

**Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

## **Preaching the Word in and Out-of-Season Culture**

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:1-4:4

Code: 80-226

The Lord has a wonderful way of guiding and directing our lives providentially, bringing us to the place He wants us to be. I really feel tonight that what I want to share with you is something that has been impressed upon my heart. We have been in a series on Genesis. We finished Genesis 4. I really only intended to do Genesis 1 and 2 and then I decided to do 3 and then I decided to do 4...and I think I'll go back and do 5 and 6 and keep going. But, I knew there would be many guests with us this weekend because of the special event last night, and I didn't feel that it would be fair to jump into the midst of the line of Seth in Genesis 5 without any prior background in Genesis. And because my heart has been so exercised about this matter of preaching the truth, I felt I wanted to draw your attention to a great text of Scripture. And when I was asked this week what I was going to preach on, I said I'm going to preach on why I am committed on preaching the Word of God. I gave you a little bit of that this morning in our discussions about deliverance. It was largely a digression, I confess, this morning, but next week we'll get back into it. And I think probably next week and the week after and we'll have that series finished.

But tonight I want to take this discussion this morning about the priority of preaching the Bible, preaching the Word of God a little bit further and I want you to open your Bible to 2 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 2 which will serve as an initial verse to begin our look into God's Word tonight. Second Timothy chapter 4 and verse 2, familiar words, "Preach the Word. Be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction."

That one brief passage defines biblical ministry in one central command...preach the Word. That is consistent with 1 Timothy chapter 3 where it says that overseers or elders or pastors, one and the same, are to have one skill. There are a lot of spiritual qualifications, there's only one skill, only one spiritual skill, one spiritual gift that is mandated and that is that pastors, preachers, overseers are to be didaktikos, is the Greek word, skilled in preaching and teaching. That is because that's what we do, we are preachers of the Word. That is our calling. That is our mandate.

And you will notice that the time for this preaching is given, "in season and out of season." Now somebody might ask the question: Well, what does that mean? What is the seasons? We know what's in season and out of season? We might debate exactly what Paul had in mind, but we cannot debate that there are only two possibilities. You can either be in season or out of season. What he is simply saying is, all the time...all the time. When it seems to be popular and when it is unpopular. When it is seasonable and when it is unseasonable.

One of the most prolific teachers of expository preaching, I think he taught about 30 or 35 years, taught and trained many Bible expositors, some few years ago announced that this was not the day for expository preaching. And I was shocked to hear that cause I guess that was a revelation that this was a cultural mandate rather than a biblical one. It's always the season for preaching the Word...in season, out of season.

The time then is clear. The tone is clear. There is a negative tone in this preaching, reproof and rebuke. That just goes with it. If you're going to preach the Word, it has warnings, it has rebukes, it has reproof. And there's a positive tone, exhorting with great patience and instruction. So there is that negative of reproof and rebuke. There is that positive of exhortation or counsel patiently done and instruction or teaching. This is our mandate. This is what we do.

People are starving for this. Sadly, they don't know it. There are people in churches starving for this, but they don't know it because they've never tasted it. Imagine starving for the Word of God and not knowing what you're starving for until you hear it. Many of you people are in that group, aren't you? You were hungry for the Word, you didn't know it until you heard it and your heart jumped and your mind was open. And you're still feasting on the Word.

And so, we preach the Word all the time with a negative emphasis when it calls for that, reproving and rebuking. Positive emphasis when it calls for that of exhorting and instructing. Martin Luther said, "The highest worship of God is the preaching of the Word." The highest worship of God is the preaching of the Word.

I remember years ago when I was asked very often, they don't ask me these things too much anymore, but people used to say to me, "If you preach an hour, how do you have time for worship?" And I would sometimes say, "If you don't preach an hour, how do your people know what worship is?" Our mandate is not from the culture, it's from the God of heaven. And in Titus chapter 2 verse 15 we are told to speak, to exhort, that's the positive, to reprove, that's the negative, with all authority and let no one evade you, no one try to think their way around it.

Now the question comes, "Why is this important?" You must know that I'm compelled to do this, to preach with authority the Word of God all the time, whether it's seasonable or not, whether it's popular or not. Years ago it was very popular to do this, and now it's not. You well know that I have reprovved and rebuked you with a negative emphasis when that is the Word of God. I have also come to you with comfort, encouragement and instruction. I do this and this is all I do and I tell you, this is all that any man of God should do because this is a command. But why is it important?

Five compelling reasons I want to give you...five compelling reasons why we must preach the Word. Let's go back to chapter 3 to find the first one. Obviously I cannot explicitly deal with all the details in

this entire section of Scripture, but I'm going to pull your attention toward some very important ones.

The first reason that we preach the Word is because of the danger of the seasons...because of the danger of the seasons. Please notice chapter 3 verse 1. Now a little bit of background. Paul says, "Realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come." To whom is he writing? Timothy, that's clear. He addresses Timothy at the very beginning. Why is he writing to Timothy? Because this is the last letter he will ever write. He wrote 1 Timothy, then he wrote Titus and then the last letter ever written by the Apostle Paul is 2 Timothy. He is a prisoner. He's about to be executed. And there is a man who is to take his place, his son in the faith, Timothy. Back in chapter 2 verse 1 he calls him "my son." Timothy is struggling with persecution, struggling with hostility from the church. He is in the church at Ephesus and they're giving him a bad time. And Timothy is in a very vulnerable spot. It's a very dangerous time for Timothy.

Back in chapter 1 verse 6 Paul says, "Kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you." Timothy is actually beginning to be unfaithful to preach with Word. Why? Because he's getting criticized by people in the church and persecuted by people outside the church. In verse 7 he says, "God hasn't given us a spirit of cowardice." This is a frightening moment. Here is the Apostle Paul at the end of his life. He's put years of investment in this young man. He put him in the church at Ephesus, a very difficult place but a very necessary place, really the mother church of all the churches of Asia Minor. He put him there to straighten out some things. It hasn't gone so well. The church has attacked him and the world around has attacked him and he's beginning to falter. And he tells him to stir up the gift of God. He tells him not to be a coward. In verse 8 he says, "Don't be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord." Can you imagine Timothy, the disciple of Paul, the protege of Paul, the successor to Paul, the one who will take the mantle of ministry and carry on the work of the great apostle being ashamed of the Lord?

Then in verse 13 he tells him, "Retain the standard of sound words, hold on to sound doctrine." This is frightening stuff, folks. Here is a man, the great Apostle Paul into his sixties, the end of his life. He's given all these years to the establishment of the church and the proclamation of truth. He is passing the mantle to Timothy and Timothy's beginning to show signs of failure and weakness. He calls him to stir up the gift, not to be a coward, not to be ashamed and amazingly to hold on to sound doctrine. Because what happens under pressure is, you begin to soften your message.

In verse 14 he says, "Guard through the Holy Spirit which dwells in us the treasure." What's that? "The truth that's been entrusted to you." Verse 15 he says, "Don't you know, aren't you aware that everybody in Asia has turned away from me?" Please don't add your name to that list.

This is a frightening time. And after those statements in chapter 1 he comes to chapter 2 and says, "Be strong, my son, be strong." I'm counting on you. And then in chapter 3 he says, "Realize this, in the last days difficult times will come." It isn't going to be easy, Timothy. It isn't going to be easy, but

you can't compromise, you can't get sidetracked, you can't bail out. You can't become ashamed. You can't become a coward. You can't alter your message. You can't downgrade the truth just because it's difficult.

And then in chapter 4 he sort of reaches a crescendo and says, "Preach the Word all the time whether it's well received or not received at all, whether it's popular or unpopular, whether it brings you accolades or execution." And here's why, chapter 3 verse 1, "Because these are difficult times," and let me translate that for you, "dangerous epochs." The word for time here is not *chronos*, chronology, it's *kairos*, epochs, seasons. And the word "difficult" or "dangerous" is savage, perilous. He is saying you must preach the Word, Timothy, because of the danger of the seasons. Savage seasons threaten the life of the church in these last days. And by the way, the last days refers to the time since the coming of Jesus. When Jesus came He inaugurated, He initiated the last days, the days of Messiah. The last days are synonymous with the days of Messiah. He came and initiated those days. He was rejected. He went back to glory. He'll come again to establish His Kingdom. But these are the last days. The Apostle John writes, "It is the last time." Peter writes that "Christ has appeared at the end of the age."

Down in verse 13 of this chapter he says, "Evil men during these dangerous epochs will proceed from bad to worse. It's going to get worse and worse and worse in these last days. You know, Paul knew what he was saying by the inspiration of the Spirit of God. He described something of the character of people in these days, they will be self-lovers, verse 2, money lovers, boastful, arrogant revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy. And this is one of those favorite lists of Paul as he just chronicles iniquities...unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, and he goes on down.

But in all of this, they will be religious. They will have a form of godliness, verse 5, without the power. They will enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses. They will masquerade as learned men, always learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. They will be like those false religious people, Jannes and Jambres, who in Egypt opposed Moses. They will oppose the truth. They will be men of depraved mind, rejected as regards the true faith. They will be false teachers. They will be filled with sin. They pose the danger to the church. The great danger to the church is not just sin, it is sinful false teachers masquerading as representatives of God, having a form of godliness without power, always passing themselves off as learned, but never coming to the knowledge of the truth. They will oppose the truth, they will reject the faith. They pose the danger. He's talking about the character, the conduct, systems of false teachers. They will bring dangerous seasons.

Can I give you a little history? Well, the Apostle under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was giving a warning that we have seen played out in history...the damnable epochs in the church's history define the fulfillment of this prophecy. The first dangerous epoch that came into the life of the church on a

massive scale was sacramentalism. That is the idea that somehow you connect with God through a mechanical means, some kind of religious ceremony. It is salvation by automatic ritual.

The Church became a surrogate Christ and people were connected to a system but not to Christ. Sacramentalism became the enemy of the true gospel, became the enemy of grace and the enemy of faith and the enemy of Christ and the enemy of the Bible and the enemy of the Holy Spirit and the enemy of God. True believers were massacred by that sacramental system and it was a grave danger that lasted all the way to 1500. There was a remnant of true believers through that history. There were people called Waldensians and other names of groups that were the remnant of true believers through that dangerous epoch of sacramentalism. But it corrupted the Christian faith. It corrupted the understanding of the Word of God, corrupted the church which corruption, by the way, didn't end in 1500, we still have it today, don't we?

Sacramentalism came like all these dangerous epochs and stayed...stayed, still here. A recent trip through Italy, I saw it in full force. Other forms of sacramentalism which believe that somehow you're connected to God through a ceremony or a ritual or beads or prayers or candles or indulgences. When I was in Italy, it was the year 2000 Millennial Celebration of the Roman Catholic Church and certain cathedrals that we visited had doors and they were absolution doors. If you went through that door you got an indulgence for your sins, forgiveness, freedom to sin is provided if you went through the doors. The more doors you went through, the more indulgences you got. And those doors, by the way, were marked so the people didn't go through the wrong door.

It was in the Reformation, 1500, that sacramentalism was given a tremendous blow in the Reformation. As we said this morning, this is Reformation Sunday in the commemoration of the church. And Luther nailed his thesis on the door of the church at Wittenberg and launched the great Reformation.

But it wasn't long after that, sad to say, the eighteenth century, there came the second dangerous epoch in the life of the church, rationalism. Coming out of the Dark Ages of sacramentalism when the Roman Catholic system oppressed people and told people that only the Church had the true knowledge, man after the back of the sacramental power was broken, after the time of the Reformation, man began to feel his freedom a little bit. And out of that came the Renaissance and man began to discover something of the image of God in him, and something of the incredible creativity that he had and something of his intellectual capabilities and began to develop all kinds of skills.

And out of the Reformation came the Renaissance and out of that came the enlightenment and out of that came the Industrial Revolution and man began to see what a mind he had. And out of that came Rationalism. And in the eighteenth century, man decided that he was God, for all intents and purposes, and that he could only believe what was rational. And anything that wasn't rational or

reasonable to him should be rejected. Man placed himself above God, human reason above Scripture. And rationalism came into the church. Rationalism corrupted the church, corrupted the Protestant church, corrupted the church that came out of the Reformation. Rationalism came into the church. The higher critical theory came into the church. They questioned the authorship of the Bible authors. They questioned the inspiration. They questioned the truth of Scripture. They questioned anything and everything in the Bible. One European scholar, one rationalist scholar decided when it was all said and done there was 26 verses that were true in the whole Bible.

Out of that came old liberalism, new liberalism, neo-orthodoxy. I remember when I went to St. Andrews with Eric Alexander, the third oldest university in the U.K. at Oxford, Cambridge and St. Andrews, an incredible place. I wanted to go to Saints Alvader's(?) Chapel because they have John Knox's pulpit there, the great preacher of the Scottish Reformation. And I wanted to see his pulpit, I wanted to stand in his pulpit. I stood in some amazing pulpits, John Calvin's and John Knox, maybe a little of their power would rub off on me. I'm surprised either of those pulpits are still standing the way they beat on them. John Knox's pulpit was in St. Andrews at Saints Alvader's Chapel and I just stood there and my eyes just filled with tears, my heart's in my throat imagining him stepping in to that Roman Catholic bastion and preaching the Reformation.

I walk out of that place and I go across the little street there and in the cobblestones are some initials. And I find a little plaque and the initials are the initials of three students in their teen-aged years...three students at St. Andrews University who believed the Reformation gospel and were on that spot burned at the stake by the Church. And there is a memorial right behind the first tee, you've seen the St. Andrews Golf Course? You've seen the Royal and Ancient Club behind it, that old building, right behind that is a great monument to those three boys, really, by our standards, but men by every standard. It's called "The Martyr's Memorial." They died because they believed in the Reformation faith in their teen-aged years, they were burned at the stake.

You keep walking from Saints Alvader's Chapel where John Knox preached Reformation truth, you walk across past the pub, right next to the initials in the cobblestones, you walk across the street you're in the School of Theology at St. Andrews University, Protestant university by the power of John Knox and the power of God. Scotland went from Catholicism to Protestantism. You can go in to St. Andrews and you won't find one person teaching there who believes the Bible. And they walk every day out of the School of Theology across the martyr's initials into the pub. That's the legacy of liberalism. That's dangerous stuff.

The third dangerous season, dangerous epoch that came in the life of the church I guess we could call orthodoxism. It came in the nineteenth century. By the nineteenth century had mass-printed Bibles and they were being spread all over the western world. We think about America was founded by Pilgrim who wanted religious freedom, but, you know, it didn't take very long until liberalism had corrupted all the institutions that they had started. There were mass-printing Bibles but people didn't

believe it, and there was kind of a dead, cold indifference to the Word of God and a lack of zeal and a shallow almost non-existent spirituality. And that's where you have something like Jonathan Edwards preaching powerfully The Great Awakening, preaching God in his church at North Hampton.

And at the end of those years of hearing the greatest preacher that ever lived in America, maybe the greatest, one of the three or four great minds in the history of America, certainly one of the three or four greatest writers, they heard the great Jonathan Edwards preach at the end of which they asked him to leave the church. They kicked him out of the church. You know why? Because he said that it should be required that a person make a public confession of faith in Jesus Christ before they take the Lord's table. That's not a very extreme view, is it? They threw him out. They tried to ruin his reputation so that no other church would have him as a pastor. And he wound up teaching 15 Indians or 18 Indians cause he was so struck by the power of the ministry of David Brainard, the missionary to the Indians who died at the age of 29. I'm reading his biography right now.

Some people regrouped and asked Jonathan Edwards if he would become the president of the college of New Jersey, later known as Princeton. He felt himself too humbled and too unworthy for that but finally accepted.

Those people had Bibles. They had Bible preaching, but it was a cold and dead orthodoxy...dangerous stuff. It's still around...people with the Bible in the pew, talk the orthodox talk, don't know the true God.

Follow the history of the church a little bit in Europe particularly and even over here, the church became politicized and you have the dangerous season called Politicism, twentieth century. The church gets politicized. Even Hitler started the German Christian Faith Movement, did you know that? Did you know that Adolph Hitler equated Naziism with Christianity?

And then came the social gospel and reconstructionism and today liberation theology, all kinds of politicized forms of Christianity...even some of the bizarre kind of religious rite that we have in our own country. That's a danger to the church. Our message is not political, folks, it's redemptive.

Now we move in to the 1950's and we get ecumenism, that's the next danger. Notice they come faster. The first one took about 1200 years, the next one a few hundred years, and now they're coming rapidly. Why? Because as mass communication and mass transportation begins to crank up, movements come and go faster. And you have the 1950's and in comes eccumenism, unity without doctrine, sentimentality, tolerance of error, disdain of sound teaching, lack of discernment. And the ecumenical movement just ripped and shredded the church in the U.K. particularly and in the United States.

And then we came in to the 1960's and the next dangerous season started. It started right here in Van Nuys, California at an Episcopal church called the Charismatic Movement. And that is the dangerous season of experientialism where truth is defined by one's experience. Truth from feeling, from revelations, from voices, from visions, from prophecies, from intuition. As one lady said to me years ago, "I don't really care what the Bible says, I know what Jesus told me." The 1960's gave birth to experientialism.

And, you know, none of these go away. We still have sacramentalism. We still have rationalism. Liberalism is still out there. We still have orthodoxism, that dead, cold orthodoxy. We still have people working very hard to create a politicized kind of Christianity that exists in some forms, even in Europe, in England and in Germany and other places, a kind of politicized national Protestantism. We still have ecumenism, people trying to bring about unity without dogma. That's now invaded evangelicalism. We've been talking about that on Sunday mornings. We still have experientialism running rampant, running wild like a fire that nobody wants to put out. Everybody who wants to can rise up and say, "God told them this...and God told them that."

In the 1980's came subjectivism, the next dangerous epoch. And by that I mean where a man began to look inward. That was psychology. And the 80's psychology came running into the church as the new paradigm of sanctification.

I've been around through some of these...you know, some advantages to being old. I remember going to a pastors' conference and I said, "I want to tell you something. The Holy Spirit hasn't needed psychology in the past, and He doesn't need it now. The Holy Spirit was able to accomplish the work of God before Sigmund Freud about 125 years ago who was an atheistic Jew who had invented psychology."

And I said, "I just want you to know that the paradigm for salvation and sanctification is the Word of God, not human psychology." And I thought, you know, I'm in safe ground...I was literally attacked on the spot by a missionary who stood up and said, "I believe the Holy Spirit ultimately does the work of sanctification but psychology is necessary to prepare people for that."

To which I replied, I remember the line because I've thought about it often, I said, "Oh, so you're saying the Holy Spirit can do His work if He can just get jump started by Sigmund Freud or Karl(?) Rogers or Jung or some variation. What happened in the movement of psychology, it swept into the church. Everywhere I went they wanted me to talk about it. I went to the Master's College, I eliminated the psychology department. It's gone. (Clapping) There's no sense in narcissistic naval watching, that doesn't accomplish anything. Then in self-esteem, then repressed memory syndrome which was a whole fabrication of lies that ruined people's lives and ruined families.



But what subjectivism did, even though the psychology trends come and go, was it produced a man-centered kind of Christianity and preachers started preaching for psychological effect. Dangerous stuff, still infecting evangelicals.

And then in the 1990's came mysticism, listening for the voice of God. The Lord's speaking... And there were books coming out on how you can learn to listen for the voice of God. And then also in the 90's came pragmatism. Pragmatism says truth is the servant of what works. The first priority in the church is "what works? What gets a crowd? What gets the money? What gets a response?" After you've decided that, you can figure out how the truth can come in.

The key to evangelization, they would tell you, is image, style. Appropriate means of ministry are those which are most popular with the people, those which are most likely to have success in the marketing strategies of the world.

In the nineties came syncretism, by that I mean, "Hey, we all worship one God." Ecumenical jihad, remember I mentioned that? We all worship the same God, doctrine's just divisive.

Now these are all accumulated epochs. Let me tell you something, folks. This is not a good time for weak preachers preaching weak messages in weak churches. Too much danger out there. You know why we have a seminary? Because men needed to be trained to deal with these dangerous epochs.

The purveyors of these dangerous epochs are described here as to their personal character, in verses 2 through 4. They're self-lovers. They are money lovers. Their fraudulent ministry is described in verse 5. They have a form of godliness without any power. And they are a danger to the weak, verse 6 and 7. And they're void of the truth. And they are men of corrupt minds and they have rejected the faith. And I want you to notice verse 9, "But they will not make further progress for their folly will be obvious to all, as also that of those two...Jannes and Jambres came to be." Their progress is more apparent than real. And those who can discern know that. They may be popular. They may have a big TV audience. But we know better.

So the first reason we preach is because of the danger of the seasons. Second reason is we preach the Word because of the devotion to the saints...because of the devotion of the saints. I like this point, this is a wonderful point. Verse 10, "But you in contrast to them, you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, sufferings. Such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, Lystra. What persecutions I endured and out of them all the Lord delivered me."

He says..."Timothy, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Paul is saying...Look, you followed me up to now, why would you turn away? You followed me up to now. Verse 10, "You followed my teaching. You followed my conduct." And those two things form integrity...what you teach and how you conduct your life. You followed my personal purpose, that is,

the passionate direction of my life. You followed my faith, or my faithfulness. You followed my patience, my love, my perseverance. All those personal qualities there...you followed my ministry and my integrity. You followed my personal character, my personal qualities. You were there when I was persecuted. You were there when I suffered. And anybody who wants to live godly in Christ Jesus should expect that.

Now go down to verse 14. After having said in verse 13, "And I know things are going to get worse and worse and worse as men are deceiving and being deceived, but you, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of knowing from whom you have learned them." Boy, I love that. You continue and you remember from whom you learned these things. From whom did you learn them? You learned them from me, Paul, the Apostle. Have you forgotten that I was called by God? Have you forgotten? Philippians 4:9, Paul said to the Philippians, "The things you've learned, received, heard, seen in me, practice these things."

What's he saying? I think this is so good. He's saying don't do anything different, Timothy. You preach the Word not only because of the danger of the seasons but because of the devotion of the saints.

What do you mean by that? I mean there are people who have gone before you who have done this. You just take the baton and keep doing it. You don't need to invent ministry. You just take the legacy and keep doing it...keep doing it.

Go back to chapter 2 verse 2. "The things which you've heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." There's four generations there...Paul to Timothy, to faithful men, to others also. I love that. The standard has been set...godly prophets, godly apostles, godly pastors, godly evangelists who have been faithful...faithful...faithful. They passed it on, passed it on, passed it on, and passed it on.

And I'm so amazed...I'm so amazed at the brash, I guess, kindly we could say unwitting folly of young men who mock the saints of the past. Who think that the genius of their ministry is the disconnect from the past. Who laugh at those who were faithful to preach and teach the Word of God and imagine their own self-styled invented approach to ministry is some advancement rather than a decline. That is astounding pride...so bold as to discard the God-ordained and God-blessed pattern. I mean, to even be imagined to be able to stand with the prophets of old, the apostles, the Reformers, Puritans, the Spurgeons, men of God of the past and even the immediate past...those like Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and beloved preacher that we have learned to love from the conference a few years ago, Steven Oldford(??) and others like that who have had a world impact faithfully preaching the Word, passing down that same great legacy.

Don't do it any different...Paul says to Timothy...don't change anything. I gave you the truth. I preached it to you. I taught it to you. I lived it. Do the same.

There's a third reason we do this. First the danger of the seasons; secondly, the devotion of the saints; and thirdly, the dynamic of the Scripture. This is obvious. Verse 15 to 17, he says, "Look, you continue in these things...verse 14...knowing that from childhood you've known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

You know, he says...Look, why would you do anything but preach the Word when you know from the time of your childhood that it was the sacred writings, the Scripture, that gave you the wisdom that led to your salvation?" How can somebody be so foolish as to think that you can get people converted easier by avoiding the Scripture?

By the way, he uses an interesting word here "from childhood," it's *brephos* which means an infant, a baby in arms. He says...From the time you were a baby in the arms of your mother you have known the power of the sacred Scriptures to lead you to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ." And what Scriptures was he raised on? Not the New Testament, it hadn't been written. He was raised on what? The Old Testament but the Old Testament was written to point to Christ. Jews used to claim that their children drank in the Law of God with their mothers' milk and it was so imprinted on their hearts and their minds that they would sooner forget their names than the Law of God. And the Law was a school master. The Law was a tutor to lead them to Messiah. The sacred writings, the *hieragrammaton*(??) is the name for holy Scripture in the Old Testament and named for the Old Testament used by Greek-speaking Jews...often used in the writings of Philo and Josephus.

So he says you know the power of Scripture...from the time you were an infant you have known the Scriptures what leads you to salvation. Further, look at verse 16, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect, equipped for every good work."

Not only does the Word of God alone have the power to save, but the Word of God alone has the power to sanctify. You know that Scripture is breathed out by God and it is profitable, or useful four ways. One, for teaching, or *didaskalian*, doctrine, that which is taught is what that word means...not the process but the content. It is profitable for biblical truth, divine truth, content. Also for reproof. It's the other side of teaching, the exposure of error and the exposure of sin. And once the truth comes and exposes the sin, it then corrects it which literally means to restore to an upright position. You could say it this way...the Bible comes and it brings the message of salvation, it leads to salvation, we're born again by the incorruptible Word of God...Peter puts it. The Word brings us to salvation. And then the Word comes in with sound doctrine and that sound doctrine reproves and rebukes our error and our sin. And as it were, it crushes us under the weight of its authority and its truth. And then it corrects us and restores us to an upright position. And then it trains us positively in righteousness. This is the comprehensive work of the Word.

"As a result, the man of God and everyone under his influence can be made mature, whole, complete and equipped for every good work." Why would you preach anything else? The danger of the seasons demand that you preach the Word. How else can people have the discernment to sort out what's going on if they don't know the Word of God which is the standard by which everything is measured? You preach the Word of God because you stand in a long line of people who have been called by God to do just that, nothing less and nothing more, and you receive the baton...how could you possibly decide that you in the line of all of these years is going to invent another message and another approach? And how could you minimize the power of Scripture when it alone saves and sanctifies?

There's a fourth reason we preach the Word, the danger of the seasons, the devotion of the saints, the dynamic of the Scripture and the demand of the Sovereign...the demand of the Sovereign. Frankly, the first verse of chapter 4 is a frightening verse for the preacher. "I solemnly charge you," it's a dead-serious command, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead and do so by His appearing in His Kingdom."

Oh, and this is...this is penetrating language. It's enough to strike holy fear into your heart. It reminds me of reading years ago about John Knox in his biography. He said, "When I was compelled to preach, I burst forth in abundant tears and retired to my room, refusing to come out." Frightened at the awesome accountability of that duty.

He says, "I'm charging you," simply saying, "I'm commanding you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus." By the way, the Greek says, "In the presence of God, even Christ Jesus." They are one and the same. Jesus is God.

We who preach are under omniscient holy scrutiny. That's why James said, "Stop being so many teachers, theirs is a greater condemnation." That's why the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4, "It's a small thing what men think of me, it's a small thing what I think of myself. I'm accountable to God." Hebrews 13:17 says, "We have to give an account to God for our ministry." And under that divine scrutiny, we preach the Word. We have been commanded to preach the Word and God and Christ are watching to see if we're obedient.

That's enough for me. I don't even need to think about the danger of the seasons, the devotion of the saints, the dynamic of the Scripture, just the demand of the Sovereign is enough. Finally, we preach the Word because of the deceptiveness of the sensual...the deceptiveness of the sensual. Verse 3 of chapter 4, "For the time will come...may I say it's here?...when they will not endure sound doctrine, they want to have their ears tickled so 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 fables or myths."

We already spoke about the dangerous seasons concocted by seducing spirits and propagated by false teachers. And here's what makes them so successful. Seasons come, throughout all of church history, when people don't want to hear sound doctrine. They refuse the truth that saves...the truth that sanctifies.

Back in chapter 2 verse 16, they go after worldly empty chatter that leads to further ungodliness. It's nothing but talk that spreads like gangrene. It's deadly. The word for verse 3, "sound doctrine," is healthy teaching. We're in a season like that, I believe. Doctrine is a bad word. The prevailing mood in the culture is that every person should determine truth for himself and that's crept into the church, as we've been saying.

I told you this many years ago. I was going through Arkansas one time in the rain, it was like an evening like this one. I was driving a little tiny Honda with Lance Quinn back to see my son Mark playing a baseball game and take him his car for the summer. And he thought he would be somewhere in the west, but he ends up in Savannah, Georgia. So I went all across America in that little Honda to give him his car. That's what dads are for, right? Driving through a rainstorm going through Arkansas on a country road, wasn't sure where I am. Saw a sign that said "Quilts." And I thought, "I'll go buy Patricia a quilt." And so, I went up to the door in the rain and it was a kind of a streamy rain and I banged on this screen and I...a funny lady came to the door. "What ken I do fer you?" She had more missing teeth than she possessed and she was really, really a cartoon character.

And I said, "Well, I was looking for a quilt for my wife."

"Oh, I've got jest xactly what you want. Come in."

So I came in, it was real dark and stuffy and she brought out a quilt that was the worst looking thing I ever saw in my entire life. It had no rhyme or reason...it had no particular color. It was...it was absolutely chaos fabricated. And I didn't know what to say, but I said..."Well, you know, that is a quilt." And I said, "You know, I think it's...I don't think it's the color I was looking for."

And she said, "How can that be? It's every color."

And I said, "Well, yeah, but...I think I was looking for something blue, you know."

"Oh," she said, "well I'm so sorry because every piece in this quilt is from a part of our lives through all of these years and it's all little bits and pieces of all the quilts I've ever made all made into this quilt. So it's kind of like my...my life story in a quilt."

Well then I felt worse. But I still didn't want it. And all of a sudden I met her husband...her husband was in there and I looked over at him and he was sitting in a chair and he had a pile of literature beside his chair. And on top I saw books from Moody Press and Chuck Swindoll. And I walked over and then I saw books from the Unity Church. And then I saw Mormon stuff. And then I saw...he had piles and piles of this stuff and I said, "Boy, you have some collection here."

I'll never forget what he said. His name was Johnny, he said, "Oh, there's good in all of it." And I realized she had quilted his theology. (Laughter)

What do you mean there's good in all of it? You know, we live in a time when the evangelical church wants to get together to fight abortion, to get together and fight homosexuality and its inroads into our culture and lesbianism. Let's get together and fight for prayer in the schools and let's fight against euthanasia.

You know what the most deadly form of wickedness is? Perversion of the truth. I can't convince them to get together to fight that in a tolerant climate. Here they are, they just want to have their ears tickled.

What does that mean? Ah, it just means that they want a message that makes them feel good. They're driven by their sensual desires. They want preachers who promise excitement and success and prosperity. And they want to jump up and down and run around and feel good...or feel better about themselves, get an emotional thrill or feel some bump in self-esteem. Marvin Vincent wrote, "In periods of unsettled faith, skepticism and mere curious speculation in matters of religion, teachers of all kinds swarm like 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 easily found."

And it's sad because people want ear-tickling teachers so they accumulate them according to their own feelings. And they turn their ears away from the...what?...truth. That's where we are. And that doesn't change anything that we do, does it? It shouldn't. I guess at this point in my life I just feel like if this is the way the trend is going, we just need to crank up the truth louder. And that's not anything noble, that's what we have been commanded to do. When I have done everything I could do, I have only done what I ought to do. Right?

Well, was Timothy faithful to this? That's really...what's the end of the story? I mean, he's...Paul's at the end of his life, was he faithful? Turn to Hebrews 13:23, we'll close with this. Hebrews 13:23, the writer of Hebrews closing out this great epistle, this is a neat little verse tucked in here. Hebrews 13:23...well actually we'll start at verse 22, "I urge you, brethren, bear with this word of exhortation for I have written to you briefly," I like that, 13 chapters and he calls that brief. Then verse 23, "Take notice that our brother, Timothy, has been...what?...released." Where do you think he had been? In

prison. He must have been faithful because he must have excited the enemy, right?, when they threw him in prison. And he was released. Suffering became for Timothy the bench mark of his faithfulness just as it had been for his beloved mentor, the Apostle Paul. The end of the story, he must have preached the Word...amen?...

Father, thank You for a look at this great text and this faithful man. Thank You for tucking that little verse in there so we know the end of the story. We feel the same weaknesses and the same frailties that Timothy must have felt when it was hard to keep going against the grain, when it was easy to sort of cave in and feel timid and a little bit ashamed and maybe even tending to compromise the truth to soften things so as to eliminate the hostility. But thank You, Lord, that when he was confronted, obviously he stood his ground, he did what he was commanded, he honored his mentor and more than that, he honored you. And, Father, that's what we want to do, and that's what we want to see You do in the lives of many across this country. We thank You for the seminary here because there are 300 Timothys there and we are doing everything we can with the blessed and gifted and capable faculty we have here to pass the truth to them so they can spread around the world and pass it on. Lord, may You take Your truth in this dangerous, dangerous time and bring it to Your people who are starving for Your Word, but maybe don't even know it because they've never tasted it. Send these men in the seminary to the strategic places in the world, not only for the sake of those outside of the Kingdom, but for the sake of those inside so they can know the great truth, the depth that can elevate them to the height of praise and we praise You in the Savior's name. Amen.

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