for you as we move to a close here. God is a Savior to all people from the teaching of Scripture in the sense that they experience God's temporal, that means this life, salvation.

Even in their disbelief and rejection of God, God is at work preserving and blessing His creation and each person is a work of God's creative power. They're part of the creation.

What are we saying? We're saying this. If God removed this protective care from our lives and from His creation, we would all perish. All of us.

In this way, everyone benefits from God's saving care for His world. Unbelievers benefit from God saving them from instantaneous death and judgment.

[66 : 12] They're saved by God in that way. That's very different from the salvation we enjoy as people who trust in Jesus, isn't it?

We're not just being saved in the here and now, are we? We're being saved from the judgment to come. Hallelujah. Now, that's very different from the salvation God provides for unbelievers, which is limited to this time, this life.

That's what we're saying. God is especially, I'll put it up here. God is especially the Savior of believers, the salvation that Jesus purchased for believers with His blood.

It involves both the temporal salvation of God in this life as He cares for us now as well as His eternal care in the life to come. It's special in that way, which is why Paul says, especially of believers.

He is the God of salvation, especially of believers in a special way, a unique way. And that's the way because that's what the rest of Scripture teaches.

[67 : 22] Well, let me end with this. As God's servants, our shared hope and labor are not in vain. Folks, I'd always want to leave you encouraged. What you strive and labor for in the Lord, what you deal with in your flesh, how you prepare yourself to be a useful servant of Jesus day in and day out, ready with a word of love and encouragement and mercy, repenting of your sins that draw you away from that kind of a life.

That's not in vain. That's all for a purpose. Look at how we'll end with this. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

Let's pray together. Father, we have sought to read from your book of 1 Timothy and bring it into our time and understand what it meant in that time as Paul confronted the false teachers, Lord, as Paul confronted the false doctrine that Satan was putting out to the church through these men. and we have set our hearts to know the truth. We have set our hearts to understand what the pure words of Jesus are for us, what they should mean to us and how we should treasure them and strive to know them and to live them out.

And so the goal of our instruction, Father, as you have told us, is that we would be people who love one another, who love the unlovely, who are willing to wade into the mess of the messy lives of people all around us and bring the hope of Jesus to them.

[69 : 11] And so I pray that you would help us to be a sacrificial and selfless people in those ways, never considering that it is a sacrifice for us to live like that, but to consider it our privilege and responsibility and our love for you.

Thank you for your word and for sound words, for pure doctrine. And I thank you, Greg thanks you, that we are serving among a people who want to hear the truth and come week after week to sit down and be edified, built up and encouraged in taking that truth into their everyday lives.

We pray that we will be faithful and loving and bring much glory to Jesus. In his name we pray, Amen.