

2 Timothy 3:15-4:5
A Disciple is Grounded in the Scriptures

This morning's topic should frankly be self-explanatory

- The importance of the Word of God

But sadly, the Scriptures are oftentimes neglected, forgotten, or ignored

- We might expect that from unbelievers
- But this same attitude sometimes manifests itself from those who profess to be Christians

How often do you read the Word of God?

- This helps you to see the value that you place upon the Holy Scriptures

As we look at Scripture itself, we see how others valued and prized the Word of God

- The LORD told Joshua, “**This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success**” (Joshua 1:8)
- “**Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel**” (Ezra 7:10)
- Jesus' words are piercing, “**MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD**” (Mt 4:4)
- Jesus prayed this for His disciples, “**Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth**” (John 17:17)
- What is said of the Bereans? “**Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so**” (Acts 17:11)
- Paul exhorted the churches in Colossae, “**Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God**” (Col 3:16)
- The book of Revelation opens with these words, “**Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near**” (Rev 1:3)

The longest chapter in the Bible extols, magnifies, and highlights the value of the Word of God

- Psalm 119, with its 176 verses, is a literary masterpiece
- It brings attention to the joy and blessings of being Word-filled

What do you think Satan wants us to do with the Word of God?

- Read it? (no)
- Study it? (no)
- Memorize it? (no)

J.I. Packer records these sobering words

- “**If I were the devil, one of my first aims would be to stop folk from digging into the Bible. Knowing that it is the Word of God, teaching men to know and love and serve the God of the Word, I should do all I could to surround it with the spiritual equivalent of pits, thorn hedges, and man traps, to frighten people off...At all costs I should want to keep them from using their minds in a disciplined way to get the measure of its message.**”¹

¹ J.I. Packer, foreword to R.C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*, 9-10.

The apostle Paul knew the value of God's Word

- He had grown up in a strict Jewish home as a Pharisee
- He knew the Old Testament writings

But when God saved him on the Damascus road, that knowledge was ignited

- He understood its meaning

As an apostle, Paul was used to record much of the New Testament

- Throughout his writings, he continually points to the Bible as the authority for the believer

In writing to young Timothy, Paul writes in 1 Timothy, “**Until I come, give attention to the *public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching***” (4:13)

- Do you hear the emphasis on the Word of God?

In the Pastoral Epistles – 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus – Paul writes to Timothy and Titus about important pastoral duties

- One of the recurring themes is the importance of staying true to the Word of God

This morning, I want us to look at a very familiar passage of Scripture

- One that you may have memorized before

But I would challenge you this morning with this thought

- Don't think of this Text as applying only to pastors
- Think of this Text as it applies to you

Let's read 2 Timothy 3:15-4:5

This passage gives us four (4) overall purposes of the Word of God

- Sinners are led to salvation (3:15)
- Believers are equipped for good works (3:16-17)
- Pastors are charged with an eternal task (4:1-2)
- Churches are guarded from theological error (4:3-5)

I. Sinners are led to salvation (3:15)

3:15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

We have to keep in mind the big picture of 2 Timothy

- This is Paul's “swan song”

This is the last known writing from the hand of the apostle Paul before his execution

- The apostle anticipated being killed for preaching Christ

That should sober us

- What would be on your mind if you knew you would die soon?

Would your tone and selection of words change?

- What would you tell those around you?

Paul's words are filled with meaning

- This was no time for triviality

The apostle reminds his young protégé of the essential truths of ministry

- Serving with a clean conscience
- Refusing to be ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ
- Being willing to suffer
- Refuting false teachers and teachings
- Fleeing from youthful lusts

In 2 Timothy 3, Paul begins to build up to the apex of this book

- He does so by reminding Timothy of his spiritual heritage

Paul writes, “**from childhood you have known the sacred writings**”

- From an early age, Timothy had been taught the truth of God's Word

Back in 2 Timothy 1:5, Paul wrote, “**I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that *it is* in you as well**”

- Godly grandmother
- Godly mother

Timothy's father was an unbelieving Greek (Acts 16:1)

- So he lacked the paternal godly example

On the maternal side, however, Timothy had a wonderful heritage

- They taught him the “**sacred writings**”

This was a term for the Old Testament²

- “**sacred**” – Divine source
- “**writings**” – written, not just verbal

These sacred writings are “**able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus**”

- The Scriptures give “**wisdom**”
- The skill to live a life that is pleasing to God

The Scriptures also point the sinner to salvation

- This salvation is “**through faith...in Christ Jesus**”

On the human side, there must be faith exercised

- Trust, reliance
- Of course, this is a gift of God (Eph 2:8-9)

The object of faith is none other than Jesus Christ

- “**there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved**” (Acts 4:12)

² John Kitchen, *The Pastoral Epistles for Pastors*, 415.

Parents, it is critical that you teach your children the Word of God

- Spend time reading the Bible
- Spend time discussing the Bible

Remember what Paul says in Romans 10:17, “**So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ**”

- Are we pointing our children to Christ?

- **Sinners are led to salvation (3:15)**

II. Believers are equipped for good works (3:16-17)

3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness:

Paul then moves to discuss the authority of the Scriptures that Timothy had learned at an early age

- These are critical verses on the subject of inspiration and authority

Sadly, some deny that the Bible has its source in God

- They believe that a group of men just sat down and penned the words themselves

Paul debunks that myth

- He writes, “**All Scripture is inspired by God**”

Literally, all Scripture is God-breathed

- It is the product of God’s own words

Peter would say, “**no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God**” (2 Pet 1:20b-21)

- Men were “moved by the Holy Spirit”
- The result is God’s own words, not the words of men

As the Divine word of God, the Scriptures have Divine authority

- They are not up for debate
- They are not up for speculation

What the Bible says, God says!

- The Word of God is just that – the Word of God!

Not only are the Scriptures “**inspired**”

- They are also “**profitable**”

The Bible is beneficial in many ways³

- It is helpful
- It is useful

³ Kitchen, 420.

Paul lists four (4) areas in which the Bible proves itself to be profitable

- Teaching
- Reproof
- Correction
- Training in righteousness

“teaching” is the broadest of the terms

- Scriptures imparts the knowledge that we need

“reproof”

- Another word might be correction or refuting of error
- Scripture warns us against wrong thinking and behavior
- Dangers must be pointed out
- False teachers must be exposed

“correction”

- This is the positive counterpart to reproof
- People must be pointed to the right/correct path
- The goal here is to restore or improve that which was lacking⁴

“training in righteousness”

- This word is used of a father’s discipline⁵
- Every believer needs training
- The Word of God accomplishes this feat

Do you see what Paul says about the Word of God?

- It covers every area of our lives!
- It is all-encompassing

There is not an area of our lives that the Word of God doesn’t address

- If not specifically, there are principles that deal with every issue of life

“His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence” (2 Pet 1:3)

- We have everything we need for “life and godliness”

3:17 that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

When the Scriptures are given full-reign in the life of a believer, the result is astonishing

- “the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work”

The technical term “man of God” refers to a pastor or prophet

- A person who speaks for God
- A person who speaks forth God’s Word

⁴ Ibid., 421.

⁵ Ibid., 421.

But think about this

- If the Word of God is able to make the man of God adequate, then how much more can it make every Christian adequate?
- It's an argument from greater to lesser

Furthermore, the Word of God equips the man of God “for every good work”

- It gives him the tools to discharge his ministry
- The pastor is fully outfitted for the task at hand

Again, by way of implication, the Word of God is able to equip every believer for good works

In Ephesians 2:10, Paul writes, “we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them”

- Every believer has “good works” in which to carry out
- The Word of God gives us the means to fulfill these

These are remarkable promises

- The Scriptures are Divine in nature
- They are useful and beneficial for every area of the believer's life
- They equip pastors and believers for the good works which God has already ordained

In light of these promises, then, here is the million dollar question

- Why do we neglect the Scriptures so much?
- Why do we not spend more time in the Word than we do?

I would submit that one potential answer is quite simple, yet profound

- We don't really believe these promises

If someone offered to pay you \$1000 for every hour that you spend in the Bible, would your Bible reading habits change?

- I would guess that they would

But the reality is that the benefits of spending time in the Word of God far outweigh \$1000/hour

- The rewards are spiritual in nature
- The rewards are mostly invisible

Do you want to be led to salvation?

- Do you want to be equipped for good works?

Then there is only way in which this can be accomplished

- Read the Word of God
- Immerse yourself into the study of God's Word

Don't remain a spiritual baby

- Don't become spiritually stagnant!
- **Sinners are led to salvation (3:15)**
- **Believers are equipped for good works (3:16-17)**

III. Pastors are charged with an eternal task (4:1-2)

4:1 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 and His kingdom:

Having established the foundation of God's Word, Paul then becomes more direct with Timothy

- He moves from the authority of the Scriptures to the solemn responsibilities that Timothy has in pastoral ministry

To underscore the importance of Timothy's task, Paul does something unique

- He binds Timothy under an oath
- The language here is striking

Listen to these words once again, "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 and His kingdom"

Paul commands that Timothy understand the gravity of his task

- The apostle does so "in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus"

In other words, God is looking, listening, and evaluating

- Ministry is done first and foremost for Him
- He is our Audience!

Christ Jesus was the object of our faith, according to 2 Timothy 3:15

- Now He is the one who will "judge the living and the dead"
- He alone has this authority and responsibility

Every single person falls into one of these two categories

- You are either living
- Or you are dead!

As if this isn't sobering enough, Paul adds the phrase, "and by His appearing and His kingdom"

- In other words, Christ is coming back!
- Christ is establishing His kingdom!

Jesus isn't just Lord and Savior

- He is Head over the Church
- He is the Groom of the Church
- He is the King of Kings

Timothy needed to feel this weight of pastoral ministry

- It isn't something to be taken lightly

Timothy couldn't redefine what it means to be a pastor

- He must fully discharge his responsibilities

Nothing more

- Nothing less

Just what was expected of Timothy?

- God doesn't leave that to guesswork

In verse 2, Paul spells out 5 essential requirements of every faithful pastor

4:2 preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

Most of us are familiar with the command “**preach the Word**” in verse 2

- But I would guess that most of you don't realize that there are more commands than that in these two verses

As a matter of fact, there are 5 commands in 2 Timothy 4:1-2

- Preach the Word
- Be ready
- Reprove
- Rebuke
- Exhort

Paul didn't give Timothy one command

- Paul gave him five
- That's because all of these are important and essential to pastoral ministry

First, Timothy was to “**preach the Word**”

- This is the word for a herald to take an official word to others
- Timothy was to herald “**the Word**” – the Word which has its source and origin from God Himself
- This provides the authority needed for proclaiming the Word of God⁶

Second, Timothy was to “**be ready in season *and* out of season**”

- Timothy must never be caught off guard
- He was to be prepared no matter the season

Third, Timothy was to “**reprove**”

- Sin must be addressed so that repentance can be achieved⁷
- Sin can't be tolerated!
- This may not be popular, but it is a needed part of pastoral ministry

Fourth, Timothy was to “**rebuke**”

- Sometimes a stern reprimand is called for
- Sin can't be tolerated; it must be dealt with

Fifth, Timothy was to “**exhort**”

- There must be tender, fatherly admonition and exhortation
- This is the coming alongside of believers, helping them toward obedience

⁶ Kitchen, 429.

⁷ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary, Exposition of Thessalonians, the Pastorals, and Hebrews*, 310-11.

To provide a sense of balance to these five imperatives, Paul writes, “with great patience and instruction”

- In other words, pastoral ministry isn't to be brash and rough
- Pastoral ministry is to be demonstrated by “great patience and instruction”

Pastoral ministry is no place for impatient men

- God is incredibly patient toward those who are His
- Pastors must be incredibly patient toward God's people

My prayer is that God may give some of you the desire to be elders

- Elders are not policy makers for the church
- Elders are not board members who simply talk business matters for the church

Elders are pastors

- Elders are shepherds
- Elders are the men charged with spiritual leadership and oversight of the church

It is a weighty task

- It is not to be taken lightly

Pastors deal with eternal matters

- But praise God for His grace
- Praise God for giving His Scriptures!

- **Sinners are led to salvation (3:15)**
- **Believers are equipped for good works (3:16-17)**
- **Pastors are charged with an eternal task (4:1-2)**

IV. Churches are guarded from theological error (4:3-5)

4:3 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;

Let's review what we have seen thus far

- Through the Scriptures, sinners are confronted in their sins and led to salvation
- Through the Scriptures, believers are able to teach, reprove, correct, and train others in righteousness
- Through the Scriptures, the believer is fully equipped for every good work
- Through the Scriptures, pastors are given multiple commands in order to round out their ministry

Wouldn't it be nice if everyone understood this?

- Wouldn't it be nice if everyone embraced this?

The reality is that not everyone wants to hear such teaching

- 2 Timothy 4:3-4 deal with that very topic

Paul warns Timothy, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine”

- That warning was sounded 2000 years ago
- And it is just as important today

There will be those who simply don't want "sound" doctrine

- Don't want healthy teaching
- Don't want accurate teaching

Instead, they will want "their ears tickled"

- They don't want confrontational ministry
- They prefer light, easy-going talk

The prophet Jeremiah voiced these words, "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule on their *own* authority; and My people love it so!" (Jer 5:31)

Furthermore, "they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires"

- They don't want anyone to rebuke them
- They don't want anyone to correct them
- They don't want anyone to confront them

No, no, no

- They want acceptance
- They want someone to tell them, "You are ok spiritually."

4:4 and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.

The result of this mentality is doubly devastating

- They "will turn away their ears from the truth"
- They "will turn aside to myths"

The visual picture is staggering

- They are turning AWAY from the truth (walking toward error)
- They are turning ASIDE to myths (preferring fairy tales to the meat of God's Word)

Why are they doing this?

- Because this is what they want
- This is what they crave

I pray that this attitude NEVER characterizes Copperfield Bible Church

- May this church proclaim sound doctrine

4:5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Having discussed what Timothy is NOT to do, the apostle circles the runway one last time

- He gives a series of rapid-fire commands for Timothy

There are four imperatives in verse 5 alone!

- Be sober
- Endure hardship
- Do the work of an evangelist
- Fulfill your ministry

First, Timothy is to “be sober in all things”

- To be level-headed
- To be self-controlled⁸

Second, Timothy is to “endure hardship”

- Ministry is not an easy task
- The language is that of a military struggle
- “Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with *me* in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God” (2 Tim 1:8)

Third, Timothy is to “do the work of an evangelist”

- Timothy was a local church pastor, not an evangelist
- But this didn’t excuse him from being faithful in proclaiming Christ to unbelievers

Fourth, Timothy is to “fulfill [his] ministry”

- This is a broad term, highlighting the diversity of elements that comprise pastoral ministry for Timothy
- God doesn’t call everyone to the office of pastor
- But God does call every believer to serve

These are the words of a dying man

- A man who has been in the trenches for many years
- A man who is trying to remind Timothy of the seriousness task of pastoral ministry

We have examined four (4) overall purposes of the Word of God this morning

- Sinners are led to salvation (3:15)
- Believers are equipped for good works (3:16-17)
- Preachers are charged with an eternal task (4:1-2)
- Churches are guarded from theological error (4:3-5)

This isn’t exhaustive

- There are many other purposes which the Word of God accomplishes that we didn’t discuss

It is vitally important that you be in the Word on a regular basis

- Reading it
- Meditating upon it
- Studying it
- Memorizing it

Let me quote from Geoffrey Thomas, a Welsh pastor

- “Do not expect to master the Bible in a day, or a month, or a year. Rather expect often to be puzzled by its contents. It is not all equally clear. Great men of God often feel like absolute novices when they read the Word. The apostle Peter said that there were some things hard to understand in the epistles of Paul (2 Peter 3:16). I am glad he wrote those words because I have felt that often. So do not expect always to get an emotional charge or a feeling of quiet peace when you read the Bible. By the grace of God you may expect that to be a frequent experience, but often you will get no emotional response at all. Let the Word break over your heart and mind again and again as the years go by, and imperceptibly there will come great changes in your attitude and outlook and conduct. You will probably be the last to recognize these. Often you will feel very, very small, because increasingly the God of the Bible will become to you wonderfully great. So go on reading it until you can read no longer, and then you will

⁸ Ralph Earle, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 2 Timothy, 411.

not need the Bible any more, because when your eyes close for the last time in death, and never again read the Word of God in Scripture you will open them to the Word of God in the flesh, that same Jesus of the Bible whom you have known for so long, standing before you to take you for ever to His eternal home.”⁹

This passage gives us four (4) overall purposes of the Word of God

- Sinners are led to salvation (3:15)
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Are you an unbeliever?

- Then the Word of God can lead you to salvation
- You must read it
- You can't be saved apart from the Word of God

Are you a believer?

- Then the Word of God will equip you for every good work which the Lord has for you
- But you can't ignore the Word of God and expect God's blessings

Are you a pastor?

- Then you are charged with more than just teaching
- You are called to shepherd the flock of God, being ready to reprove, rebuke, and exhort – all with great patience and instruction

Are you a part of this church?

- Then you are called upon to fight against the temptation for your ears to be tickled
- You must treasure the Word of God

No matter who you are this morning, you need the Word of God

- Commit yourself to its daily reading, study, meditation, and memorization

⁹ Geoffrey Thomas, *Reading the Bible*, 22.