

- When the Apostle Paul was commissioned by Jesus to become an apostle to the Gentiles, Jesus spoke these words

Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;

Acts 9:16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.”

- Paul’s time serving Christ as an apostle included the burden of knowing his life would end in martyrdom
 - As Paul’s death approached, he faced his end with the same resolute faith he displayed in his life
 - He testified without fear, he traveled without regard for his personal safety and he taught as boldly as ever
- Shortly before he died at the hands of Nero in Rome, Paul penned his final letter to enter the canon of scripture
 - It was his second letter to a young man ministering in Ephesus
 - We recently finished Paul’s first letter to Timothy, so it’s natural to pick up with the next letter
- But in many ways, the two letters are very different
 - Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy following Paul’s trial and acquittal by Caesar in AD 62
 - Paul resumed his travels in Asia Minor, having left Timothy behind in Ephesus
- So as Paul penned 1 Timothy, he was concerned for the church’s continued steadfastness in the face of influence from the pagan city and false teachers
 - As we noted in that study, Paul’s first letter to Timothy is similar to his letter to Titus, another pastor dealing with similar issues in Crete
 - His letter provided doctrinal instruction combined with exhortation on proper leadership
 - They were pastoral letters intended to shore up faltering groups of immature Christians led by inexperienced pastors
- But 2 Timothy comes under very different circumstances for Paul and Timothy
 - The year is AD 67 and Emperor Nero has gone crazy
 - The burning of Rome in AD 64 prompted Nero to blame the Christians leading to persecution
 - Ever since, it had been dangerous to be identified as a Christian or have contact with the leaders of the movement...like Paul
 - As a result, Paul had been re-imprisoned in Rome and after his preliminary hearing, Paul knew his death was imminent
 - So under a deadline and with concerns for the church’s response to the coming persecution, Paul writes his last letter to Timothy

- It tell us how special this young man and the church in Ephesus was to Paul that his final act of writing was to them
- Paul's final words are evocative of Moses' or Joshua's final instructions to the people of Israel
 - All three call upon God's people to hold firmly to the Lord by faith
 - And to look forward to the Lord's fulfillment of His promises despite the earthly difficulties that lie ahead
- In the few years since Paul wrote 1 Timothy, conditions in Ephesus had worsened considerably
 - Worldliness continued to invade the life of the body, and false teachers were growing
 - Now the church was under persecution from the Roman Empire
 - And the apostles were fast disappearing
 - So leadership over the church was quickly transitioning to a second generation
 - This trend, combined with Paul's impending death, leads him to adopt an urgent tone and offer a very personal appeal
 - No letter in the New Testament is more personal than 2 Timothy
 - Paul draws upon his personal example and makes multiple appeals
- The four chapters of Paul's letter move between two central ideas
 - First, encouraging Timothy to follow Paul's example of courage in the face of persecution
 - Courage means facing persecution without changing the message, which pleases Christ
 - And it may mean chains or martyrdom, but God gives grace to face such things
 - And ultimately, these things bring reward
 - Even in the best of circumstances, ministry is difficult and hard
 - But the temptation to walk away is especially strong when the penalty includes your life or freedom
 - So Paul gives strong argument to Timothy to stick with the plan
 - Secondly, Paul puts their circumstances and times in perspective with a lesson on the end times
 - Paul will compare the situation the church will face in the last days, to the situation he faced in his day
 - And then Paul explains how the church must face both times in similar ways
 - We may not live in Paul's day, but we are living in the last days he described
 - So obviously, it's important we give attention to his instructions

2Tim. 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the

promise of life in Christ Jesus,

2Tim. 1:2 To Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

2Tim. 1:3 I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day,

2Tim. 1:4 longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy.

2Tim. 1:5 For 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.

- Paul's salutation is similar to the one he wrote in his first letter to Timothy, though Paul reverses the lens
 - As usual, Paul identifies himself as an apostle by the will of God, a man called into leadership by a personal appearing of Christ
 - He was called according to the promise of life in Jesus
 - He means his calling was part of a plan to bring salvation to men
 - Paul wasn't suggesting he was personally essential to God's plan
 - Rather, he's reminding Timothy that God appoints men in ministry to accomplish something
 - God needs no one, but by His grace He calls many to serve Him, which is our honor and blessing
 - But when a man is called to serve, especially in evangelistic or pastoral ministry, that man becomes a part of the plan of God for the salvation of men
 - As such, each minister must approach his role with a sober and faithful dedication to the task at hand
 - This was Paul's attitude and he calls Timothy to adopt a similar mindset
 - Paul says in v.3 that he served with a clear conscience as did the forefathers
 - What a powerful statement and one bound to prompt jealousy in any minister
 - Having a clear conscience doesn't mean we didn't sin
 - It means our motivation, approach and effort in serving Christ was never compromised
 - Still, who won't have regrets over the way we served Christ?
 - Hopefully, our regrets will not be our strongest memories of serving Christ, but to have none would be truly remarkable
 - Obviously, Paul was a man of exceptional faithfulness
 - He was in a line of special men God called to serve Him in key moments of history
 - Men like Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David

- And now Paul
- Paul extends a customary greeting of grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus
 - Then Paul thanks the Lord for Timothy's salvation and ministry
 - In 1 Timothy Paul thanked the Lord for his own salvation and ministry
 - This switch is a not-so-subtle acknowledgement that Paul's time leading the church was ending and Timothy's was taking hold
 - Paul prayed for Timothy constantly, he says, night and day
 - He longed to see Timothy
 - And when they separated, they came to tears
 - It's easy to imagine that Timothy was like a son to Paul who had no natural-born children
 - And I'm sure the feeling was mutual
 - Notice that Paul adds his seeing Timothy allowed him to be filled him with joy
 - Elsewhere Paul wrote that he rejoiced in all circumstances
 - But clearly, Paul wasn't always "joyful" and there is no contradiction here
 - To rejoice in all situations doesn't mean to feel joy
 - It means understanding that God is working to produce something good through suffering
 - Therefore, we seek to feel joy even as we rejoice in whatever God brings our way
- Timothy's enduring faith in the midst of difficult circumstances was a continuation of his family's testimony, Paul says in v.5
 - Timothy's mother was a Jewish woman named Eunice
 - Her name means good victory
 - She was a woman of faith raising Timothy to know Christ, though married to a pagan, Greek father
 - Her mother was Lois, also a believer
 - Paul isn't necessarily crediting the mother or grandmother for Timothy's faith, since faith is a gift from God
 - Parenting isn't the determinant factor in a person's life
 - But God commonly works through good parenting to raise up godly men and women
 - It's no surprise that believing children are far more likely to come out of believing families who live their faith out in genuine ways
- After this brief greeting, Paul moves directly into his exhortation to Timothy

2Tim. 1:6 For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in

you through the laying on of my hands.

2Tim. 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

- Because Timothy was a man of sincere faith, from a family of faithful servants, Paul calls Timothy to kindle afresh the gift of pastoral ministry the Lord deposited in him
 - The Greek verb translated kindle afresh is made from two words
 - One word means a living creature
 - The second means a fire
 - Together, they describe something living in danger of dying, of being extinguished
 - In this case, that thing is the spiritual gift given to Timothy
 - In 1 Timothy we learned that the gift Timothy received by the laying on of hands was a gift of pastoral care
 - Timothy was a young man with a nervous stomach of some kind
 - But he was called by God's Spirit into a place of leadership and authority
 - That gift was from the Lord, so it anticipated Timothy assuming the role even if he didn't look the part
 - But Paul's choice of words suggests a worrisome development in Timothy's walk as a minister
 - Only a few years after Paul's first letter, the apostle is fearing that the spiritual fire driving Timothy in pastoral ministry was in danger of dying
 - We can't know how far Timothy had moved away from his calling but we do get an indication of what was responsible for Timothy's slipping
- Paul tells Timothy in v.7 that God didn't give him a spirit of timidity
 - Paul's observation seems specifically directed at Timothy's chief failing – that of a timid, fearful nature
 - Timothy was leading a pagan church in a major city within the Roman Empire, one closely associated with Paul
 - Now that Nero was actively pressing for the persecution of Christians, serving as a leader of the church in Ephesus was a dangerous role
 - It would be no surprise to hear that a pastor like Timothy might shrink back from serving publicly out of fear for Nero's persecution
 - Nero was especially hard on those in leadership, so the temptation would have been great for Timothy to lower his profile
 - He might have declined to preach or lead the church
 - He may have denied his association with Paul
 - Or even renounced Paul's teaching

- We have no indication Timothy took any of these steps
 - But Paul's exhortation suggests Timothy was in jeopardy of such things
- The enemy, who is behind all such persecution, never lowers his profile, never takes a day off
 - So when a man of God like Timothy takes a day off, the enemy gains ground
 - Both in his life and in the life of those he guards
- Paul says that the Spirit Timothy received was not one that experienced timidity
 - The Greek word is literally the word for cowardice
 - God did not put a coward inside us
 - So when we act cowardly in our faith, we are operating in the flesh
 - The flesh's desire to preserve itself is driving our thinking, rather than the fearless spirit God gave us at our rebirth
 - So indirectly Paul is telling Timothy that should he be feeling like hiding or repudiating his ministry, he can know he's acting in his flesh
 - Because such a response would never come by a prompting of the spirit
 - Timothy would be guilty of making the very mistake Jesus described when He said

Matt. 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

Matt. 16:25 "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

- When Jesus says "save a life", He's referring to our fleshly instinct to save our physical lives
 - To avoid the threats, persecution, and even martyrdom that come against those who follow Jesus
 - If the thought of these possibilities scares us out of following or serving Christ, we will lose far more than we gain
 - At most, we gain a few more years living on earth, only to die in the end anyway
 - But an unbeliever loses his or her soul
- And even a believer has the potential to lose if he shrinks back from serving God
 - Salvation isn't in question, but eternal blessings lie in the balance perhaps
 - So the better trade is to be willing to lose one's earthly life should God require it
 - For in doing so, we gain eternal things
- So the Lord gives believers a spirit of power, love and discipline
 - Once again, we're talking about the nature of the spirit given to every new believer at the moment of faith

- As we believe in Christ as Messiah, our spirit is born again in the likeness of Christ
- That new spirit possesses power and ability that we never had before
- Specifically, Paul says our spirit possesses power
 - Spiritual power refers to a bold character that recognizes the authority we have when serving in a calling from God
 - A spirit of power is not a promise of supernatural power nor does it imply we can exercise power over demons or even other people
 - It's describing a strength to serve God without concern for the consequences, operating boldly in confidence that we serve the Living God
 - The power of our spirit won't allow us to be frightened away from our duties merely because men threaten our earthly life
 - A spirit of power understands Jesus' orders:

Matt. 10:27 “What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops.

Matt. 10:28 “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

- A good example of a man operating in the power of his spirit was the prophet Amos
 - He was a goat herder in Judah when the Lord sent him to prophesy judgment against the king of the Northern Kingdom
 - That calling put him in great jeopardy, but nevertheless he served in the power of the spirit

Amos 7:10 Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent word to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, “Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is unable to endure all his words.

Amos 7:11 “For thus Amos says, ‘Jeroboam will die by the sword and Israel will certainly go from its land into exile.’”

Amos 7:12 Then Amaziah said to Amos, “Go, you seer, flee away to the land of Judah and there eat bread and there do your prophesying!

Amos 7:13 “But no longer prophesy at Bethel, for it is a sanctuary of the king and a royal residence.”

Amos 7:14 Then Amos replied to Amaziah, “I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet; for I am a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs.

Amos 7:15 “But the Lord took me from following the flock and the Lord said to me, ‘Go prophesy to My people Israel.’

- That's a man walking the spirit and seeing the power of the spirit at work

- That's the power Paul was reminding Timothy had within him
- Secondly, Paul says we received a spirit of love
 - The love we receive by the spirit is very different than the love we show in the flesh
 - Basically, the flesh knows how to love only one thing: itself
 - Though we show emotional love or sexual love to others in the flesh, that love is entirely self-centered
 - And when the flesh feels threatened, as in the case of persecution, it will take steps to preserve itself
 - This kind of love is not God's kind of love
 - His love is agape love
 - That's the Greek word for love Paul uses in v.7
 - It's selfless, sacrificial love
 - It's the kind of love we show to God and to others when we are living in the spirit
 - We sacrifice ourselves to serve God
 - And we sacrifice our own needs for the sake of someone else
 - When we walk in the love of our spirit we will think nothing of self but only of God, and those God wants to reach through our hands and feet
 - That's the love Paul wanted Timothy to feel, rather than a selfish love of self-preservation
- Finally, the spirit gives us discipline
 - The Greek word for discipline is better translated self-control (or we would say self-discipline)
 - Once more, this is very different to what we find in our flesh
 - Our flesh has no self-control
 - Instead, the flesh feeds itself constantly and insatiably
 - The Bible calls the flesh's appetite a "lust"
 - Our flesh lusts after many things and at all times
 - In the face of persecution and deprivation, our flesh will seek ease and comfort and the approval of men
 - We may retreat from our testimony or from assembling with other believers
 - In Timothy's case, he may have neglected to act as an evangelist, which Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy was part of his job
 - Better to remain on good terms with the Roman authorities than to risk losing friends, home and freedom
 - Instead, Paul says the spirit in us will exert the necessary self-discipline so we can say no to the flesh
 - We can ignore the world's threats, forgo the comforts of concession if necessary

and press on with the mission we've been given

- Timothy may have been meek, timid and fearful, but those were qualities of his flesh, not his spirit
- So if he was living that way, it meant he was walking by the flesh and not in the spirit
- From that reminder, Paul moves to a call to action

2Tim. 1:8 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,

2Tim. 1:9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,

2Tim. 1:10 but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

2Tim. 1:11 for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher.

- Obviously, Paul says “therefore” because this is the natural response to the truth of v.7
 - Since we have a spirit capable of moving in strength, love and self control, let's take steps in keeping with that spirit nature
 - Specifically, Paul asks Timothy not to be ashamed of the Gospel or of Paul himself
 - Paul's request certainly lends weight to our assumptions concerning Timothy
 - He seems to have struggled with maintaining a public testimony before those who might persecute the church
 - And he distanced himself from Paul's ministry
 - Paul calls himself a prisoner of Jesus Christ
 - It's an intentionally ironic statement given that as Paul wrote these words he sat in chains in a Roman prison
 - As Timothy receives this letter, he would have also heard from the courier of Paul's predicament, which would have only added to Timothy's worries
 - So Paul describes himself not as a prisoner of Rome but of Jesus, because long before Rome imprisoned Paul, he had been enlisted to serve Jesus
 - Jesus has taken hold of us, will use our lives to glorify Himself, and then He brings us home for a glory in eternity
 - If we see ourselves in that way, then nothing this world does to us can trouble us in the end
 - In fact, Paul says he was made to suffer for the sake of the Gospel by the power of God

- In other words, the Lord by His power brought suffering upon Paul, as we read in the book of Acts
- That suffering was purposeful
- It furthered the cause of the church, by giving a strong testimony to the truth of his message
- It's often been said that man doesn't generally suffer the way the early church martyrs suffered, merely to defend a lie or conspiracy
 - Especially not when they stand to gain nothing for it
 - Paul's suffering validated his confidence in his message
 - And as a result of his sacrifices, many more were brought into the church and strengthened through his example
- So once more Paul tells Timothy not to be ashamed of him and of Timothy's own testimony
 - When Paul tells Timothy not to be ashamed of him, Paul isn't concerned with his own reputation in Ephesus
 - Nor is Paul concerned for Timothy's personal testimony, per se
 - Paul is concerned for the strength and persistence of the church in that city
 - Should the church's shepherd in that city back down from a public, courageous stand for Christ, what would become of the sheep?
 - And if the pastor repudiates Paul's ministry before the authorities, then how would they defend the truth against the false teachers who sought to undermine Paul's teaching?
 - There was a lot on the line in Ephesus, and it hinged on the leader of the church standing firm despite growing resistance
 - To help Timothy face this challenge, Paul reminds Timothy of his own example at the end of v.8
 - And in the process, Paul launches into one of the clearest summations of the true Gospel in all the Bible in vs.8-11
- In v.9 Paul says that the Lord called each of us into a saving faith by His grace
 - It was a holy calling, that is a calling to live out the faith we've been given
 - And that calling had no relationship to our works
 - Our place in Heaven is neither obtained, nor secured, by our good works
 - We bring nothing to our salvation, and contribute nothing to our glory
 - We are servants, slaves enlisted to glorify the Lord according to His power and by His grace
 - And that saving grace was granted us from all eternity
 - As Paul says in another letter written to this same city, the letter of Ephesians

Eph. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,
Eph. 1:4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love
Eph. 1:5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,
Eph. 1:6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

- The supreme evidence of God's unmerited favor for His children is His predetermined plan to adopt us, a plan He initiated before the world began
- How can we fail to serve a God who singled us out from all eternity to receive His grace for that purpose?
- And the church has an especially privileged place in God's plan, having been the ones to whom the revelation of the Messiah came
 - God's grace for His children was granted from before time, but that plan centered on the arrival of His Son to redeem the world
 - And of all people in all times of history, we are especially blessed to have the revelation of Christ's appearing
 - The saints of old longed to see the things we know in detail through the word of God, and with the benefit of the hindsight of history
 - Here again, to whom much is given, much is expected
 - By His appearing, Christ abolished death for His people
 - It's hard for us to appreciate this truth this side of the grave, because our physical body still must return to dust
 - But the death Paul is speaking about is not the physical death of our body
 - For that is a death we welcome, knowing it leads to a new incorruptible body
 - Paul's talking about the Second Death, the eternal death, the separation from God that comes upon every soul that perishes without God's grace
 - The word death is ironic because the Second Death is separation from God is an eternal state of suffering, a state worse than death
 - That death is so severe that it weighs on the subconscious of every unbeliever
 - To see an unbeliever as they face the final moments of their life, is to witness true fear of death
 - But Christ's appearing brought Him to His own unjustified death, which abolished the Second Death for any who are covered by His sacrifice
 - And with the abolishing of the Second Death comes entry into immortality
 - Rather than darkness and fear and separation, we enter into eternal light in an age of glory with God

- This is the future promised for all believers, and nothing can invalidate the promises of God
 - So if that is our future, one that is only a heartbeat away, how can we act in fear or trepidation in the face of earthly threats?
 - What is the real cost of faithful discipleship?
 - Merely a willingness to sacrifice something we want to lose and can't keep anyway
 - Paul reminds Timothy that they serve a God Who saved them before they knew Him
 - Paul ends saying he was appointed a preacher, apostle and teacher
 - God called Paul to this life as a part of God's predestined plan
 - And this call was to further the administration of the Gospel of glory by which Paul and all men are saved
 - A preacher is a herald, someone who brings news that needs to be heard
 - Paul was one of God's heralds and the principle preacher to Gentiles, of which Timothy was a beneficiary
 - The implication of Paul being a preacher was clearly that Timothy owed his own salvation to Paul's obedience
 - So that raises the question of who would not hear should Timothy be disobedient to his call to preach?
 - Paul was also an apostle, which is one sent with a message
 - Apostles were called to begin a work of the church in new places
 - Heralds speak and move on, but apostles put down roots to ensure the planting of something permanent
 - Paul was an important part of planting most Gentile churches of the first century, including the church of Ephesus
 - Here again, the implication is that Timothy would have no church in Ephesus had Paul not been obedient to his call
 - And Paul obeyed even in the face of threats and persecution from the Jews in the city
 - So how could Timothy put that city at risk by shrinking back from shepherding what Paul helped start?
 - Finally, Paul was a teacher, one who perpetuated the spiritual growth and maturity of what was established
 - Even after Paul helped establish the church in Ephesus, he returned on multiple occasions during his journeys
 - Each time he returned, he took a chance with his freedom
 - Nevertheless, he returned to continue the work begun there, because that was his call as a teacher
 - Likewise, Timothy was called to continue growing that church, not to decimate

it by running in fear or denying Paul's teaching in the face of opposition

- As opposition grew in Ephesus, these pressures only grew
 - No amount of hype or earthly logic could withstand the temptation to shrink back in the face of torture and death
 - Only the confidence in the spirit that this life is fleeting, regardless of what it brings
 - And the call on our lives is to live well for Christ
 - Not necessarily live long
 - As I said earlier, our days are moving in the direction Paul warns Timothy, into the later days of persecution
 - We may not see it yet in our own backyard, but it's coming the Bible says
 - And when it comes, we need to remember these words to Timothy
 - We will need to rest in the power, love and self-control available to us in our spirit so we may give a good testimony no matter what comes

- In the opening of his second letter, Paul implored Timothy to stand firm in his faith and in his appointed role as the leader of the church in Ephesus
 - In the midst of growing Roman persecution, the church leadership was feeling pressure to shrink back from public ministry
 - Public proclamation of the Gospel now carried a serious price
 - And association with men like Paul was automatic cause for suspicion
 - Paul obviously worried his timid protege, Timothy, might follow suit in Ephesus
 - Paul told Timothy he didn't receive a spirit of fear but a spirit of courage and power and self-discipline
 - If Timothy would walk by the leading of the spirit in him, he could stand up to his fears and worries
 - This was Christ's calling on every servant
 - For just as Christ faced persecution for telling the truth, so must His servants be prepared to endure the same
- Therefore, Paul commanded Timothy to not be ashamed of Christ's testimony nor of Paul's own ministry as Christ's prisoner
 - It's interesting that Paul chose to use the word "shame" in v.8
 - I doubt Timothy himself would have described his instinct to hide from persecution as being "ashamed" of Christ
 - He might have argued that he was not ashamed of Christ; he just worried for his life or those of his flock
 - But scripture testifies that when we put our needs above glorifying the name of Christ, we have declared we are ashamed of our mission
 - It means we reject its very premise, its claims
 - The Gospel declares that the world is spiritually dead and under judgment
 - The Gospel declares that true life is found only in Christ
 - And the Gospel declares that nothing in this world is worth trading for eternity
 - So when we consciously choose to silence this message to preserve our earthly life, we communicate an opposite testimony
 - We declare (by our choice) that the world's judgment of us is more convicting than that of our Lord
 - We declare that the life we possess in this world must be preserved at all costs, even at the cost of silencing the message of eternal life in Christ
 - And we declare that this world is more precious to us than the one we receive by faith in Jesus
 - In that sense, we demonstrate that we are ashamed of Christ when we let the world's desires drive our choices
 - And if we distance ourselves from others who serve faithfully, we communicate disapproval with their faithfulness

- We are saying we're ashamed of them too
- At the moment persecution arrives, few believers will have the presence of mind to recognize the implications of shrinking back
- Which is why we must give careful thought to what we will do before we face that moment
- As we return to Paul's letter, we move directly to that question
 - Specifically, what will hold us to the mission when the world threatens to take everything away?
 - In human terms, what answer do we give to the missionary entering a dangerous place?
 - How do we justify the loss of a father, husband, mother or wife to persecution?
 - How will we stand firm in our message and in our mission when powerful people threaten to take our life or those we love?
 - Intellectually, we may all agree that Christ is greater than anything in the world, and we must never be ashamed of Him or His testimony
 - But if intellectual agreement were enough to hold us to the mission, then how do we explain Peter's denial of Christ?
 - And how do we know for certain that we will do better than Peter, who famously declared he would never abandon Jesus?
 - Clearly, good intentions may not be enough in the face of death
 - We may have never faced such a choice and perhaps we never will
 - But the early church faced martyrdom daily
 - And in many places today, Christians still face it
 - And in the coming years, the church will face it more and more
 - So what do we say to those who waiver? Here's what kept Paul going:

2Tim. 1:12 For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

- Paul says "for this reason" I also suffer these things rather than living in shame of Christ
 - And what follows is Paul's anchor, Paul's shield against his own fears and doubts, as he served under threat of persecution
 - That anchor and shield was something he knew which in turn gave him confidence in the face of suffering
 - Notice that the solution to remaining faithful to Christ in times of trial was found in knowing, that is in spiritual knowledge
 - In contrast to spiritual knowledge, the church today has become absorbed in "experience"

- We crave excitement and stimulation in our walk with Christ, and everything spiritual is judged against this standard
- When believers evaluate the quality of a church service, for example, their assessments usually turn on details like the quality of the music
- Or the cleverness of the pastor's jokes or illustrations
- Or on the novelty of his stunts, videos or props
- Or even on the length of the service itself or the comfort of the stadium seats
- Rarely do they comment on the theology of their statement of faith, the pastor's biblical knowledge or the godliness of the congregation
- Therefore, it should be no surprise that many believers prioritize experience over scripture when evaluating spiritual truth
 - When personal experience defines our understanding of Christ, then our relationship will be one-sided and self-serving
 - Moreover, it will be ever changing, because contrary experiences compete in our mind as we seek to find truth
 - God is "good" when he heals someone we love, but what about when He doesn't heal another?
 - Hell is real for you, as you thank God for saving faith, but will it still be real after your unbelieving parent dies?
 - Our experiences lie, because at best they are incomplete and at worst they are reflections of our preferences and moods
 - You can spot a Christian who defines spiritual truth through experience:
 - Their past experiences will trump any teaching from the Bible
 - Questions about God's blessings and gifts, or about angels or the Spirit, or heaven and hell...all these issues will be decided based on personal experience
 - Any teaching to the contrary is dismissed out of hand, since "...no one can tell me what I experienced..."
 - In that sense, truth becomes relative, since different believers possess different experiences
 - Which means that experience-based learning is highly subjective and easily manipulated to suit our preconceived notions and desires
 - We embrace some truths and reject others on the basis of how we feel, since there is no objective standard
 - Many of the popular heresies plaguing the church today have gained a foothold because immature believers have bought into experience-based truth
 - For this crowd, the more powerful and dynamic the speaker...
 - The more wealthy and successful the church and pastor...
 - The more engaging and entertaining the church service...
 - Then the more "real" and "true" the message seems

- But when we turn off the jumbo screens, silence the driving rock beat and clear the smoke machines, what do we find enduring?
 - If our understanding of spiritual truth is based in our experiences rather than in an abiding study of scripture, we are standing on quicksand
 - The foundations of our faith are forever moving under our feet
 - We hold something to be true only until something better comes along...
 - A more convincing teacher or a more compelling presentation becomes just cause to change our views or practices
 - So we're tossed back and forth by the waves of church fads that come and go
 - We snap up the next bestselling book by a smiling Christian pastor...
 - Or set the DVR for that popular Christian miniseries everyone is talking about, hoping it may hold the secret to revolutionizing our walk with Christ
 - A church body standing on the quicksand of experience, rather than on the firm foundation of God's word, will suffer
 - In times of ease, the church built on experiential truth will be superficial, vain and beset by sin
 - It will serve only itself
 - And it will remain forever vulnerable to the temptations of its flesh and the enemy's lies
 - But in times of persecution, the stakes increase considerably
 - Believers who rely on experiential truth will be unprepared to face existential tests
 - How will they respond to demands like "Renounce Christ or die"
 - If our theology is little more than "God wants me to be happy" then how will we justify martyrdom?
 - Certainly that was the concern for the church in Ephesus
 - A life of ease and wealth hadn't prepared them for Nero's purging of the church
 - And now that being Christian involved real risks, what was true? Was faith in Christ worth dying for?
 - What experience could justify watching loved ones fed to lions or going to the stake?
- Only by abiding in His Word may we stand faithfully
 - The Word of God is food for our soul
 - It's a light to our path
 - Truth is found only in God's Word, and therefore believers only grow and strengthen through an abiding study of the Word
 - This is the central truth Jesus taught in John 15:

John 15:1 “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

John 15:2 “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.

John 15:3 “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

John 15:4 “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

John 15:5 “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

- Like the analogy of branches on a vine, we are drawing our spiritual supply from Christ
 - To strengthen us for greater production, the Lord may prune us at times
 - If we respond to that pruning in the proper fashion, we produce even more fruit
 - But if we disconnect ourselves from that supply, we have no hope to sustain our walk
 - And experiences with God, however genuine, do not equal, much less replace, an abiding knowledge of God in His Word
- When Paul says he knew in Whom he believed, he’s saying he knew where his supply came from
 - He knew the master who pruned him
 - And that knowledge from God’s Word sustained him through suffering
 - Regardless of what kind of persecutions we face in this life, our ability to sustain our faithful walk also depends upon our devotion to God’s word
- As the psalmist says:

Psa. 119:33 Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes,
And I shall observe it to the end.

Psa. 119:34 Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law
And keep it with all my heart.

Psa. 119:35 Make me walk in the path of Your commandments,
For I delight in it.

Psa. 119:49 Remember the word to Your servant,
In which You have made me hope.

Psa. 119:50 This is my comfort in my affliction,
That Your word has revived me.

- To be sure, God also uses experience from time to time
 - Miracles have a place in God’s economy
 - But generally, they serve to get someone’s attention to hear the Word of God

- Moses used miracles to gain Pharaoh's attention for God's Word
- Jesus used miracles to gain an audience for the Gospel
- And in the church, the Spirit may produce miraculous signs from time to time, but only as a means of calling attention to Christ in His Word
- Which brings us back to Paul in v.12
 - He says he was willing to suffer for the Gospel because of two things He knew from the Word of God
 - First, he knew in Whom he had believed – speaking of Christ
 - Paul knew Christ
 - Obviously, Paul knew Christ in the simple sense that Paul was a believer in Jesus Christ
 - Every believer “knows” Christ in this way, by definition, which is important
 - But Paul was speaking about a knowing that went far beyond obtaining a saving knowledge of Christ
 - Paul knew Christ intimately from a study of His Word
 - We could talk for hours on all that Paul came to know of Christ by His Word
 - But three aspects of Christ probably directly supported Paul's willingness to suffer
 - Knowing Christ's character, purpose and power
 - First, Paul knew Christ's character
 - He knew Christ was merciful and good and a rewarder of those who seek Him
 - Paul also knew our God is a God Who keeps promises
 - And he knew that the passing of time had no effect on the faithfulness of God
 - As Paul himself wrote...

Rom. 8:38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, Rom. 8:39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Secondly, Paul knew God had good purpose in allowing His children to suffer for His name sake
 - Just as the Father determined that the Son would suffer to bring about our redemption, so may He ask that we suffer at times
 - Paul also knew that the Lord does not call us to suffer more than the Lord has suffered already
 - And that like Him, we may be glorified through suffering
 - That after we're tested and found faithful, we may receive a reward that cannot

perish

- Finally, Paul knew that His God was a God of power
 - Nothing can stand against the Lord
 - God's will be done, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against His Church
 - So when persecution comes against the church, it's not evidence of something gone wrong, but rather it was part of God's plan
 - Therefore, Paul could face troubles in this life with confidence and peace knowing that God was at work through them
- Of course Paul also had unique personal experiences with Christ, which no one else in the church has equalled
 - But ironically, Paul's extraordinary encounters with Christ were necessary to equipping the apostle with spiritual understanding
 - So then Paul could supply the rest of the Church with that biblical knowledge
 - Ultimately, even Paul's experiences with Christ became the Word of God for us
 - In the end, everything Paul knew was according to the Word
- So from study of God's Word, Paul knew in Whom he believed, and in that knowledge he gained confidence to suffer for His name's sake
 - Then in the second half of verse 12, Paul adds that he was convinced that Christ was able to guard what Paul had entrusted to him
 - At first reading, this statement may sound a little backward
 - We might have expected Paul to say that he was convinced he would guard what Christ had entrusted to him
 - That is, Paul would guard the message of the Gospel and the care of the church, which Christ had entrusted to Paul
 - But that's not what Paul said, for that's not what Paul is speaking about
 - Paul said he was willing to suffer for Christ because he knew that Christ was guarding something for Paul
 - And of course, knowing Christ's character, purposes and power, Paul was confident that Christ would guard it faithfully
 - And whatever Paul is entrusting to Jesus, it must be important
 - Because this comment is Paul's main argument for why he serves Christ without hesitation and without shame
 - So what was Paul entrusting to Jesus that Jesus was guarding?
 - The answer is Paul's eternal reward
 - The heavenly reward Paul knew he would receive for having served Christ faithfully
 - For having suffered in this life for the sake of the Gospel, Paul was storing up an eternal reward that no one could take from him

- A reward that Christ was guarding, ensuring
 - And that was all the reason Paul needed to suffer for Christ
- Paul was trusting that when all was said and done in his life, his sufferings would be worth it
 - That the eternal outcome of his life of suffering as a disciple would be well worth the sacrifice
 - Which is why Paul says that we can't compare the two

Rom. 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

- This is one of the most important and profound truths of the New Testament for believers
- A commitment to serve Christ as a faithful disciple holds opportunity for eternal rewards
 - These rewards are reserved for us in the Kingdom
 - And we will only see them after we are resurrected
 - We aren't talking about earning salvation itself
- As Paul just reiterated in v.9, we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone
 - But Paul says he was willing to suffer hardship and accept the world's scorn to share that message with others, because he was convinced that Christ would make his sacrifice worth it in the end
 - No matter what the world might do to Paul in retaliation for his obedience to Christ, Paul knew he could trust the Lord to guard his eternal reward
- Friends, concern yourself with pleasing Christ, because one day we will stand before Him for our judgment
 - And at this judgment, the Lord will determine the degree of our Heavenly reward
 - As Paul explains

2Cor. 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

- Paul says we will be recompensed or repaid for our service to Christ
 - As we fulfill our calling and please our Lord, we will receive a reward
 - But if our discipleship is found lacking, if our deeds in the body are bad, as Paul says
 - Then our rewards will suffer likewise
- This is a truth found only in God's word

- You cannot find confirmation or even the suggestion of eternal rewards in everyday experiences in the church
- This is a truth known only from the counsel of God's word
- And it's a central truth for every Christian's walk
 - To know of eternal rewards as the Bible teaches it, is to be prepared to face the temptations of the world
 - Whether temptations of distraction and dissipation
 - Or temptations to give in to our fears of persecution
 - Either way, knowing the Lord is testing our faithfulness and will reward us accordingly gives us good cause to serve faithfully
- This is but one example of why a faithful and consistent preaching of God's word is essential to the growth and maturity of the church
 - As Paul reiterates to Timothy

2Tim. 1:13 Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

2Tim. 1:14 Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.

- Reading between the lines again, it seems that Timothy might have been tempted to modify his preaching to avoid trouble
- But Paul tells Timothy that persecution is all the more reason to preach the truth
- Paul calls it the standard of sound words which Timothy heard from Paul
 - The Greek word for standard means "pattern", like a pattern used to make a dress
 - And sound words could be translated a healthy or safe message
 - There is one safe, healthy message and Timothy should pattern his speaking after that message: the one Paul delivered
- Paul spoke those words in faith and love in Christ
 - He spoke out of love for Christ and for love of the church
 - And he spoke in faith that Christ would put His own word to great use, even if Paul couldn't see how in the midst of his circumstances
 - And that must be Timothy's view as well
 - A willingness to speak truth no matter what he worried might come
 - Doing so would ensure reward for Timothy and make opportunity for others to learn the same truth
- In fact, the sound words of the Word of God was a treasure entrusted to Timothy by Christ
 - I wonder what would happen in church pulpits if more men thought of the Word of

God in this way

- This is what God treasures above all else

Psa. 138:2 I will bow down toward Your holy temple

**And give thanks to Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth;
For You have magnified Your word [above] all Your name.**

- God holds his Word as greater than even His name
- All men called to minister to God's people in pastoral ministry have been entrusted with the Word of God, something the Lord sees as a treasure
 - So what do we suppose the Lord thinks as He observes pastors like Timothy neglecting, or even changing, His word to suit their own purposes?
 - Especially when we know that the truth that leads men and women to abide in Christ is found only in the Word of God
- So Paul calls Timothy to guard or keep that treasure through the Holy Spirit
 - Which is to say Timothy was to value it above anything else
 - Above his personal safety
 - Above his popularity or the whims of his congregation
 - In season and out of season as Paul will say later
- This truth also has implications for the individual believer in the body of Christ
 - Knowing how highly the Lord values His Word (even above His name!), then a believer is on notice to treat the Word of God as the treasure it is
 - First, we must have a personal goal of seeking to understand the depths of God's Word
 - We must find our supply in it daily
 - We should endeavor to study it in a comprehensive way, regularly and consistently
 - We do that both as a matter of personal study and in seeking outside instruction
 - We are responsible for that pursuit, as the writer of Hebrew says in speaking to the churches of his day:

Heb. 5:12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

Heb. 5:13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant.

Heb. 5:14 But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

Heb. 6:1 Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press

on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

Heb. 6:2 of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

- No believer is exempt from the biblical injunction to know the Word of God
- And not just superficially, but well enough to teach others regardless of whether we are personally called to teach
- This is a high standard that few today seem interested in meeting
 - Even among those Christians who engage in regular study of God's Word, many still seek an "experience" rather than a true in-depth study
 - Stand-up comedy routines and aimless discussion groups are fast replacing straightforward, didactic instruction from knowledgeable instructors
 - No matter what methodology or curriculum we choose, in the end every believer is responsible to Christ for what we learn
 - Remember, we are called to know and abide in Christ by His Word
- Secondly, knowing how the Lord treasures His Word, every believer should think carefully about what kind of church or organizations he or she supports
 - In these days of waning understanding, and commitment to, the Word of God, believers must double-down in our efforts to promote proper teaching
 - If your church does not teach the Bible clearly, properly and routinely from the pulpit, then why support it?
 - If the church leadership doesn't value the treasure God has entrusted to it, how useful can it be helping you guard it?
 - With persecution right around the corner, the church needs to return to the confidence Paul had to face suffering
 - The confidence that comes from knowing and guarding God's treasure
 - Not everyone in the body of Christ will share our love and appreciation for the Word of God
 - And when difficult times come for us, many are going to face them standing on quicksand rather than on the rock, just as was the case in Paul's day
- In fact, most of the church in Asia was quickly abandoning Paul as a result of persecution

2Tim. 1:15 You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.

- Paul says "all" the church leadership in Asia turned away from him
 - The word all isn't an exaggeration
 - Christian leaders and many of the flock in and around Ephesus (which was located

- in Asia) had repudiated Paul in one way or another
- They did so to save their freedom and livelihood, and the lives of their families
- But because they weren't rooted in God's Word they didn't realize what they were sacrificing in the process
 - If they could have seen into the future and gazed upon their heavenly reward, like a contestant playing Let's Make A Deal
 - And if asked whether they wanted to trade their job or freedom or even their earthly life for what lies behind Door #1
 - These Christians were readily saying yes...they would give up whatever was behind that heavenly door in exchange for temporary, earthly gains
- Clearly, this was a foolish bargain, and it was one they didn't need to make
 - If they had treasured the Word of God, they would have a better understanding of what lies behind that door
 - They could have appreciated the magnitude and permanency of that reward
 - Likewise, they would have appreciated the fleeting and worthless quality of our present life
 - As Jim Elliott once said

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose

- These Christians in Asia were making the fools trade
- Among the leaders were two Paul mentions by name
 - These men are not mentioned elsewhere, but apparently they were initially very helpful to Paul in Ephesus
 - But now had turned away merely because of persecution
 - These men may have been believers, but forevermore their names have been immortalized in God's eternal Word for their misdeeds
 - Not the kind of testimony any of us want
- Paul mentioned these men to give Timothy cause to think again about his own actions
 - Imagine seeing one man's name recorded in scripture by an apostle and then wondering how your own history will be written?
 - It would seem Paul wanted to give Timothy extra motivation to do the right thing
 - We can only hope it succeeded
- Paul singled out another man in an unusual way

2Tim. 1:16 The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains;

2Tim. 1:17 but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me —

2Tim. 1:18 the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day — and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus.

- Paul asks the Lord to grant mercy to a man named Onesiphorus
 - Paul says several good things about this man's testimony
 - First, he often refreshed Paul while Paul ministered in Ephesus
 - He must have been a man who supported Paul in various ways while ministering in the region
 - Secondly, he was not ashamed of Paul's chains
 - As an example, Paul remembers a time when the man sought to find Paul in Rome while Paul was on house arrest
 - Clearly, the man was faithful to Paul and even courageous
 - But when Paul was in chains in Rome, it wasn't because of general persecution against the church
 - Rather, this was an attack against Paul by the accusations of the Jews
 - So in those days, a man like Onesiphorus could visit Paul without much personal concern
 - But now the days were different and all Christians were at risk, especially those who associated with Paul
 - And it would appear that under these circumstances, the man's faithfulness had waned
 - Paul doesn't say anything specifically, but he implies the man fell like the rest in Asia
- Paul asks the Lord to have mercy on this man on "the day" which is a reference to the judgment seat
 - Paul's appeal for mercy would suggest very strongly that the man was in need for forgiveness concerning this issue
 - Which if true means that Paul felt sorry for the man in light of his previous diligence in serving Paul
 - I suspect Paul made mention of Onesiphorus to make an impression on Timothy
 - As Timothy contemplated whether to follow after the other leaders in distancing himself from Paul, the apostle gives Timothy an example of how it might go for him
 - As he contemplates Paul remarking on how much good this man did for Paul in the past, Timothy couldn't help but notice that now the man was in need of mercy
 - That at the judgement seat of Christ, there would be an accounting
 - Perhaps this would give Timothy added incentive not to sacrifice eternal things for the sake of temporal
 - If you're motivated to faithful service to Christ by nothing more than the love of

Christ, then you are to be commended

- Go forth and serve!
- But if you are like most people, you will appreciate the reminder that God is a rewarder of those who seek Him
 - And furthermore, you will be strengthened by remembering that we will give an account before the Lord
 - And we want to hear those words, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

- The letter of James opens with a counter-intuitive call for Christians to anticipate and even embrace suffering for the sake of Christ

James 1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

James 1:3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

James 1:4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- Any Christian who has contemplated these words has questioned the logic of receiving suffering with joy
 - The two seem mutually exclusive
 - We understand that “to suffer” is to be without joy, and to know joy is to be without suffering
 - So how can one be compatible with the other, we wonder?
- Nevertheless, this is the Bible’s teaching on suffering in our faith, and James goes on to explain how suffering is, in fact, a source of joy for every believer
 - First, we have to understand that the suffering James speaks about is associated with trials the Lord brings us
 - He’s not speaking about all forms of suffering
 - Often we suffer as a result of our own sinful choices, and this suffering is not a source of joy but hopefully a cause for repentance
- James is referring to suffering for the sake of our testimony, whether by persecutions or other difficulties brought upon us to test our faith
 - These trials are a source of joy, for they are designed by the Lord to bring opportunities
 - James says they test our faith, to know if we are willing to stand firm for Christ and for eternal concerns over earthly concerns
 - In effect, trials are opportunities for us to reaffirm our commitment to our eternal future with Christ over our attachment to this world
- With each new opportunity, we gain spiritual strength, like a muscle growing strong under the strain of exercise
 - This is spiritual endurance, James says
 - And that endurance will lead to a “perfect” result
 - It will leave us complete, lacking in nothing, he says
 - Conversely, a failure to endure well may lead to a loss of something, a lack of completion
- What is this thing we will gain by our endurance?
 - Beyond the spiritual growth and blessings that follow maturity, James is looking forward to eternal blessings of rewards and honor in the kingdom

- To be perfect, lacking nothing, refers to gaining a full reward
- That reward doesn't turn on a moment or even a season of our lives
- Our progress is only measured at the end, and our reward is only assigned once we've run our race
 - So as we encounter trials, and even if we should stumble at times, nevertheless we still have good incentive to get back up and continue enduring
 - Because until the end has come, we are still growing
 - And until our race is over, we still have good cause to endure, since we are still marching toward our reward
- Which is why we have reason to count suffering as a source of joy, because it means our race has not ended and opportunity for reward remains open
 - So if you have successfully withstood trials in the past, then count new trials as opportunities for extra credit
 - But don't take your past success for granted, since no one is without the need for more spiritual growth
 - Or if you have stumbled in the face of trials in the past, rejoice over new trials as a sign the Lord considers you worthy to prove yourself again
 - And don't be discouraged by past mistakes, since no Christian arrives in Heaven with a perfect track record
 - We are all sinners, which is why we all needed grace in the first place
- Every trial is a chance to be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing, James says, and today in Chapter 2 Paul picks up this same idea as he encourages Timothy to stay faithful in the face of persecution and trials
 - Last week Paul ended Chapter 1 with a sobering list of men who had failed in this regard
 - Paul told Timothy these men had walked away from him and even the faith, rather than face persecution
 - In one case, Paul said he prayed the Lord would forgive Onesiphorus in "the day", a reference to the judgment seat of Christ when rewards are handed out
 - This man had done much to support Paul in days past, but apparently he too shrunk back when the going got tough
 - Paul listed these examples to remind and exhort Timothy to do better
 - And earlier in the chapter Paul gave reason for his willingness to suffer for Christ
 - He said he knew that Christ was guarding his reward
 - And therefore, nothing could steal it from Paul
 - Ironically, the only way Paul's reward could come into jeopardy was if Paul himself retreated from his service to Christ
 - This was Paul's concern for his protege, Timothy
 - With so many in Asia making the wrong choice, Paul seems worried Timothy

might follow suit

- So as we move into Chapter 2, Paul continues to reinforce the importance of remaining faithful to his call even in the face of trials
- And to make his point, Paul uses three analogies that teach different aspects of God's reward system
- First, Paul offers an introductory encouragement

2Tim. 2:1 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2Tim. 2:2 The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

- Coming on the heels of Paul's list of faithless men in Chapter 1, we see Paul pivoting back to Timothy with a hope for better things
 - Paul says "you, Timothy" so as to distance Timothy from those others
 - We can't know how close Timothy was to following their bad example
 - Perhaps Paul didn't know for sure either
 - But clearly he was concerned, and we can hear him working hard to persuade Timothy not to make the same mistake
 - Paul implores Timothy to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus
 - We know grace means "unmerited favor"
 - That is, it's something God does for us before we even know we need it
 - In the case of salvation, it's the choice of God to send His Spirit into our hearts leading us in crying out "Abba, Father!"
 - And in the case of facing trials of one kind or another, Paul says there is yet another form of grace given us in Christ Jesus
 - This form of grace comes "in" Christ for it is only available to those who are Christ's by faith
 - This grace enables the believer to stand strong against the temptation to be unfaithful
 - This form of God's grace is an enabling power, but it does not guarantee a positive outcome, as men like Onesiphorus demonstrate
- Therefore, we must conclude that believers possess a God-given power to stand firm against temptations to flee persecution in unfaithful ways
 - Yet we must avail ourselves of this grace to benefit from it
 - As a matter of faith itself, we must first decide to remain faithful rather than shrinking back
 - And then by the grace of God, we will be strengthened in our decision to stand
 - That's what Paul means when he calls upon Timothy to be strong

- He's calling Timothy to use the strength God has made available by His grace
- But even the decision to be strong depends on something else
- For what explains why one believer stands when another doesn't?
- The Bible's answer is that believers must renew their minds
 - We must take up a process of obtaining the mind of Christ so that we will make different decisions in moments of crisis
 - In the past, the old self made decisions based on earthly values and fleshly desires
 - Now our new self is called to make decisions based on the mind of Christ and the leading of His Spirit living in us
- We must train our mind to think like Christ so that we might live like Him
 - The Bible calls this training process the renewing of our mind
 - Making it new, changing it from the depraved ways we knew before faith and into likeness with Christ
 - For example, Paul says in Romans:

Rom. 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

- Paul says our walk must be transformed by a renewing of our mind
 - That renewing comes only through a study of God's Word
 - By knowing Christ's Word, we move away from conforming to the world and toward the likeness of Christ
 - By this transformation, Paul says we will live out the will of God
 - We will show the world by our new thinking and new behaviors what is good and acceptable and perfect to God
- Secondly, Paul says this is a daily renewal in our inner person which leads us to eternal glory

2Cor. 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

2Cor. 4:17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

- Our outer, sinful nature is decaying and fading even as we are renewing our inner person day by day
 - Notice again that this renewing of the inner person will be tested by momentary, light affliction

- Testing gives opportunity for our new self to be made visible as we live it out before the world
- And as we endure that affliction, we gain the benefit of eternal, weighty glory far beyond comparison
- And now we see how transforming our mind brings us to the point where we can count all suffering as joy
 - By the counsel of scripture we gain the mind of Christ so we come to see our trials the way Jesus saw His trials
 - We come to understand that our afflictions for the sake of Christ are the fertile ground where God plants seeds of opportunity
 - The opportunity to respond in faith, sacrificing earthly things to the glory of Christ and for the potential of heavenly reward
 - The grace of Christ working in us gives us the power to stand in the moment
- That's why Paul emphasizes that Timothy must ensure that the teaching Paul left with him in Ephesus be shared widely by trustworthy men
 - Notice in v.2 Paul places this demand on Timothy
 - If the church in Ephesus was to withstand the coming persecution successfully, then it must be prepared with proper teaching
 - Renewing their minds was the necessary prerequisite to making the right choices
 - But if the church made the choice to remain faithful as Paul did, then the grace of God would give them the strength to follow through
- Then Paul moves to teaching Timothy on the very point of suffering, using three analogies to drive home the logic for why suffering in trials is worthwhile for a believer

2Tim. 2:3 Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

2Tim. 2:4 No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

2Tim. 2:5 Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.

2Tim. 2:6 The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.

2Tim. 2:7 Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

- For the second time in as many chapters, Paul calls Timothy to suffer hardship as Paul did
 - And to explain the sensibility of such a call, Paul draws upon three analogies
 - First, Paul says that suffering hardship for the sake of the Gospel is like a soldier called for duty

- I have some qualification to speak on this analogy
- I spent 9 years in the US Air Force, not counting the four years I spent as a cadet at the Air Force Academy
- This gives me a first-hand sense of what Paul means when he compares serving Christ to military service
- Although my Army brothers and sisters might argue that serving in the Air Force doesn't qualify as being a soldier
- As it turns out, life in the military is great preparation for life in ministry
 - A soldier must be 100% committed to the mission and to his or her role
 - Because the mission is too important to tolerate a half-hearted effort
 - Paul says we must be a "good" soldier, and the Greek word for good means wise
- In the context of soldiering, being wise means setting the right priorities in life
 - And specifically, a soldier must set aside pursuit of the world at least to some degree
 - What passes as normal life for a civilian can't hold for a soldier
 - Military service is an all-consuming lifestyle in most cases, especially in times of war
- Therefore, Paul says a good soldier can't concern himself with the affairs of everyday life
 - Instead, the only desire of a soldier is pleasing the one who enlisted him
 - Pleasing his sergeant, pleasing his commander, ultimately pleasing the nation he serves
 - Military life has no place for token contributions
- Paul says Christians are to serve in battle in a similar way
 - Christ has called us to duty as His soldiers
 - We have a new mission in life, one that's eternally important
 - It's a battle against the enemy and the world and even our own flesh
 - Imagine if soldiers routinely ran from the battlefield at the first signs of conflict declaring they weren't prepared for such trials?
 - That's the situation when a Christian run from trials or abandons their testimony altogether
 - It means they weren't educated in the realities of serving Christ
 - You are soldiers, which means you are preparing for battle
 - Therefore when the fight comes, you can't shrink back
 - You must remain in place to serve and glorify the One Who enlisted you
 - So Paul's first example emphasizes our outlook and preparation for service as Christians

- We must understand our role and mission will eventually bring us into conflict with an enemy
- Therefore, be ready to take up the fight
- Secondly, in v.5 Paul uses the example of an athlete running in a race
 - Now, Paul has moved from how we prepare for service to how we pursue our service
 - An athlete must compete well to receive a prize, Paul says
 - The Greek word compete can also be translated strive
 - The emphasis here is in the striving, a constant expending of effort toward a goal
 - For who competes without a desire for the reward?
 - Today it's fashionable, especially with young children, to assign everyone an award at the end of a competition
 - There can be no losers or winners
 - We all know this isn't real life
 - And I suspect most children aren't fooled by this charade either
 - We may not be keeping score at the game, but you can bet they are
 - Because winning is a primal motivation for striving
 - And the incentive for striving in any competition is the prospect of a prize at the end for those who compete well
 - But as Paul says, if we want that prize, we must follow the rules
 - We must compete according to the way the race requires
 - If the rules require we stay inside our lane, then we can't stray
 - And if the rules require we cross the finish line, then we can't stop running before we reach that point
 - In other words, if we don't give our best, we cannot succeed which is the whole point in competing in the first place
- In the same way, Paul says every disciple of Christ has entered a race of sorts
 - The race began the moment we became a believer in Jesus Christ
 - It continues until we die and enter the Lord's presence
 - During this time, we are competing for rewards, eternal rewards
 - Only in this particular race, we don't compete against other athletes
 - Instead, we're competing against ourselves
 - Against our fleshly desires and selfish nature, against our fears and the temptations offered by the world to draw us astray
 - Our challenge is to compete according to the rules
 - And the rules of this race are simple

- Stay inside your lane and finish the race
- The world, the enemy and our flesh are always attempting to draw us outside the lines God set for us
- Whether by sins of one kind or another, or distractions of earthly gain or pleasure, we are presented with opportunities every day to leave our lane
- And sometimes the enemy, or our flesh or the world, places hurdles in our path
 - And as we come upon these trials, the challenge makes us consider giving up or going another way
 - To become like Onesiphorus, establishing a track record of running well only to stray off the track and forfeit the prize
- Likewise, we must bring an eternal outlook to our walk as Christians
 - We must commit to running well, according to the rules, so that we may receive a reward
 - We must give our best to Christ, in whatever form our service to Him may take
 - We must guard our own lives to ensure we stay in our lanes, so to speak
 - So the second example of an athlete reminds us that serving Christ requires a missional mind, one that isn't easily distracted
- Finally, Paul compares our life of Christian service to that of a farmer
 - And in this example, Paul emphasizes that the farmer is hard-working
 - The word for hard-working in Greek literally means weary
 - So our farmer is a weary sort
 - The life of a farmer is certainly filled with long days of back-breaking work
 - A farmer prepares the field, sows seed to produce a harvest
 - Paul says only after the harvest arrives, only then does the farmer receive his payment
 - His payment is a portion of what has been harvested, the fruit of his field
 - His provision is entirely dependent on producing a successful harvest
 - The farmer can't give up before the harvest arrives
 - If he does, he would be left with nothing to show for his efforts
 - But if he perseveres, then he knows he will be the first to profit
 - A farmer's reward comes at the end, which leads him to be patient in the long hours of the work and willing to suffer hardship
 - Giving up early means gaining nothing in the end
 - Likewise, Christians cannot lose sight of our goal in serving the Lord
 - Our service will be difficult at times
 - There will be many days when we waver in the face of suffering
 - Perhaps the trials will be intensely personal, as the Lord works to uncover our

weaknesses so we can be strengthened for greater service

- And sometimes our trials will come as public suffering for Christ under persecution
- We may feel like quitting, we may wonder if it's all worth it
 - But if we think like a farmer, we understand the fruit of our labors won't be revealed until the final harvest
 - If a farmer can show patience for a few months in pursuit of a crop of grain
 - Certainly, we can endure a lifetime of serving Christ for the glories to be found in the kingdom
 - How can we tell Jesus that He's asking too much of us when so often we willingly sacrifice much more, for lessor worldly goals
 - How many years will we invest in education or training for a sport or some profession
 - How many hours, how much money has been invested in meaningless things that perish with us?
 - Is seeking the pleasure of your Lord worthy of less sacrifice and effort?
 - Can we see Paul's point? Farmers understand that their work will be hard
 - But they also understand the reward is worth the investment
 - And they know if they give up early, they profit nothing
 - We need to think of our walk in service to Christ in the same way
 - So the first example emphasized the preparation for service
 - The second example illustrated the proper pursuit of service
 - And the final example reminds us of the need for persistence in our service even as we may grow weary
 - Simply put, if you know God to be good – and certainly He is
 - Then you can be sure that when all is said and done, we will all agree that our sacrifices were worth it
 - Trust Him in that even now, and serve Him well
- Now Paul offers one more example, the chief example for all Christians – Christ Himself

2Tim. 2:8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel,

2Tim. 2:9 for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned.

2Tim. 2:10 For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.

- There can be no better example, of course, than Jesus Himself
 - Paul alludes to Jesus' example in all three of these qualities
 - First, Paul refers to Christ rising from the dead
 - This statement immediately draws our attention to Jesus' suffering and death
 - No follower of Jesus Christ will ever be able to say they suffered more in serving Christ than He did in serving us
 - He is our ultimate example of suffering in obedience to the call of God
 - Jesus willingly suffered in obedience to the Father
 - And He did so to serve God in an eternal mission
 - Secondly, Jesus was resurrected from the dead
 - So His service in suffering brought glory to Him in the end
 - But His suffering had to proceed His glory
 - He had to persevere and finish the race set before Him
- Then Paul adds Jesus was the descendant of David
 - Paul is alluding to the Davidic Covenant, which established that David's descendant would rule over Israel and all nations
 - That promise was directed at Jesus of course
 - In a day to come in the Kingdom, Jesus will receive the rule that the Father promised to Him

**Psa. 8:5 Yet You have made him a little lower than God,
And You crown him with glory and majesty!**

**Psa. 8:6 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands;
You have put all things under his feet,**

- In fact, Jesus has yet to receive this reward since it's waiting for the arrival of the Kingdom
- The point is that Christ Himself is still waiting for His reward
 - Like us, He is still showing patience since what He died to receive hasn't yet been awarded to Him by the Father
 - He hasn't received His Bride in full and He hasn't inherited the Kingdom
 - So if Christ suffered willingly for eternal glory, and if He persevered even to the point of death, and if He is showing patience for His reward...
 - How can we not be willing to do the same?
- Finally, Paul offers himself as one more example to Timothy
 - Paul willingly suffered hardship for Christ, he says
 - To include imprisonment as a criminal

- He knew what he was asking of Timothy
- He understood the risks, but he wasn't asking more of Timothy than he was willing to do himself
- But then Paul adds that his imprisonment wasn't at the expense of the mission, for no one can imprison the word of God
 - Paul means that even as persecution comes against leaders in His church, it has no bearing on God's ability to deliver the Gospel
 - Ironically, Paul says in v.10 that he endured these things for the sake of the chosen, that is those who may obtain salvation in Christ
 - Far from lessening his effectiveness in the mission, he endured persecution in order to accomplish the mission
- Persecution accomplishes far more in God's economy than concession and compromise ever could
 - When the church stands firm in the face of persecution, it leads to growth of the best kind
 - It draws attention to the love of God's people, putting it in stark relief against the hatred and sin of those who oppress believers
 - Just as Abel's godliness was amplified by his brother Cain's persecution and hatred
 - So will the message of the Gospel be amplified by the world's hatred of us
 - As someone once said, the blood of the martyrs waters the seeds of faith
- Regrettably, the church has sometimes sought to avoid persecution by compromising with their oppressors
 - When this happens, the excuse is often that we must make some concessions to the demands of our enemies to ensure the Gospel survives
 - Paul's testimony (and the history of the church) proves this to be wrong
- Moreover, it's hubris to think that God needs us to bring His word to the world
 - The world was *made* by God's word
 - So clearly the world cannot restrain the word of God in any way
 - Timothy couldn't use that excuse to avoid the persecutions and trials God may bring, and neither can we
- This brings Paul back to summarize his central point with a memorable expression

2Tim. 2:11 It is a trustworthy statement:

For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him;

2Tim. 2:12 If we endure, we will also reign with Him;

If we deny Him, He also will deny us;

2Tim. 2:13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

- Paul summarizes the relationship between faith, service and reward by coining a saying or memorable expression
 - Paul starts with the assurance this is a trustworthy statement, something that you can take to the bank
 - In Greek, the word Paul used for trustworthy is *pistos*, which means “this is something we can place faith in”
 - And the first part of the saying holds that if we died with Christ, then we will also live with him
- This is a concise expression of the Gospel message itself
 - Essentially, the Gospel is a matter of believing in two things
 - First, that Jesus is the perfect, sinless sacrifice Who died in our place on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins
 - Secondly, that Jesus was resurrected from grace never to die again
 - These two parts are neatly summed up in Romans:

Rom. 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

- When a person places faith in Christ in this way, the Bible says that person has died with Christ
 - In other words, God assigns Christ’s death in place of the believer’s own death for sin
 - And in that sense, all believers have died with Christ through their faith in His payment on the cross in their place
 - So Paul describes saving faith as having died with Christ
- Then he goes on to finish the thought saying if we have died with Him, then we can be sure we will live again with Him eternally
 - Our faith in Christ assures us that the death of our body is not the end of us
 - We will receive a new body
 - We will walk the earth again with Christ
 - And we will never die again
- So in v.11 we find a simple summary of the promise of the Gospel of Jesus Christ
 - Notice the Gospel does not rest on your good works, for human works have no value to the Lord
 - We cannot work our way out of our debt of sin
 - We cannot earn the righteousness that comes by faith alone
 - Only God could pay our debt for us, through His Son on the cross
 - But since we know that we cannot earn our salvation through works, we may be

tempted to think that our works are of no value whatsoever

- This must be the thinking of any Christian who shrinks back in the face of trial or persecution
- Or they fail to appreciate what's on the line in eternity
- So they think that having saving faith is the end of the story...but it's just the beginning
- In v.12 Paul says if we endure with Christ, we will also reign with Him
 - The Greek word translated as endure carries the sense of persevering in the face of difficulty, to have patience at a work
 - Much like the farmer, Paul says if we work patiently serving Christ then we will reign with Him
 - We know that Paul is no longer addressing the topic of salvation, since he has introduced the necessity of a human work
 - Instead, Paul has moved to the next step of the Christian walk
 - Following salvation through faith, we now begin to serve the Lord as His disciple in our walk of faith
 - As a disciple we're called to serve faithfully, enduring trials and waiting patiently for a reward
 - Like a soldier or athlete or farmer
 - Paul says if we endure in our work, we will reign with Christ, which is a reference to our eternal reward
 - Scripture teaches that all believers are promised both an inheritance in the kingdom
 - And we will have the opportunity to reign with Christ in governing the coming Kingdom on Earth

Rev. 20:6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

- In the Gospels, Jesus explains that our opportunities to reign are determined by our faithfulness to serve Him now
 - Some believers will receive a greater reward than others
 - Jesus says that our present time serving Him on Earth is the test of our endurance and faithfulness
 - And by this test, the Lord will discover who is deserving of greater responsibility in the coming Kingdom
- Jesus used a parable to explain how He will assign us responsibility to share in His reign in the Kingdom

- In the key statement in the parable, Jesus declares:

Matt. 25:21 “His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’

- We have each received a degree of responsibility to serve Him now
- We have opportunities to serve Him in our churches or to witness to Christ in our neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, & communities
- We have been given spiritual gifts for that purpose
- And at our judgment, we will be measured for our endurance according to what we have been given
- Those who make the most of the time on Earth to serve Christ, will be given the greatest opportunity to serve in the Kingdom
 - Scripture alludes to greater honor, greater responsibility, a greater inheritance in some form
 - Having greater things in eternity is much more valuable than having anything in this short life
 - So while our salvation comes by grace alone through faith alone in the death and resurrection of Christ
 - Our endurance in serving Christ as His disciple grants us opportunity to enjoy greater opportunities to serve Christ in the Kingdom
- Paul’s point raises an obvious question...what if a Christian fails to serve Christ faithfully?
 - What if a believer denies the Lord the service He expects?
 - Paul addresses this possibility in the second half of v.12
 - He says if we deny Him, then the Lord will deny us
 - We’re still in the context of enduring and reigning, so now Paul is speaking of the opposite condition, that of failing to endure
 - Paul describes it as a denial of Christ
 - That is, denying Christ of our service and our endurance as His disciple
 - Onesiphorus denied Christ His endurance when he apparently walked away from Paul in the face of persecution
 - It’s a choice to live for ourself and for this world instead of living for Christ and the Kingdom
 - In such a case, Paul says the Lord will deny us...which is to say, Christ will deny us some portion of our reward
 - He will deny us the opportunity to reign with Him in greater ways
 - Just as when we withheld our obedience to our earthly parents, they denied us

- privileges and rewards
 - So it will be for any in the Kingdom who deny Christ their endurance
 - The prize is for those who compete well
 - And so God holds out the prize, as motivation for us to serve Him faithfully
- Remember, the judgment in these matters comes at the end of the race, not in the middle
 - So if you are worried your reward has already been lost, you can take comfort knowing that the race is still under way
 - You need only return to your lane and pick up the pace
 - Everyone stumbles here and there
 - No one will reach the end without a testimony of good days and bad days
 - Don't let the enemy deceive you into remaining sidelined
- Now, some teachers read Paul's statement in v.12 and come away misunderstanding what Paul is saying
 - They assume that when Paul says Christ denies us he means that Christ removes salvation, as if a person ceases being saved
 - They conclude that denying means denying the faith, so therefore Christ will deny us before the Father
 - But this is not what Paul is trying to teach us
 - Paul probably wondered if someone might make just such false conclusion at this point
 - So Paul added one more line to his saying to make sure we didn't jump to the wrong conclusion
 - In v.13 Paul adds that even if we are faithless, He will remain faithful
 - That is to say, in the case where a believer foolishly walked away from Christ (like Onesiphorus), the Spirit will never leave us nor forsake us
 - The Lord has promised we will be resurrected into eternal life
 - He has promised we will live forever with Christ in the Kingdom
 - And the Lord will remain faithful to those promises
 - Paul added this statement in v.13 to make sure we didn't go too far with his saying
 - We don't earn our salvation by our good works, so we cannot lose salvation by "bad" works
 - Nevertheless, if we walk away from serving the Lord, we do place our eternal rewards at great risk
 - We stand to suffer loss in the Kingdom
 - We will come through our judgment moment as through fire, with nothing to show for our time spent in service to Christ
- We must consider carefully our call to be a disciple of the Lord

- Are we willing to endure hardship?
 - Do we make the most of each day to please Him?
 - Do we avoid being distracted by the concerns of everyday life like a soldier?
 - Are we running our race with an eye on the prize and competing according to the rules like an athlete?
 - And are we willing to be patient like the farmer, content to receive our rewards in the Kingdom?
- And when trials and persecution come our way, will we have invested the time necessary to renewing our mind by God's word
 - So that renewing may prepare us to choose to stand in His power by His grace
 - A successful walk in Christ begins with an understanding that our service to Christ is a test
 - One that demands commitment, diligence and endurance
- So when you get up in the morning, rise to serve Christ's agenda
 - As you seek to serve, meditate on His word
 - When we become discouraged or struggle with sin or fall into despair, know His grace will grant you the power to stand
 - Provided you choose that course
 - When you confront trial, persecution and even death, take comfort knowing your life is poured out for the One Who died for you

- I trust you had opportunity over the past week to reflect on the analogies Paul provided last week
 - Paul compared our walk in Christ to that of a soldier, athlete and farmer
 - Each of those analogies drove home a key point
 - Soldiers are committed to serving well at the sacrifice of everyday concerns and in spite of the expectation of danger
 - Athletes compete earnestly and according to the rules so they may obtain a prize at the end
 - Farmers demonstrate persistence and patience in the face of difficult work knowing that they only obtain a reward at the end
 - Paul taught that all three analogies apply to our lives as Christians
 - We too are called to serve Christ sacrificially in spite of persecution
 - We also compete for a prize, so we set our mind on observing the commandments of our Lord
 - And like a farmer, we understand the work will be hard, and the reward appears only after the season of our earthly life ends
 - Therefore, Paul concluded, we suffer hardship and persecution gladly, because it is a testing of our endurance and an opportunity for reward
 - We won't always pass these tests with flying colors
 - Sometimes we will stumble, shrink back, feel like giving up
 - But the Lord will grant us grace to stand strong if only we will embrace the trial
- Of course, not all believers take this path
 - Some go in other directions, so now Paul moves to giving instructions to Timothy concerning this wayward crowd
 - Paul bridged into this discussion last week by quoting a trustworthy statement
 - Paul repeated a hymn or creed of the early church, assigning it the weight of scripture
 - The creed affirmed several important theological principles
 - First, v.11 succinctly summarizes the Gospel of salvation by faith in Christ
 - If we have faith in Christ, then we will share in his eternal life
 - Then in v.12, the saying proceeded from faith to good works
 - By enduring in serving Christ through good works, we will see a reward of reigning with Christ in the Kingdom
 - But then the saying turned decidedly negative
 - In the second half of v.12, we're reminded that those who deny Christ their service will likewise be denied their rewards
 - The word "deny" sounds so strong it can lead us to assuming (incorrectly) that Paul is speaking about a severing of our relationship with Christ

- Of course, this isn't even possible, since every believer is eternally secure in their relationship with Christ
- Moreover, the final verse of this creed (v.13) clarifies that was not the intended meaning of the saying
 - Even if we are faithless in our relationship with Christ, the Lord sticks with us to the end
 - Faithlessness in this context means a failure to live according to our confession
 - To live disobediently, as a prodigal son or daughter, even to the point of apostasy
 - Nothing can separate us from the love of God, yet these choices still carry consequences
- Paul gave Timothy this summary expecting Timothy to share it with the congregation in Ephesus, as Paul says next:

2Tim. 2:14 Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers.

2Tim. 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

2Tim. 2:16 But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness,

2Tim. 2:17 and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus,

2Tim. 2:18 men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some.

2Tim. 2:19 Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness."

- Earlier in this chapter, Paul asked Timothy to take the things he heard from Paul, entrust them to faithful men and expect them to teach others
 - For Paul, teaching was the solution to apostasy
 - As persecution grew and pressure increased upon the church, the church body needed the Word of God to lend it fortitude
 - The Word of God is power to the believer, both for the knowledge it imparts and for the spiritual strength it provides
 - The Word explains why God allows persecution
 - It offers rationale for persevering through it
 - And it brings hope for glory and the promise of reward for those who suffer in it
 - But when the church lacks the Word of God, it leaves a vacuum

- And as someone once observed, nature abhors a vacuum
- Something will fill that empty void
- Therefore, if a pastor neglects to provide the Word of God, to train up a congregation in spiritual truth, then others will step in to do that job
 - In particular, the enemy will happily fill that vacuum
 - Only he won't be serving up the Word of God
 - He serves up lies, through he'll dress them up to look good
- Paul tells Timothy this is exactly what was happening in Ephesus
 - In v.14 he tells Timothy to remind them of these things
 - "These things" refers to the principles summed up in the trustworthy statement
 - Reading between the lines a little, it seems that the church wasn't handling persecution well
 - And I said earlier it seems Timothy was on the brink of following after other leaders who abandoned Paul during this time of persecution
 - Now I assume from Paul's words that Timothy may have neglected or overlooked the need to teach doctrine to Ephesus' impressionable believers
 - If they didn't know that they were saved entirely by faith, then they may have worried unnecessarily about their eternal security
 - If they didn't understand that works brought opportunity for reward, then they may have felt there was no advantage in maintaining their witness in the face of persecution
 - And if they didn't understand God's desire to test our faith through persecution, they might propose novel, unbiblical explanations for such events
- These things were happening in varying degrees in Ephesus, and Paul wants Timothy to put an end to it through proper teaching of correct doctrine
 - Moreover, Paul asks Timothy to solemnly charge them (or declare with godly authority) to stop useless arguing about false things
 - The English translation says they must not wrangle about words
 - In Greek it literally translates as fight about words
 - Paul's describing arguments that center on meanings of words, probably taken out of the Old Testament
 - Or perhaps even from Paul's teaching
 - These kind of disputes are ever-present among the untaught or poorly taught within the church
 - Ironically, most true biblical scholars shy away from such arguments
 - Because they know them to be "red herrings"
 - Such disputes are usually not the main issue, nor do they illuminate the main issue

- They are distractions at best, and at worst they are a subterfuge
 - Like a pickpocket who distracts you while taking your wallet through slight-of-hand
- Paul says such arguments are useless and lead to the ruin of the hearers
 - They serve no useful purpose
 - They don't lead us to truth
 - They don't build our faith in Christ
 - They don't grow our walk or encourage us to put away sin
 - They are useless spiritually
 - For this reason, they lead to the ruin of hearers, literally the destruction of hearers
 - How are believers "destroyed" by these useless debates?
 - Paul's referring to their walk, their spiritual progression
 - Instead of pursuing true spiritual knowledge, they pursue the curious, the provocative, the sensational teachings of false teachers
 - Instead of focusing on serving Christ by preaching the Gospel, they use their time to promote strange ideas
 - Instead of moving into the main stream of spiritual maturity, they get caught in stagnant eddies where they stop moving and growing
 - You can see this happening today as it did in Timothy's day
 - You can find believers investing meaningful time and energy debating the shape of the earth
 - The correct Sabbath day
 - The proper secret name with which to address Jesus
 - And many other useless disputes about words
 - If you get sucked into these discussions, take note that the arguments are not a seeking of spiritual truth by which we may know and serve Christ in greater ways
 - They are always distractions away from those goals
 - As R.W. Ward once observed,

"In the end disputing about words seeks not the victory of truth but the victory of the speaker."

- The whole exercise smacks of ego and pride
- It feels like someone trying to prove a ridiculous assertion to win a bar bet
- But when true biblical instruction falls by the wayside, the enemy is ready to fill that void with this kind of nonsense, because it is destructive to the spiritual growth of believers
 - The believer whose spiritual diet consists of this kind of junk food will be the first to

fall away in times of trial

- Whether because of persecution or merely personal temptations, these are the ones who run first
- They are seeking tickling of ears, so when the pleasure stops, so do they
- Naturally, the antidote for such things is that the church receive sound teaching
 - So Paul tells Timothy in v.15 to do his job
 - Specifically, Paul asks Timothy to be diligent to present himself to God as a workman approved and not ashamed as he teaches the Word
 - The Greek word translated “accurately handling” simply means to use something correctly
 - The ultimate, and only, goal of every Bible teacher is to use the Word of God correctly
- That’s the essential difference between false teaching and true teaching
 - Sometimes in the course of teaching we do need to focus down on individual words and consider their meaning carefully
 - And other times, an emphasis on words is useless and brings ruin
 - The difference is whether we are using the text correctly
- For example, some false teachers say the phrase “call upon the name of the Lord” is referencing some unique, secret name of Christ
 - They teach we must know and use that secret name (and only that name) if we want to be saved
 - This teaching about words isn’t communicating the correct meaning of the text
 - The Bible emphasizes the importance of “calling” – not on some specific “name”
 - Regardless of which name of Jesus we know and use, the point is we have called Him our Savior and placed our faith in Him
 - This is an example of wrangling over words in a useless way
- Paul said Timothy must be diligent to be a worker who uses scripture correctly
 - The words diligent and worker make clear this is a process of effort, not talent
 - Handling the Word of God correctly isn’t a gift; it’s a practice
 - Everyone, especially pastors, must work hard to handle the Word properly
 - There will be no excuse for shoddy workmanship among those who seek to learn and teach the scriptures
- Paul alludes to the risks when he says Timothy must present himself before God on this matter
 - Paul is alluding to Timothy’s moment before the Judgment Seat of Christ
 - The Greek word for “present” is the word for stand
 - So Paul’s reminding Timothy he must stand before Christ some day to come and

- give an account for how he taught
 - And at the moment, Timothy will wish to be judged as one who worked hard to teach the Word properly
 - Rather than as one who wrangled over useless words, as some were doing in Ephesus, which will bring shame at the judgment
 - Remember James says that teachers will face a tougher judgment for this reason
- So what are we to do when confronted by such nonsense in the church?
 - Paul tells Timothy in v.16 to avoid such empty, foolish talk
 - As I've mentioned before, Paul doesn't say debate or challenge or even consider their arguments
 - He says to avoid them altogether
 - Give no time or attention to their teaching
 - Rebuke them to stay silent and to repent of such false teaching
 - But after this, have nothing more to do with them so long as they teach in this way
 - Engaging in debates with people who want to promote useless speculation rather than the self-evident truth of scripture is counter-productive
 - Paul says it leads to further ungodliness
 - The Greek word for "lead" can also be translated "progress"
 - Therefore, we could say that while these men were teaching progressive interpretations of scripture
 - They only served to progress ungodliness
 - And Paul says avoid them because to entertain such empty talk can only make matters worse
 - Entering into debates with those who promote nonsense of one kind or another promotes ungodliness in three ways
 - First, it lends legitimacy to the false teachers
 - When respected teachers give equal time to charlatans, we elevate them at the expense of our legitimacy
- Secondly, debating false teachers suggests to Bible students that the question the false teachers raise is open to debate, or that the truth of the matter is in question
 - False teachers always begin with a settled truth of scripture (like what "call upon the name of the Lord" means)
 - Or with some common-sense understanding (like the shape of the earth)
 - And then proclaim they have a new and novel view that disrupts the status quo
 - For example, we recently received an email to the ministry that read:

I have been reading a lot of stuff about the flat earth theory, and stories relating to Enoch and Angel Uriel, that we have been deceived in many ways about the true shape of the earth.

- Notice this person was receiving teaching from false, unbiblical sources (Enoch, and Angel Uriel) and giving it equal weight to credible sources
- And he was attracted to it because it challenged orthodoxy and fed a conspiracy narrative (“We’ve been lied to!”)
- Such false teaching always implies there is a great deception afoot, which is seductive and exciting to untrained ears
- This is useless teaching which distracted this person away from pursuing meaningful spiritual truth
- Why give this sort of thing even more traction?
 - When we debate it, we help raise the very question that there is something still to resolve
 - It’s like the question, “Do you still beat your wife?”
 - The question itself makes a statement
- Paul says it will spread like gangrene
 - Gangrene was the ancient term for any sore in the flesh that wouldn’t heal
 - Paul is describing the way this teaching eats at the body, destroying the walk and progression of believers
- Thirdly, it underestimates the skill of the enemy, since we enter the debate assuming we will win the argument in the end
 - The enemy is crafty, and no less so when he speaks through false teachers
 - Just because truth is on our side doesn’t mean we won’t fall
 - It happened to Woman in the Garden and it can happen to us too
 - For all three reasons, Bible teachers and pastor should never agree to debate those who hold such unbiblical views of scripture
 - Instead, we should obey scripture when it commands us to avoid such people
 - Don’t play with fire; you get burned
 - Paul mentions two such believers who apparently got involved in such disputes
 - Hymenaeus and Philetus were members of the church in Ephesus perhaps under Timothy’s charge
 - If so, then mentioning them by name might have been Paul’s not-so-subtle way of reminding Timothy of the dangers in his own church
 - They were involved in a dispute over the timing of the resurrection of the church
- The resurrection moment of the church is often called by another name today, the Rapture

- It's a common source of dispute today (unnecessarily, since scripture is so clear on it)
 - And now we see that disputes over this event have always been around
 - The enemy has always recognized the strategic value of undermining a Christian's understanding of, and confidence in, the promise of our resurrection
- Our resurrection is the single most important moment in the life of any saint
 - Our resurrection is the moment we receive the promised eternal life we gain by faith in Christ
 - It is our hope in Christ
 - The word hope in the Bible is a reference to our hope of living again eternally with Christ
 - So our hope in Christ is all about us rising from the grave never to die again
- These men in Ephesus maintained that the resurrection had already happened, which means those saints on earth were not included
 - Who knows how they explained this but regardless, Paul says this teaching was upsetting the faith of some
 - We can understand why this would be so
 - If I believe I missed the resurrection, then I would have little reason to persist in my faith
 - This would be especially true if I was facing persecution for my faith
- In fact, the Greek word translated "upset" in v.18 is literally translated "overthrow"
 - These men were causing believers to drop the practice of their faith
 - And to lose hope in Christ's promises
 - And this disruption came merely because these men wrangled with certain words bringing confusion and doubt
- Paul gives a short and simple counter to their false teaching in v.19
 - He says the testimony of the Word, which he calls the firm foundation of God, will stand or remain despite such men
 - Paul then quotes from two OT passages
 - These statements are the "seal" Paul says
 - He's referring to the way an architect or builder would inscribe his personal mark or seal on the foundation of a building
 - The seal identified the builder's work
 - Similarly, the word of God declares that believers are marked or sealed to identify our Builder
 - First, Paul quotes from probably Numbers 16:5 to say the Lord knows who are His
 - This is a statement of assurance to the believer

- No matter what is taught and no matter who may be drawn astray by it, the Lord knows who are His children
- And we can be sure He will not forget us or fail to fulfill His promises to us
 - Even those who had been upset by these men and may have abandoned their walk with Christ, even these would be resurrected one day
 - Ironically, they will be surprised to see the promise fulfilled
 - When they could have been strengthened by hope
- If these two men had understood the Word of God (rather than investing time in nonsense and useless arguments) they could have known these things too
 - They could have seen the assurance of God's promises not to forget any who are His
 - With that assurance comes sufficient knowledge to refute stupid claims that the resurrection had already come
 - Clearly, if the promised gathering of God's people had come already, then all who are His would have known it
 - Therefore, a sensible, biblically-educated person can safely conclude that teaching to the contrary is wrong
 - This is how study of scripture prepares us to handle false teaching
 - We won't gain a specific response to every false teaching
 - That's not possible given the infinite number of ways lies can be constructed
 - Instead, the more you know Christ and His plans and His character from scripture, then the better you will be at spotting false or useless teaching
 - And that's enough to reject it
 - To have nothing to do with it
 - It's like trying to identify counterfeit currency
 - We don't study counterfeits; we study the real thing so that we know when we see something false
 - That's why Paul quotes the second verse taken from Isa 52:11 probably
 - The Lord declares that "everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness"
 - When we can identify something that's false, we don't need to tangle with it or try to fix it
 - We need to avoid it, to abstain from wickedness
 - **Addendum:** The cross-references from 2 Tim. 2:19 may appear different to modern day translations of the Old Testament, as Paul would have been quoting from the Septuagint (Old Greek translation of the OT). He would also have used a rabbinical interpretative method, called Remez, which takes both a literal and allegorical approach.
 - Study of scripture will prepare us to spot wickedness, and a desire to please the Lord will lead us to steer clear of it

- But if our egos get the better of us, we may decide we are going to challenge and defeat the false teaching face-to-face
- Or if we are weak in our study of scripture, we may not recognize the errors at all and become a victim of it
- Since Paul has asked Timothy to remind the church of these things and to teach them properly in the Word, Paul offers his fourth metaphor to encourage obedience to his instructions:

2Tim. 2:20 Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor.

2Tim. 2:21 Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.

- To understand this analogy properly, we need to keep it in the context of believers led astray by false teaching into a useless, destructive walk of faith
 - Secondly, we need to assign proper meaning to each detail in the analogy
 - Starting with the large house
 - In scripture, houses are always pictures or euphemisms for families or groups
 - Notably, the people of God are called “houses” in scripture
 - And the Church is specifically called a house in Hebrews, and the master of that house is Christ
 - It’s a large house because it includes all believers over the entire period of the Church, which surely must be millions if not billions of believers
 - In this house (that is, in the church), we find gold and silver vessels
 - These are pots used to serve food and probably only at special occasions
 - Think of them as fine china
 - But in this house are also vessels of earthenware and wood
 - These are vessels for common use
 - And in fact, some were used as toilets in the home
 - All these vessels are part of the owner or master’s house, yet there are obvious distinctions between them
 - In the metaphor, the distinctions are quite severe
 - Paul intended this stark contrast to make sure we didn’t miss the distinction
 - But it doesn’t require that we apply an equally strong distinction when interpreting the metaphor
 - In other words, even the dishonorable vessels are believers
 - We see this clearly because in v.21 the vessels are called to “cleanse” themselves
 - The word in Greek means to clean out, to empty itself of the filthy material

- Clearly, this isn't describing coming to faith, because the cleaning out is done by the vessel itself, not by the Master
- If we were talking about unbelievers becoming believers, then the metaphor suggests a works-based Gospel
- This is different than the vessels analogy Paul uses in Romans 9, where God creates vessels in a certain way from the beginning
- Instead, in this analogy Paul is describing the honor and dishonor of different members of the body of Christ
 - That honor, or lack thereof, is determined by whether we clear out the things that dishonor us in God's eyes
 - A believer is called to come out from wickedness
 - To stand out in our witness, to separate ourselves from the world
 - And to separate ourselves from false teaching and those who promote it
 - As we do this, we serve the purposes of the Church
 - We witness to the truth
 - We honor and please Christ
 - But of course, we will also raise our profile in the world, leading to greater persecution
 - That was the dilemma in Ephesus for Timothy and the rest of the church
 - Do what God requires, be honored at the judgment, and receive reward
 - Or shrink back, blend in, avoid persecution and yet be filled with dishonor
 - Paul says there were consequences for these choices
 - In particular, Paul says that the vessels that preserve their honor were sanctified and useful to the Master
 - They were prepared for every good work
 - They were ready to serve and therefore they would serve and be rewarded for that service
 - What prepared them for this opportunity? The renewing of their minds through the Word of God
 - As they began to understand biblical truth, they could discern false things so as to avoid them
 - They could then walk in the truth confidently unshaken by persecution or false teaching
 - And they will be rewarded one day
- This leads Paul into a series of direct exhortations to Timothy for how to handle the present situation in Ephesus

2Tim. 2:22 Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and

peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

2Tim. 2:23 But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels.

2Tim. 2:24 The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged,

2Tim. 2:25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,

2Tim. 2:26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

- You can see this passage as a summary of the first two chapters, because it wraps up Paul's major ideas expressed so far in the letter
 - First, Paul asks Timothy to flee youthful lusts
 - We know Timothy was a younger man
 - And young men have lusts that older men generally lack
 - While sexual lusts are obvious, I don't think that's what Paul was principally concerned about in Timothy's case
 - Since there has been no indication of that concern thus far
 - More likely, the youthful lusts Timothy knew was that of ambition, public acceptance or financial accumulation
 - These things could have been responsible for pulling Timothy away from a strong stand with Paul
 - Paul says flee these things, literally run from them
 - And pursue (or run after) righteousness, faith, love and peace
 - Each of these words is important but Paul uses them here in a collective sense
 - Together they represent the true sanctification his analogy mentioned
 - True spiritual maturity and strength is living in righteousness, faith, love and peace
 - Despite persecution, deprivation or rejection, a mature Christian has these qualities born out of a close walk with Christ through His Word
 - They are evidence of a pure heart, Paul says, among all those who call upon the name of the Lord
- As Timothy pursued these things, he must also refuse (or not answer) those who engage in foolish and ignorant speculation (like those we discussed)
 - Here again, the standard is to avoid such people and not to engage with them
 - Paul reiterates that we refuse them because they are seeking to start a quarrel
 - There can be no good spiritual purpose in proposing that the Earth is flat or that the name Jesus isn't the proper name of Christ, except to start an argument
 - But those who seek to serve the Lord as His bondservant cannot be known as a

quarrelsome person

- The Greek word for quarrelsome can be translated to contradict
- We must not become one who makes a pattern of contradicting those who speak nonsense
- Literally, Timothy's spiritual job description precluded him from engaging in such debates
- Instead, a pastor must be kind to all, able to teach and patient when wronged, correcting those in opposition in gentleness
 - This is Paul's recipe for how a pastor must approach situations where empty talk and silly notions are being spread in place of sound biblical instruction
 - First, be kind to all
 - Being rude to a false teacher has no value
 - It's unlikely to win him over, and it only makes you look bad too
 - Secondly, the pastor must be able to teach on the point if they hope to set the person straight
 - Obviously, teaching implies a student willing to learn
 - So Paul's not contradicting himself earlier when he said flee and avoid such people
 - He's merely stating the obvious, that if we have the potential to help such a person, we must possess sufficient knowledge to correct the fact
 - Thirdly, patience when wronged is a prerequisite for pastoral service, especially when working to correct false notions in the body
 - If a pastor stormed off in a huff anytime someone spoke an unkind word or took offense, they would be very lonely
 - Pastors must maintain a perspective that people are their sheep
 - And therefore, they are shepherds leading people, not driving them from behind
 - Show patience in the hope that continuing the engagement may lead somewhere good
 - Finally, the job inevitably includes correcting those in opposition
 - The goal isn't to make or keep friends or find "common ground"
 - The goal is to correct
 - To set those who are opposing the truth on a course aligned with the truth
 - You don't want to hurt feelings, but you can't be afraid of hurting feelings
- If a pastor approaches the correction of useless speculation and other false teaching in this way, he stands the chance of winning them over
 - But Paul says only if the Lord may grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth
 - Again, we're talking about believers

- So consider what Paul just revealed...that even the knowledge of biblical truth depends on the Lord
- If we become enamored with false teaching, then we are taking a risk
 - The risk is that the Lord may not grant us the repentance we need to come to our senses
 - He may elect to leave us where our pride or ego or ignorance took us
 - If we are not diligent to study *and* follow scripture, we may stumble into a pit of false teaching
 - And the Lord may or may not drop a rope down so we can escape
- The writer of Hebrews says something similar

Heb. 5:12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

Heb. 5:13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant.

Heb. 5:14 But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

Heb. 6:1 Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

Heb. 6:2 of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

Heb. 6:3 And this we will do, if God permits.

- Those who do not know the Word of God can't discern good from evil
- And this leaves them susceptible to the enemy's lies and the sin that he provokes in us
- If we allow ourselves to descend to this point, we will escape the snare of the devil only if the Lord brings us to our senses, Paul says
 - Ultimately, the devil is the one behind these schemes of false teaching and useless, distracting arguments
 - He is working to sideline, to stumble God's people
 - Though we are no longer his, nevertheless we can still be deceived into doing his will Paul says at the end of v.26
 - That's what happens when Christians turn aside to follow these myths or live in open rebellion
 - That's what Timothy and the rest of Ephesus would be doing if they continued to run from their witness, to entertain false teaching and avoid persecution
 - They were deceived, held captive by the enemy

- And in danger of being found to be vessels filled with dishonor
- The Father is merciful, but He is also an exacting Master who reaps where He does not sow
- He expects us to obey His commands

- As we move into Chapter 3 of 2 Timothy, Paul's letter remains on the topic of bad teaching or false teachers
 - But he's also beginning to transition from Timothy's circumstances to the circumstances of the church generally
 - Timothy, as we know, was a young pastor contending for the faith in a pagan city
 - And he did so during a time of increasing hostility toward Christians and the message of the truth
 - Not only was he contending with false teaching in various forms, but now he was fighting his own flesh in its desire to avoid persecution
 - Because of these challenges, Paul wrote to shore up Timothy's courage to continue preaching the truth
 - In Chapter 1 Paul told Timothy not to neglect the gift he received knowing God granted it for an eternal purpose
 - Paul pointed to his own example of suffering for Christ, as inspiration for Timothy to continue the fight
 - And he mentioned a few contemporaries who failed in that regard as a warning to Timothy
 - Then in Chapter 2, Paul choose to use a series of comparisons to explain the importance of holding to the mission
 - Over the chapter, Paul compared Timothy's Christian service in ministry to seven roles
 - A son, a soldier, an athlete, a farmer, a laborer, a vessel and a bond-servant
 - Paul's point in this chapter was that life as a servant of the Living God involves no less commitment, sacrifice, patience, dedication and reward than do these other walks of life
 - In fact, serving God will require all the more in these areas
 - And so if we're willing to do what's necessary to fulfill these other roles, why would we be less willing for the sake of serving Christ?
- Finally, as Paul ended Chapter 2, he gave Timothy the exhortation to strive to be a pastor who handles the Word of God properly
 - Make your goal in ministry to handle the Word of God accurately
 - As I said in the last lesson, this should be the highest (and maybe only goal) of every man in pastoral ministry
 - Paul said that being an approved workman includes the responsibility to avoid being dragged into worldly and empty talk
 - Pursuing holiness in your own life is a prerequisite for teaching others about the holiness of God from the word
 - Moreover, Timothy must avoid getting dragged into unhelpful, useless and foolish speculations about words

- Finally, he must work to correct those caught up in such things
- On that final point, Paul said the goal was to avoid being quarrelsome, showing love and patience as he worked to bring repentance among those in opposition
 - Those who are consumed by false teaching are not the enemy necessarily
 - Often they are victims and so they may be the focus of our ministry, should the Lord grant them repentance
 - So although Timothy was to stay out of the mud himself, he should also seek to pull others out as well
- But we can't save everyone, so there are times when it's best to leave the fight
 - That leads us into Chapter 3 where Paul moves to proving his point regarding false teachers, by drawing a comparison to the nature of the last days
 - In fact, let's begin Chapter 3 by re-reading the final two verses of Chapter 2
 - This will give us the full context for Paul's teaching in this chapter

2Tim. 2:25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,

2Tim. 2:26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

2Tim. 3:1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.

2Tim. 3:2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,

2Tim. 3:3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,

2Tim. 3:4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

2Tim. 3:5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

- Reading the end of Chapter 2 with the beginning of Chapter 3 makes clear that Paul wasn't unrealistic about the degree of success Timothy might achieve
 - In fact, Paul's tone is decidedly pessimistic
 - He says things like "if perhaps God may grant repentance"
 - They are caught in a snare of the devil
 - They are held captive, doing his will
 - And then in Chapter 3, Paul opens with "realize this Timothy, in the last days difficult times will come..."
 - Paul is about to set Timothy straight about the nature of the days in which he ministers
 - When Paul says last days, he refers to the days of the church prior to the Lord's

return

- “Last” days doesn’t necessarily refer to a short time, though the longer this age lasts, the less of the “last days” remains (obviously)
 - You should hear last days as referring to the final period of history before the Lord sets up the Kingdom
- And in the last days, Paul says difficult times will come
 - Why did Paul want Timothy to know about the future?
 - Because Timothy needed to understand that his situation in Ephesus wasn’t unexpected nor was it unprecedented
 - The Lord had revealed to Paul that other pastors in other cities would face similar and even worse circumstances during the time the church exists on earth
 - Young and often untrained men like Timothy would be required to stand firm contending for the faith against false and ungodly adversaries
 - As bad as life may be for Timothy, and as hard as the work may be at times, Timothy wasn’t alone and God wasn’t surprised
 - Therefore, there could be no self-pity or making excuses, or avoiding of persecution or confrontation
 - Instead, Paul expected Timothy to set an example for the church to follow
 - To teach and preach the truth of scripture, unadulterated by foolish speculations and unafraid of opposition
- And critical to Timothy’s success was having realistic expectations while knowing his enemy
 - A man of God must steer clear of the traps and pitfalls set by the enemy
 - In these last days, the world is going to be marked by extreme ungodliness
 - And so we must be ready to note and avoid the negative influence of men under Satan’s control
 - Before we look at Paul’s description of these times, let’s understand that the very notion of a bad-to-worse progression would have been news in itself
 - Paul is saying that the age of the church on the earth will not progress to greater godliness or enlightenment, prior to Christ’s return
 - Certainly, those who come to faith in Jesus during this time will be sanctified by their faith
 - But the world at large will not get better during these days
 - Rather, Paul says the condition of men on earth goes in the opposite direction
 - For those of us living 2,000 years after Paul with the benefit of hindsight, this truth doesn’t shock us
 - We see it fulfilled before our eyes
 - We see clearly the growth in evil over the past centuries...even just in the past

few decades

- But for the early church, Paul's words were probably surprising
 - They were enjoying Pax Romana, a worldwide Roman peace
 - And though life was difficult in many ways, it seemed to be getting better
 - So to learn that the Messiah's appearing was not to result in Pax Christos, a worldwide peace of Christ, was news probably
 - Therefore, if Timothy held such an expectation, then it's no mystery why he might have been disturbed by the arrival of persecution
- Even today, there is a certain view of eschatology that believes the world is marching toward greater holiness in preparation for the Lord's return
 - Those who hold to this view are likely to find their faith in God's word shaken when these expectations aren't met
 - As the world descends deeper into ungodliness, they struggle to make sense of it
 - Because they had the wrong expectation, despite Paul's counsel
 - Therein lies one of the key problems with bad eschatology; a wrong view of the Bible's teaching of the end times
 - An over-realized view of end times can undermine a believer's confidence and interest in prophecy
 - They've been told one thing, but the world points in a different direction
 - And so they question whether prophecy can even be understood at all
 - Which is why Paul tells Timothy "realize this"
 - The church needs to understand that the days of the church – the last days – are a period of difficult times
 - The Greek word for difficult can be translated fierce or harsh
 - We must be prepared to undergo harsh and difficult circumstances at the hands of ungodly people
 - Persecution and difficulty isn't proof that you're doing something wrong
 - It may be proof you're serving God well
- Paul moves now to listing 19 vices that mark the nature of these days
 - Paul gives us this list for at least a couple of reasons
 - First, here's our proof that the world is not going to become more holy during the church age
 - Each time you watch a news story about some episode of depraved indifference to human life...
 - Or hear about a YouTube video of reckless or boastful behavior going viral...
 - Or culture normalizing behaviors that used to be scandalous and worthy of

condemnation...

- You can remember Paul's words and understand this is what we were told to expect
 - Don't get discouraged
 - Don't doubt the Lord or His promises, as if the world's descent into ungodliness is cause to question your faith or your Bible
 - Recognize that the Lord warned you to expect such things during these days
- Secondly, I think Paul wants Timothy and the church to understand these things, because to be forewarned is to be forearmed
 - Paul told Timothy to flee these things and to stand apart from the world
 - To protect the word and to be willing to suffer when enemies try to silence him
 - So knowing that the pressure against godly believers will only get worse, is key to preparing to stand up to that pressure
- Let's look briefly at each item of the list
 - The list begins with lovers of self
 - The phrase means narcissism
 - I think it's appropriate that the list begins with this vice, since it has become the defining characteristic of our time
 - Technologies like social media and the cell phone camera have only served to give society's narcissism an easier outlet
 - But the instinct to love one's self has always been in humanity's heart. We just see it on display all the more today
 - In a way, this vice explains most of the rest of the list
 - In our self-deception, we have been taught and have come to accept love of self is a virtue
 - We have changed the term slightly to make it sound more appropriate
 - We call it self-esteem today, but it's the same idea
 - And so we say that raising kids with "healthy self-esteem" should be a goal
 - The Bible says that mankind has all the self-love (or self-esteem) we need
 - The Bible calls it pride, and it says we have way too much of it
 - Ironically, when the world won't affirm our love for ourselves, we pout or rage or get depressed or work all the harder for attention
 - We call these bad behaviors a lack of self-esteem
 - When in reality, they are actually the consequence of someone realizing they weren't as lovable as they thought
 - The word of God says love of self is a mark of the sinful hearts in the last days

- The last thing anyone truly needs is more self-esteem
- Instead, we need less self-esteem and more Christ-esteem
- Fearing our sinfulness brought into the presence of a holy God is the beginning of wisdom
- Paul uses the term “loving” numerous times in this list, including with the second item
 - In the last days, mankind will be lovers of money
 - This means being avaricious
 - Having an insatiable appetite for money and what money may possess
 - Beyond being greedy, this sin also involves a dissipation of time as people spend countless hours earning the money they desire
 - So it’s a sin of consumption made possible by an investing of time and energy in selfish pursuits
 - Next Paul says men in these days are boastful and arrogant
 - Both these words are ways in which we display pride
 - Being boastful means speaking pridefully
 - Arrogant means acting pridefully
 - Both are the outward displays of self-love
 - The fifth and sixth items are revilers and disobedient to parents
 - These too are related sins
 - Reviling is acting against proper authority
 - While disobedient to parents is acting against parental authority
- The Greek word for disobedient could also be translated unresponsive
 - So imagine a child sitting by as a parent gives an order, yet the child doesn’t even acknowledge the parent’s instructions much less obeys
 - In the culture of Paul’s day, this was the height of insubordination
 - In fact, it was almost unimaginable that a child would respond to a parent’s authority in that way
 - Yet today many families know the experience of children ignoring a parent’s authority, which is the highest form of rebellion
 - Disobedience among children is so prevalent in our culture today that restaurants bar children
 - Families decline to fellowship with other families, knowing they can’t expect their children to behave
 - When a child has so little respect for a parent’s authority that they ignore instructions, the child is in full rebellion
 - Even if the child hasn’t yet begun to act out in the worst ways, it’s only a matter of time

- Paul says this is a mark of ungodliness in the last days
 - So certainly Christian parents must do their best to guard against raising children who have this attitude
 - We can't guarantee our children become believers, but we must set an expectation of respect and obedience in the home
- The seventh item is ungrateful, which means to carry an unthankful, unappreciative heart
 - We can see this sinful attitude growing in our culture and world
 - Increasingly, our culture is unfazed by the conveniences and blessings of our modern life
 - What satisfied yesterday is suddenly not good enough today
 - Imagine how grateful our ancestors would have reacted if they could see into the future to understand the things we possess today
 - For example, in 1950 the size of the average American home was under 1,000 sq. ft. (93 sq. m)
 - Today it's about 2,700 sq. ft (252 sq. m)
 - But are we happier today than Americans of 1950?
 - Our houses may be bigger, but we're working harder to pay for them
 - The added expense leaves us more stressed
 - And we have to fill all that space with things which we must pay for, and dust and protect and replace
 - Having an ungrateful heart inevitably leads to avarice and greed, which explains why this sin exists alongside the others on this list
 - We judge what we have against what our greedy heart desires
 - Which leads to discontent and ungratefulness
 - Every year's iPhone leaves me ungrateful for the one I have
 - Another person's success leaves us discontent with our situation in life
 - The pursuit of more drives a sinful lifestyle, which leads us to the next item on the list
 - Eighth: people will be unholy
 - To be unholy means, simply, to be unlike God
 - This one term summarizes the entire list, but in light of the other items around it, I think Paul means it more specifically
 - It means impure as in a sexual sense
 - People will be unholy in their bodies, which should require no further explanation
- Impurity in our bodies leads to the next two items on the list in v.3: unloving and irreconcilable

- The Greek word for unloving means to be heartless, callous
 - It means to be without love in the true sense of the word
 - So in this age, people will use their bodies in increasingly impure ways with one another
 - And yet at the same time, show less true love for one another
- Seeing these two side by side in Paul's list makes perfect sense
 - Our culture is oversexed and unloving because sex is not love
 - In fact, it's the opposite of love when practiced in ungodly ways
 - Yet in these days Paul says immorality becomes the norm, and so people will be unloving
- And as we would expect, such relationships don't last
 - Marriages based in selfish love fail
 - Friendships involving fornication end without marriage
 - And other illegitimate relationships give rise to all manner of abuse
- So Paul adds that people won't be reconcilable
 - The word in Greek includes the notion of unforgiving
 - Looking beyond immoral relationships, we can see this quality in every area of life
 - People are quick to take offense and no one has reason to forgive
- Next comes malicious gossips
 - A malicious gossip is someone who spreads false rumors for the purpose of hurting someone
 - In Paul's day, this usually involved men spreading rumors in the workplace or women gossiping house to house
 - Those in the early church who spoke against Paul were malicious gossips
 - Paul says this behavior will be the way of ungodly people in the last days
 - The Greek word for malicious gossip is *diabolos*
 - From which we get the word devil – who is the father of lies
 - In our day, we see how this is being fulfilled in ever-more powerful ways
 - The internet and the anonymity of modern communication has made malicious rumors a fact of life
 - We now have a new name for it: fake news
 - This is probably one of the clearest examples of fulfillment on the list
 - Never before in history has it been so easy to do what Paul says here would become typical for the age
 - You can certainly expect this to get worse, not better

- Items 12-18 on the list are very closely aligned, so we will look at them as a group
 - You can see a cause-and-effect relationship building in this part of Paul's list beginning with lacking self-control, then brutal and then haters of good
 - To lack self-control means to lack the ability to restrain the evil nature of our flesh
 - No one needs self control when acting in the Spirit, for the Spirit naturally brings control
 - Self-control is always a matter of controlling our sin nature
 - But in these days, people stop trying to control (or never gain control) over their flesh
 - They are like animals living according to instinct
 - And so they are brutal
 - Brutal literally means uncivilized
 - So the world lives increasingly without regard for societal norms, or the dignity of others or even their own bodies
 - Even a casual look around the world confirms this progression
 - Brutality leads to people becoming haters of good
 - In this context, a hater of good is someone who is antagonistic toward anything that seeks to counter their brutality
 - Anything in life that convicts them or prevents them from acting out as they please is attacked
 - Much like a wild animal kept in a cage, they rage at the zookeeper and bite at the bars
 - This pattern is easy to see today, as anyone or anything that dares to call out sin will be attacked
- In v.4 the chain of behavior continues to items 15 and 16, treacherous and reckless
 - The first word means seeking to betray or depose those in control
 - Naturally, as the world becomes brutal and haters of good, they will seek to overturn the establishment
 - Paul says ruling authorities are in place for our good, but since the world hates good, it will hate the establishment
 - Once again, it's easy to see the world's desire to rebel against authority and disrupt order
 - This leads to reckless living
 - The word in Greek is better translated "falling headlong"
 - The word carries both the sense of jumping before you look and of being stubborn
 - As in the case of someone who has been warned not to jump off a cliff, so they decide to jump anyway

- We can see the progression continuing from treachery to recklessness
 - As the world seeks to throw off the shackles of social norms and authority, they begin to act in increasingly headstrong, reckless ways
 - They are not under counsel or authority
 - So they are living without restraint
 - Browsing through the most popular videos on YouTube reveals a world of increasing recklessness
- In extreme cases, the world is reckless with life itself, seeking increasingly dangerous daredevil stunts
 - This comes from hating good also, since it shows contempt for life itself and the opportunity to understand the meaning of life
 - They have made life an empty pursuit of cheating death
 - For an unbeliever to play with death is the absolutely epitome of recklessness since they are risking an eternity in the Lake of Fire
- This cause-and-effect chain concludes in v.4 with items 17, 18 and 19: conceited, lovers of pleasure, not lovers of God
 - To be conceited means to be proud, but in the sense of wrapping one's self in a veil of self-delusion
 - Such a person has supposed themselves to be someone other than they truly are
 - To imagine they live a life of importance or substance
 - Conceit is a necessity in a narcissistic, reckless culture
 - We must compete with everyone else's narcissistic achievements while maintaining our sense of self-worth
 - As social norms dissolve and forgiveness and reconciliation disappear, we must defend our ego
 - Else we risk being run over and rendered irrelevant in a culture that loves only self
 - Conceit leads to a society in which everyone is seeking personal pleasure at everyone else's expense
 - From where we live, what we drive, what we eat, what we wear, what toys we possess and hobbies fill our time, our culture is obsessed with self-gratification
 - This is simply the natural outworking of all the other sins, which lead to uncontrolled selfishness
- Ultimately, the narcissism, ungrateful hearts, lack of self control, brutality and conceit add up to a failure to love God
 - The world has no regard for God
 - But more than that, the world hates God
 - And as Paul says, love for the world and love for God are diametrically opposed

- We can only do one at a time
- Of course the unbelieving world has always been opposed to God
 - But what changes in the last days is the focused hatred of the world against Christ, the true manifestation of God
 - Prior to Christ, the world's opposition to God was diffused, lacking focus (beyond hating God's people)
 - But today, the Messiah has been revealed so the world knows Who to hate now
- Have you noticed that movies like to use the name of Jesus Christ in vain, but you never hear Muhammed or Buddha used in vain?
 - And Christians are mocked on television, movies or elsewhere but rarely other faiths?
 - This is no coincidence
 - Satan focuses the world's hatred at his true enemy, God
 - This too is a sign of the last days
- True to form, our conceited world likes to think of itself as close to God, even as they hate Him
 - Item 19 in v.5: Paul says the world will hold to a form of godliness though they deny its power
 - They make a show of being religious, because it feeds their conceited view of self as worthy of God's love
 - The word in Greek for form literally means an outward form, as in making a show or pretense
 - There is no substance to their piety
 - Today we see this superficial form of godliness evident in those who describe themselves as "spiritual"
 - If you ask them if they are Christian (or any other religion), they will say no to distance themselves from any authority
 - Remember, our culture is treacherous, they reject authority
 - So instead, they claim a higher status of being "spiritual"
 - Much like they enjoy having sexual relationships without the constraints of commitment or self-sacrifice
 - This is not godliness at all, of course, which fits with the whole pattern of an arrogant, boastful, depraved society
 - They have denied the true power of God, Paul says
 - The true power of God is found through faith in Jesus Christ alone
 - That power being the power of His blood to save us from sin and the power of the Holy Spirit to teach us true godliness
 - For all their forms of godliness, the one form they categorically reject is that of faith in Jesus Christ

- And so they possess neither the form nor the substance of true godliness
- They have no truth nor sincerity in anything
- Paul's list is so powerful because it is such a vivid portrayal of the effects of sin when left unchecked in the human heart
 - As the natural constraints God has placed in the world erode, sin abounds all the more
 - God gave mankind marriage, government, societal norms and even our own conscience to contain the sin of man's heart
 - Even barriers like communication, distance and language are being eliminated
 - It's a repeating of the Tower of Babel
 - Mankind, united by their sin nature, achieves even greater heights of depravity, even as they declare they are seeking to reach God
- At the end of v.5 Paul says to Timothy, avoid such men as these
 - Paul's command serves as an interesting counter to his earlier call to correct and counsel men who teach in error
 - Sometimes Timothy was to engage with those causing trouble in the church
 - And in other cases he should avoid such men, Paul says
 - The difference is a matter of the heart
 - In the first case, those engaged in foolish and useless talk were believers who were caught in the trap of the enemy
 - But perhaps they might be rescued, Paul said
 - So Timothy was to engage with believers to correct and perhaps rehabilitate
 - But he wasn't to participate with them in their idle talk
 - But in the case of those here in Chapter 3, we're talking about unbelievers who stand in the way of the church
 - These men will be the source of persecution – the difficult times that will come upon the church
 - In general, Timothy is to avoid such men as these
 - Perhaps they too may be reached with the Gospel
 - But that decision lies with the Lord, and in the meantime Timothy should use discretion and wisdom
 - Paul is coaching Timothy on the balance between reaching the culture and remaining apart from the culture
 - Like a shepherd who leads his flock into pastures but away from wolves
 - We must understand the threats that we face even as we try to convert them
 - Jesus expressed it as being wise as serpents and innocent as doves
 - Never giving cause for accusation yet being smart in how we handle ourselves, knowing we are operating behind enemy lines

- Paul is trying to give Timothy wisdom on how to defeat his enemies even as he is ordering Timothy forward into battle
 - Including naming more examples from Timothy's past experience

2Tim. 3:6 For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses,

2Tim. 3:7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

2Tim. 3:8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith.

2Tim. 3:9 But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes's and Jambres's folly was also.

- Paul says that among those in the world who fit this pattern of sin, there are those who "enter into households" to captivate weak women
 - This is such an intriguing statement, which some see as somewhat misogynistic
 - Paul is describing a pattern in Ephesus, we assume, though I doubt anything that happened in that city was altogether unique
 - In fact, I think we can still see this pattern today
 - In general Paul is describing what can happen in the church when unbelievers posing as religious experts get too close to the church
 - To be clear, we're talking about unbelievers
 - Notice Paul begins with "for among them"
 - Clearly, we're talking about people from the list above, which means they hold to a form of godliness but deny its power
 - These are false teachers, unsafe men who portray themselves as ministers of God in some form
 - Paul told Timothy to avoid such men because they hold a risk for the weak in the church
 - Paul calls out weak women at home weighed down by sin
 - Paul is speaking about a situation in his culture that is different today at least to some degree yet follows the same principle
- First, you have a captive audience
 - In Paul's day, women were mostly found in the home
 - False teachers came into the home during the day, while the men were away in the fields
 - They sought to captivate the women with false teaching
 - Secondly, they found spiritually immature Christians living un-sanctified lives
 - The women were beset with sin because they were not growing in the word

- So they were suffering under the weight of the consequences of all that sin
- So naturally, such a Christian seeks for relief as the Spirit convicts them
- The problem was they found “answers” in the wrong place
 - Their immaturity left them vulnerable to receiving false teaching
 - You may remember in our 1 Timothy study we learned that the false teaching in Ephesus was being promoted by deceived women in the church
 - Now we see how those women were deceived
 - They were won over by crafty false teachers while they were without the protection of their husbands
- Interestingly, the same pattern repeats itself today, though it’s not necessarily limited to women
 - The internet and television brings a myriad of false teaching into homes
 - There, these teachers find a ready audience of weak Christians desperately seeking solutions to life’s problems
 - While the real solutions are found in God’s word under proper teaching, they seek quick solutions from men selling snake oil
- Paul says immature Christians are led on by various impulses (or lusts)
 - We don’t know the lusts that dominated Paul’s day
 - But I doubt they were all that different from our day
 - And today we see people seeking to be healed, to be rich, to experience a miraculous encounter with God
 - So they succumb to any false teaching that offers what they lust after
 - Paul says they are always learning but never able to come to true knowledge
 - This is a pattern you see commonly today
 - A Christian who is always enamored with the latest fad...a book, a movie, a particular teaching or new practice
 - They float from fad to fad, always learning something new but never actually growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ
 - That’s the danger for the church who’s pastor does not help their flock keep distance from these threats
 - They are like wolves robbing the shepherd of stray sheep that wander too far from the flock
 - If Timothy was going to hold the line in Ephesus, he had to contend with the false teachers who were undermining his mission
 - He couldn’t shrink back for this was the time to be alert and on guard
- In vs. 8-9 Paul cites an example from Moses’ experience in Pharaoh’s court
 - We know from Exodus 7 that Moses was opposed by two of Pharaoh’s magicians who performed a stunt similar to the miracle Moses performed

- God turned Moses' staff into a serpent
 - These two magicians, probably through slight of hand, mimicked the miracle
- That's a perfect representation of what false teachers do in general
 - First they gain an audience because a true work of God is taking place around them
 - False teachers rarely start their own religious movements
- They almost always hijack the true church
 - Mormonism begins with a man they call Jesus, though he's not the Jesus of the Bible
 - Jehovah's Witnesses do the same
 - Just as the two magicians Paul names tried to hijack Moses' appearance
- Secondly, they seek to diminish the work of God into a work of man, while claiming to have that power themselves
 - Moses claimed God did the power but the magicians attempted to prove that such power lies within the grasp of men
 - False teachers speak of God but really put the spotlight on themselves and their audience
 - All power is within the grasp of the individual if only they follow the recipe of the false teacher
 - Finally, the end effect of these magicians is to oppose the truth
 - The magicians sought to discredit Moses and his testimony
 - Likewise, the false teachers in the church seek to move our minds off the Gospel and the true message of the church
 - And onto other meaningless things like prosperity
 - Paul says these men opposed the truth, because they have depraved minds and have been rejected by God in regard to faith
 - Paul's strong declaration lines up with Jude's statement about the same false teachers

Jude 4 For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

- Jude says God marked such men out for condemnation beforehand
- And Paul says they were rejected in regard to faith
- Clearly they are not candidates for rehabilitation, and so Timothy and the church should avoid them altogether

- To end our teaching tonight, notice Paul says the good guys win in the end
 - In v.9 Paul says just as the magicians saw their snake eaten alive by God's snake, so will the false teachers' attempts to undermine the church fail
 - This is Paul's encouragement to Timothy to stand strong against such men
 - Moses was probably afraid of what he faced in the court of the most powerful man on earth
 - Nevertheless, he stood firm and truth was vindicated by God's power
 - Similarly, Timothy had good reason to stand firm against opposition
 - Because he was not alone
 - And God knew difficult times would come, so this wasn't a shock or a surprise
 - The men are as evil as the days, but that's why the church exists to proclaim the truth
 - And in the end, the Lord will win by His word

- Last week Paul told Timothy that times were going to be tough for Christians
 - In the last days, people were going to act in increasingly ungodly ways
 - Paul listed 19 vices that would typify the nature of people on earth during our days
 - And as we examined that list, we came to see clearly that this is exactly the world we know today
 - Paul's point was that persecution of believers is not going to be unusual
 - The nature of our days is evil
 - So in the last days, ungodly people will focus their evil hearts against one another and especially against the church
 - Furthermore, the opposition will be led by men who seek to stumble the faithful
 - Unbelievers who come into the church with false teaching
 - Paul said these men would entice weak, immature Christians who are driven by lustful desires
 - Christians who are always learning but never coming to the truth, Paul said
 - The false teachers will pick off some of the weak in the flock, but they will be defeated in the end, just as in the day of Moses
- Therefore Timothy had to be prepared to face difficulties as a pastor
 - Despite whatever temptation Timothy felt to retreat from his God-given role to lead the church in Ephesus, he needed to stay the course
 - A season of persecution wasn't cause to give up on his pastoral duties
 - These seasons are to be expected
 - And a falling away in the church at the hands of false teachers is not evidence that God's people are losing the fight
 - They are reason to press forward in the fight so we may rescue them
- Now Paul gives Timothy the recipe for how a pastor (or any Christian) may prosper in the face of trials and the difficulties we experience in our walk
 - And once again, Paul uses himself as an example for Timothy to follow

2Tim. 3:10 Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance,

2Tim. 3:11 persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!

- In v.10 Paul lays out a series of steps that should mark an obedient life
 - He begins with the comment "now you followed..."
 - Paul means that Timothy paid attention to Paul instead of listening to false

teachers

- Paul's comment suggests that in his time with Timothy in Ephesus, there were also false teachers competing with Paul
- Apparently, these false teachers were competing with Paul, seeking to lead believers astray
- Among those who were targeted was Timothy, and yet Paul says Timothy followed Paul, not the false teachers
 - Specifically, Timothy followed Paul through a series of experiences
 - Each step in this chain leads to the next
 - Paul is describing a progression of spiritual maturity and the consequences that naturally follow
 - So let's look at this chain to understand how mature Christians progress in their pursuit of Christ
- Paul begins with teaching
 - The life of a Christian begins with teaching and everything that follows in their life will turn on the teaching they follow
 - Every Christian is called by scripture to seek proper biblical instruction
 - But many Christians make little effort in this pursuit or they pursue false teaching that tickles the ears
 - If a believer lacks proper instruction, they lack the fuel to drive the engine of their sanctification
 - The Holy Spirit works in our hearts to leads us into a walk of righteousness and holiness
 - But making that journey successfully depends on an understanding of what pleases the Lord

Col. 3:10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him —

- The Bible calls for all believers to begin their walk of pleasing the Lord with a renewing (or a making new) of our mind
- We are expected to come to a "true" knowledge
- From what we learn about Christ and about ourselves in scripture, we gain the insight and motivation to obey Christ
 - We learn about our sin and the struggle we must wage against our flesh
 - We learn what pleases Christ
 - And most importantly, we begin to take on Christ's desires in place of our previous, sinful desires
 - This is a supernatural process, not merely an intellectual process

- There will be things we learn that change specific thoughts and understanding
- For example, learning about rewards in the Kingdom may change our attitude toward accumulating wealth here
- But other times, what we learn doesn't seem directly related to our responses
 - For example, a believer might read the account of Ruth's life and feel motivated to become a missionary in Africa
 - The word of God is living and active, so it possess spiritual power beyond the words on the page
 - That's the power of pursuing instruction
- But if a Christian does not pursue instruction in God's word they are standing still
 - They're like a runner still in the starting blocks
 - The race has begun but they aren't going anywhere
 - Even worse, the writer of Hebrews tells us in Chapter 5 that those who fail to mature in learning will regress
 - A failure to nurture our spirit with the word of God results in our flesh growing stronger at the expense of our spirit
 - Sooner or later, a believer will be captivated by lust or distracted by the enemy's temptations and schemes
 - The word of God has been provided to believers to keep us from these things, as it corrects our wrong thinking and cleanses us of our desires to sin

**Eph. 5:25 ... Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,
Eph. 5:26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,**

- The greatest scandal of the modern church is its intolerance for strong, consistent Bible teaching
 - Most believers who love the word of God and recognize its importance know this struggle
 - Many can tell stories of working in vain to get their pastor to teach the Bible consistently (or at all)
 - Or trying to persuade a small group or Sunday school class to study a Bible book rather than a popular paperback
 - Knowing how many churches have abandoned teaching the Bible as a regular part of Sundays and everyday, we have to wonder what will become of the church?
 - We don't have to wonder very hard, because the result is evident around us
 - Paul will address this outcome in Chapter 4, so we'll leave that discussion for next lesson
- Let's move to the next step in Paul's chain: conduct

- The Greek word for conduct is better translated “lifestyle” or manner of living
 - And naturally, our walk in life will follow naturally from our thinking
 - Our entire educational system is built on this concept
 - We educate and train people to think differently so they will act differently
 - As Paul says

Rom. 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

- By our renewing of our thinking, we will experience a transforming of our walk
 - And that transformation results in a life that proves or testifies to what pleases Christ
 - That is the call on every Christian life
- Occasionally you may encounter a bias against Bible study among some within Christianity
 - Some will say that those who study the Bible “too much” are less likely to serve the Lord
 - This line of thinking suggests that learning can get in the way of living for Christ
 - In the same way that a student can stay in college indefinitely rather than graduating and moving on to a job
- This type of thinking is itself evidence of spiritual immaturity and indicative of someone who lacks an appreciation of the power and necessity of scripture
 - Simply put, it’s literally impossible to study the Bible too much, assuming we’re talking about a believer directed by the Spirit in study
 - The more time we spend in the word of God, the more potential to know Him truly
 - And the more we know Him, the more potential for our conduct to please Him
 - Even Paul required many years of teaching by Christ in Arabia before launching into his ministry
 - And Paul was a Pharisee, someone who had literally memorized the scriptures
 - In any church you will find those who walk with the Lord and serve Him faithfully, and those who don’t
 - More often than not, those who walk closely with the Lord are those who know Him by His word
 - But when knowledge is lacking or where false teaching reigns, sin will follow
- Timothy knew Paul’s teaching, so Timothy followed Paul’s conduct
 - And from there came purpose, Paul says

- Specifically, Timothy felt a call to a similar purpose in pastoral ministry
 - Obviously, not every believer will feel called to the same ministry
 - But everyone will feel called to serve Christ in some respect
- So teaching leads to a lifestyle of godliness and from a lifestyle of godliness, we find opportunity to serve Christ in some mission
 - Notice this relationship...holiness in living is a prerequisite to our purpose in serving Christ
 - God calls men and women to serve Him first in our putting away sin and walking in love
 - And then secondly through a purpose in serving Him
- The order of these steps reflects the Lord's priority for His children
 - His first concern is for our holiness
 - He encourages our service, but even our service is intended to drive us into a closer walk with Christ
 - So we can't substitute busy-ness for holiness
- Next, Paul says Timothy knew Paul's faith
 - Notice faith falls fourth in this list, after conduct and purpose, so we know this can't be a reference to saving faith
 - Rather, this is the faith that comes as a result of spiritual maturity
 - It is a confidence in the promises and plan of God
 - A way of thinking and living that rests in God's power
 - Speaking from my own experience, I can testify to the truth of these steps
 - As you make your purpose in life to serve the Lord, you find yourself growing in faith
 - You become more aware of your dependence on the Lord, and on His power and work around you
 - That in turn gives you greater confidence to step out
 - Likewise, you develop a sense of patience – the next item down Paul's chain – as you wait on the Lord or suffer through trials
 - You are committed to the course because you have an understanding of what God is asking
 - You have faith to pursue it
 - So your patience grows
 - Patience produces love and then perseverance
 - The chain is a progression of sanctification in a believer
 - Paul modeled this for Timothy and Timothy followed Paul's example to a point
- But when a believer moves down this path, he or she becomes dangerous to the enemy

- This type of maturing, committed, effective servant is a powerful tool in the hands of the Holy Spirit, and the enemy knows this
 - So naturally, as the devil and his army decide where to focus their attacks, they will concentrate on those who pose the greatest threat
 - So Paul says those who are maturing in love and perseverance will become targets of persecution
 - And those who are targeted for persecution will not escape without suffering as God permits
- Now Paul has reached the main point of his chain of qualities
 - Timothy was suffering in persecution because he was doing the right things
 - He knew the right teaching, which led him to conduct himself and his ministry as God intended
 - As he persevered in love and faith, he became a target in Ephesus, which led to his suffering
- Of course, the enemy's purpose in bringing persecution was to cause Timothy to think twice about pursuing his mission serving Christ
 - If the enemy could convince Timothy that his comfort or his safety was more important than serving Christ, then he could neutralize a soldier in the battle
 - That's the enemy's purpose every time he brings pressure against us
 - He is seeking to prove us unfaithful, to our condemnation and to the shame of the name of Christ
- But the Lord allows the enemy a degree of latitude to work in this way so that His children may prove their faithfulness
 - He tests our hearts in this way, in the same way that Christ was tested by the enemy in the desert after 40 days
 - And such testing is the inevitable result of a faithful walk with Christ
 - It's not a matter of if, but when
 - Paul gives us this truth in v.12

2Tim. 3:12 Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

- This is a basic principle of scripture
- Christians who desire to live a godly life will be persecuted
- There are four key words in this verse
 - First, the word "all"
 - This principle is 100% true 100% of the time without exceptions
 - No Christian is exempted from this principle
 - Secondly, the word "desire"

- Persecution is not reserved for the most holy among us
 - Rather, it is an inevitability for any believer who has left the starting blocks and is endeavoring to run the race set before him or her
 - All that is required to receive persecution is a sincere desire to pursue godliness
- And that brings us to the third word, “godly”
 - A Christian’s goal must be to live in a godly way
 - The word godly here is a reference to the entire chain of activity in vs.10-11
 - In other words, Christians who are moving along this path are desiring to live godly lives
- Finally, the word “will be persecuted” (one word in Greek)
 - Like the law of gravity, this principle is absolute
 - Christians who make a goal of living in a godly way will attract the attention of the enemy
 - Notice Paul says that we will experience disappointments or tragedy or suffer loss
 - He said we would be persecuted, and persecution means being targeted for suffering because of our godliness
- If a Christian is not experiencing persecution in this way, what does it say about their walk?
 - We should be careful about drawing firm conclusions on this point alone
 - Few Christians endure persecution continually
 - Even Paul had days when he wasn’t experiencing persecution
 - Nevertheless, the principle still holds
 - ALL who desire to living in a godly way WILL be persecuted
 - Sooner or later it will happen
 - When you set your life course on the path of righteousness, you are moving in a direction opposite to the world and its god – Satan
 - So you should expect friction
 - So if you never know persecution for your faith, consider whether you are truly desiring to live in a godly way
 - Are you pursuing this chain of spiritual maturity in your life?
 - Or did you get stalled somewhere along the way?
 - If so, then the enemy need not waste time working to neutralize you
 - You already did that to yourself
- Paul continues to alternate between the path of the evil world and the path God’s people

2Tim. 3:13 But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

- Paul says that as Timothy pursues godliness, the evil of the world will continue unabated
 - In fact, it will progress from bad to worse
 - The general direction of society is toward greater sin and depravity
 - And certainly history has proven this to be true
 - Ironically, the world has convinced itself that things are getting better
 - But that's because the world confuses technological progress with human progress
 - The ease of modern living obscures the reality that the quality of life has actually deteriorated
 - We may have more freedom from simple tasks, but we've filled that free time with sinful pursuits
 - Or we're working more to pay for all the convenience
- Meanwhile, the general condition of the human heart continues to deteriorate
 - The evidence is all around us
 - More people are sicker than ever despite taking more drugs than ever
 - More people are miserable despite more convenience and wealth
 - More children grow up ungrateful and disobedient
 - More marriages are failing
 - More people are addicts
 - More schools are violent
 - Civil society has become violent, intolerant and abusive
 - The arts are dominated by portrayals of sex and violence
 - And even the church culture has become dominated by narcissism, arrogance and superficiality
 - And it's only going to get worse, because the world is deceiving itself even as the world itself has been deceived
 - The enemy has fed the world one lie after another
 - Lies about what matters in life, what constitutes success, what death means
 - And on top of those lies, the world has constructed a super structure of false ideals and false teaching
 - The world is living a lie and repeating it to each other
- So the Church will exist in difficult days, surrounded by evil men and attacked by false teachers

- Which is why Christians must commit to a godly life even though we know it will lead to persecution
 - We've set our life on a course moving in the opposite direction from the world
 - And that opposite course means the differences between us and the world will only grow

2Tim. 3:14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them,
2Tim. 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.

- As the world grows more evil, we should remain determined to rest in what we have learned
 - Paul says Timothy must continue in what he learned and became convinced of
 - Once again, the secret to maintaining a godly life in the midst of an evil world is to have the right knowledge
 - And then to be convinced of it, which means to have an abiding confidence in the word of God
- In Timothy's case, his conviction was based on the credibility of the one who delivered it to him, namely Paul
 - Remember, the New Testament canon didn't exist in Timothy's day
 - Timothy did have the Old Testament scriptures, Paul says in v.15, and he learned those even as a child
 - But Paul's teaching was new
- Nevertheless, Timothy found confidence in what Paul taught because he knew Paul's position as an apostle
 - An apostle carried the word of Christ to the church
 - The apostles validated their authority to author God's word through miracles
 - That miraculous power demonstrated these men were called and equipped by God's Spirit in a unique way
- In a sense, we have the same basis for confidence today
 - We place our confidence in the word of God knowing it came to us from Christ by way of his apostles
 - Both the Old and New Testament are the word of God
 - And as such they are the sacred writings, Paul calls them, which means they are the words God provided to man
 - These words have the power to give wisdom leading to a salvation through faith which is by Jesus Christ

- The scriptures are the chief weapon of the church in accomplishing our mission to reach the world for Christ
- So that as we contend with the growing evil of the world, we must stay the course of teaching the word
- Paul's articulating one of the most important principles for the mission of the church: the sufficiency of God's word
 - Paul juxtaposed the problem of growing evil in the world with the church's dependence on the word of God
 - One is the solution to the other
 - Timothy was to continue in the things learned because he had confidence in them
 - And his confidence stemmed from knowing their source and their power
- The word of God has the power to bring the world wisdom and salvation through faith
 - That faith itself is a product of the word of God working in a heart
 - As Paul says

Rom. 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

- So as the world hates the Church more for its godly stand, the church is supposed to all the more trust in and preach the word of God
 - If we truly want to bring an end to persecution around us, we must be prepared to share the very thing that has the power to address sinful hearts
 - How sadly ironic it is that many in the church today call for a diminished role for the word of God believing it counterproductive to reaching the world for Christ
 - I've heard it said too often that an in-depth presentation of God's word is out of place in the pulpit as it will scare off visitors
 - Or it will overwhelm believers who aren't accustomed to Bible study
 - Paul's response is that the word of God is the only solution to those problems!
 - As we teach the word regularly, the believer grows in conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love and so on
 - And as we present the truth of God's word, unbelieving hearts are moved to faith in Jesus Christ
 - Not everyone will respond this way
 - But there is no better solution
- Paul summarizes the power of God's word in a well-known statement to follow

2Tim. 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

2Tim. 3:17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

- Paul says that all scripture is inspired by God
 - The Greek word for inspired is a verb, literally translated God-breathed
 - In Hebrew, the words spirit and breath are virtually identical
 - Which is reflected in the Genesis account where God breathes a soul into his body made of dirt
 - Since God places His thoughts in the mind of a prophet by His Spirit, we can say the prophet's words are "God-breathed"
 - This is a mystery of God's power working through men
 - That God can move through the thoughts and life of an individual to bring that person to record accurately God's precise words
 - Yet at the same time, the Lord preserves the unique qualities of that person's intellect and personality
 - Isaiah's words read very differently than Jeremiah's or Solomon's
 - Nevertheless, these words are exactly as God intended them to be
 - We can suppose that the Lord created Isaiah and Jeremiah to have certain personalities so that their unique writing would result
 - Regardless, the Jewish men who wrote the Bible did so as moved by God's Spirit and recorded words prepared from before the foundations of the earth
- So all scripture is from God and must be given the same authority and weight
 - This is a key point: the Word of God doesn't contain scripture
 - All of it IS scripture
 - We cannot pick and choose which parts are to be seen as from God
 - If it is in the canon, then it is the revealed word of the Creator, and nothing of it is in error
 - Of course, some see Paul making a circular argument here
 - We consider the Bible inspired because it is the canon of scripture
 - And we call the Bible scripture because it was inspired by God
 - And certainly, we must acknowledge that our confidence in the word of God is a matter of faith
 - We are confident in the inspired nature of what we read in the Bible, which is why we acknowledge it as scripture
 - But our confidence is not in the assertions of scholars but in testimony of scripture itself and in the power of God to reveal Himself
 - Scripture has a self-evident quality to a believer, because it is written by God for believers

- The author of scripture is the Holy Spirit
- And believers come to understand scripture because the Holy Spirit is living in us, teaching us all things
- So the author is also the interpreter, so that scripture is self-evident to a believer who is working in the Spirit
- As we spend time in God's word, it convinces us of its heavenly origins
- But unbelievers cannot share in this experience
 - The meaning of scripture is beyond their natural abilities to grasp

1Cor. 2:12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God,
1Cor. 2:13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.
1Cor. 2:14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

- So for the world, any assertions about scripture seem circular
- Only if the Lord brings repentance, faith and the Holy Spirit will a person move from the point of understanding of God's word
- From that point, a believer must still be taught (just as you are now) to understand and appreciate the authority and sufficiency of God's word
 - All scripture is from God, so we must accept it all as such
 - And if we continue in it, then we will find it working in our life
 - If we ignore it or dismiss some or all of it, we lose the opportunity to gain from it and be changed by it
 - Paul gives four key ways in which the word of God works in the life of a believer
 - Before we look at each way individually, take note that the word of God is useful
 - Paul says all scripture is profitable and should be put to work in the body
 - The word profitable means something brings benefit
 - The word of God has benefits for those who use it
 - Occasionally I hear pastors saying they won't teach the Bible verse by verse in a Sunday service because they want to provide relevant teaching
 - In fact, the phrase "relevant teaching" has become code for a pastor that doesn't teach in an expository fashion
 - It usually means topical series where a pastor offers folksy advice on life and happiness
 - That's not edification...it's tickling ears

- So the word of God has four principle purposes in the life of a believer
 - First, it is our source for teaching
 - It brings us to a knowledge of the truth
 - As an unbeliever, the Bible teaches us the truth of God in Christ so that we may be saved
 - This is the only spiritual truth available to an unbeliever such that until they grasp this truth, they can find no other
 - For believers, the word of God teaches us the truth about living a life that pleases God while preparing us for what is coming in our future
 - Because the Bible is beneficial for bringing us to a knowledge of the truth, then by definition the Bible presents truth
 - And therefore anything that contradicts the Bible is false
 - So that if the Bible says the world and everything in it came into being in six days, then any teaching to the contrary is false
 - And if an alternative teaching seems convincing to us, it is only proof of how crafty the enemy can be in his lies
 - So when you see a Christian who is suffering in their walk because of ignorance, bring them to the word of God
 - Don't just bring them a verse on a certain topic
 - Too often I hear people asking questions like, "Where in the Bible do I take my Christian friend to show them they shouldn't have sex before marriage?" etc.
 - That's not how we are to use the word of God, for even if we could find a perfect verse, it won't have the magical power to stop their sin
 - They must be taught from God's word in a wholistic fashion so that their thinking changes, which will lead to a change in behavior
 - This type of immature thinking about God's word leads believers to fall for false teaching about special prayers or promises in scripture
 - The unhealthy fascination in the obscure prayer of Jabez is one such example
 - Bruce Wilkinson's book proposed that if we followed prayer of this OT character, we would see the same result he saw
 - Such teaching reduces God into a genie, obligated to do our bidding so long as we use the magic words
 - And it diminishes God's word to nothing more than a book of spells or incantations waiting to be discovered
- Secondly, the word of God is beneficial for reproof
 - Reproof means bringing a person back to the truth after they have strayed from it
 - Christians who have been taught from God's word may one day stray away from it
 - Rebellious teenagers, rebellious adults too

- When that day comes, their friends and family wring their hands wishing they had the perfect words to bring them back into a walk with the Lord
 - Our first response ought to be prayer, followed by a patient counsel to that person to spend time in God's word
 - Because if they spend time in God's word, they will be under His counsel and not ours
 - And the Lord may use His word to bring reproof, a return to the things they once knew
- Once again, we're not talking about pointing them to a killer passage or verse that answers all life's questions and settles all concerns
 - We're talking about an abiding in the word of God
 - If a person who is living in sin or under false teaching is willing to return to the word of God, then this is a good sign in the first place
 - If they remain there, then the Lord will bring them back on track
- Thirdly, Paul says the Bible is useful for correction
 - Correction is different from reproof
 - Reproof meant bringing someone back into living under the truth they once knew
 - Correction means changing someone's understanding concerning the truth
 - For example, a Christian living a life of fornication needs reproof
 - They need to be convicted over their sin and return to living a life of purity
 - The word of God can bring that conviction and lead them back to righteousness
 - On the other hand, an otherwise upright Christian may hold to a belief in Evolution
 - For that individual, the Bible can be a source of correction
 - It leads them to a proper understanding of the truth of origins
 - So a reproof brings someone's behavior into agreement with scripture
 - While a correction brings someone's thinking into agreement with scripture
 - Scripture can also act to correct groups of people or whole churches or denominations
 - So that if the church has moved away from the word of God for a time and has adopted false teaching, this too can be corrected
 - Provided the church returns to a study of God's word
 - We see powerful examples of this in Israel's past, when in 2 Kings 22 Hezekiah discovered the scrolls of the Law under the temple
 - And it caused him to bring the people of Israel back into agreement with the Law
 - So if you're troubled by what you see happening in your particular small group, or Sunday school class or church or denomination, then the solution is to lead them

back to the word

- If they spend time in the word of God, over time it will correct the group
- In time, the word of God is like a compass that points to the truth
- Finally, Paul says the word of God is beneficial for training in righteousness
 - The word for training is typically used in reference to helping children develop good habits
 - It means discipline
 - So Paul is saying that a regular diet of God's word develops in us a discipline of righteousness
 - This is the ultimate aim of study in God's word
 - As we learn and as we are reproofed and corrected, we begin to live a life patterned after scripture
 - And as we practice this new pattern, it forms new habits, new disciplines
 - So we become trained in righteousness
 - The training begins in our mind but eventually becomes a matter of muscle memory, so to speak
 - We become accustomed to living in righteous ways
 - So that over time we reflect that learning in our life
 - It is the fruit of our years of study
- Another false critique I encounter from time to time is that people who study the Bible a lot are less like Christ in their behavior
 - They become puffed up in knowledge but less loving or focused on reaching the unsaved
 - Such thinking suggests that we either study the Bible or we serve the Great Commission
 - One gets in the way of the other
 - Such thinking is 180° away from the truth
 - The best evangelists are typically the best representatives of Christ
 - And the best representative of Christ will be the person who thinks and lives most like Christ, who is trained in righteousness
 - And the person who has spent a lifetime in the scriptures will be the one trained in righteousness
- Finally, notice that Paul says all scripture is useful in these ways
 - Not just certain areas of scripture
 - So if someone needs correction or reproof, we need not take them to Hebrews 5 or 6
 - If someone needs to be instructed on marriage, we don't necessarily need to go to Ephesians 5 or 1 Peter 3

- If we want someone to understand that Jesus is the way of salvation, we don't necessarily have to send them to John 3:16
- These passages are fine, but so is a passage in Genesis or in Revelation
 - Remember, the word of God is not a recipe book or a dictionary
 - The truth it holds and the power it can supply are not limited to specific words or thoughts
- Rather it works in the heart in mysterious ways, because it is living and active
 - So a man reading Isaiah can become a better husband
 - A woman reading Ruth can become a better wife
 - A child reading about Daniel in the lion's den can appreciate the faithfulness of God
 - And a young man appreciating the power and wisdom of God in the flood story in Genesis can come to believe in Jesus Christ
- That last example is my own, and it's proof to us that the Bible is not a regular book
 - It's the eternal word of God revealed to us so that we might find eternal life
 - And so that we might live to please God
 - This was the tool Paul called Timothy to use to help the church stand firm during difficult times and among evil men
 - Our days are even more difficult and even more evil, so we need the word of God all the more

- Tonight we conclude our study of 2 Timothy, our 17th New Testament book study at VBVM!
 - To this point, we could summarize Paul's letter as an in-depth examination of a single problem – a certain weakness in the church at Ephesus
 - This problem may have also been a personal weakness for the pastor in Ephesus, Timothy
 - The problem?
 - Moving away from a ministry of clear, bold teaching and preaching of the word of God, in order to avoid persecution
 - As we've learned over several weeks, the church in Ephesus was a difficult assignment for a man like Timothy
 - It was pagan, worldly, and untrained in the Jewish scriptures
 - It was vexed by false teachers who sought to undermine the true Gospel
 - It was led by a young, relatively inexperienced pastor and teacher
 - And now the church was experiencing the beginnings of Roman persecution under Nero
 - Under those circumstances, many leaders in the church in Asia were already retreating from their public witness and ministry
 - Paul mentioned a number of men who had ruined their testimonies by shrinking back to save their skin
 - And Paul's comments to Timothy have strongly suggested Paul was concerned that Timothy might follow them
- So from Chapter 1 to 3, Paul has worked to reinforce the faith and diligence of Timothy
 - Paul's asked Timothy to follow his example of suffering for the Gospel
 - He's told Timothy not to neglect the gift God gave him for the purpose of fulfilling his ministry
 - He reassured Timothy he has a spirit of power and courage, which will strengthen him if he walks by the Spirit
 - Paul drew on numerous examples like soldiers, athletes and farmers to explain the need for perseverance
 - Paul emphasized self-discipline, patience and an enduring hardship knowing our rewards come at the end
 - And even if we should suffer persecution to the point of death, this is merely walking in Christ's footsteps
 - In the end, the Lord will remain faithful to us no matter what
 - Finally, Paul put into perspective the false teaching and persecution Timothy was facing in Ephesus
 - He said Timothy had to avoid distractions
 - Steer clear of men who seek to move the church away from the the foundations

of the faith

- Some of God's bondservants will fall prey to temptations, but that isn't the last word
- A faithful servant of God like Timothy can be useful to God in rescuing those who oppose the truth
- And persecution wasn't cause for excessive alarm either
 - The church was living in difficult times
 - Mankind is destined to progress from bad to worse, deceiving the weak in the church
 - And in the midst of these days, the church will be a target for persecution
- Yet it will prosper, so long as it holds fast to what gives it strength
 - So long as the church continues in what it learns from scripture
 - And so long as it continues to teach it
- That last point leads us into Chapter 4 where Paul concludes his letter with an everlasting charge to Timothy and the Church universal

2Tim. 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:

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

2Tim. 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,

2Tim. 4:4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

- You rarely find Paul giving instruction in his letters using such formal language
 - To solely charge means to declare or testify something under an oath
 - Paul says he issues this charge as a testimony from the Lord
 - In a sense, Paul says he's not playing around here
 - He's saying that his instructions to follow are specific directions from God Almighty to Timothy
 - And since they were recorded in scripture, then we know the Lord intended these words also be direction to the church
 - Moreover, Paul says his charge to Timothy is witnessed by God and Christ, the One Who will Judge the living and the dead
 - Paul is reminding Timothy that his faithfulness to this solemn charge will be evaluated one day by Christ
 - Notice there are two groups of people being judged: the living and the dead

- And there are two moments mentioned: His appearing and at His kingdom
- These pairs are linked intentionally
 - The living are the saved, and they will be judged at Christ's appearing for the Church
 - This moment is commonly called the Rapture, when Christ appears to claim His Bride and call Her home
 - Following the Rapture, comes the judgment seat of Christ, when believers receive their rewards
- But then the dead will be judged at the end of Christ's kingdom
 - That judgment will be for the unbelievers
 - Which results in a penalty of the second death
- So Timothy needs to consider carefully what Paul is about to say
 - He can't dismiss it merely as good advice or optional
 - He is on notice
 - The Lord will remind Timothy at the judgment that he was told
 - And if Timothy isn't faithful to this charge, there will be consequences
 - Of course, if he is faithful, then there will be rewards
 - The only thing Timothy won't be able to do is claim he didn't know
 - And likewise, anyone in the church working in a similar ministry role is similarly on notice
- So then what is this charge? Three words...
 - In v.2 Paul says preach the word
 - Timothy's charge is to preach the word of God
 - This the climactic verse of Paul's letter
 - After all has been said about the problems in Ephesus and the risks of shrinking back, it comes down to one simple solution
 - The solution to dealing with false teaching: preach the word
 - The solution to misguided or deceived believers: preach the word
 - The solution to persecution: preach the word
 - The solution to apostasy in the church: preach the word
- Let's look more carefully at what Paul is charging Timothy to do
 - Paul said to preach the word
 - Notice Paul said preach the word, not teach the word
 - Merely teaching the word of God would not have been sufficient for Timothy to satisfy this charge
 - And it's not enough for the church today

- Biblical preaching moves beyond teaching in two essential ways
 - First, the Greek word for preach means to proclaim
 - Preaching is a public proclamation of truth
 - We can also conduct teaching in a public setting
 - But usually teaching is delivered to students in semi-private settings
- Preaching is targeted at those who weren't necessarily looking for instruction
 - So Paul calls Timothy to proclaim the truth publicly
 - Remember, pressure was building for Timothy and other pastors to hide, to avoid public witnessing so as to avoid persecution
 - The last thing many of them wanted to do was speak publicly about Jesus
- Yet Paul says this is precisely what must be done
 - Proclaim the word of God
 - Whether on a street corner, in a synagogue or while standing before kings and authorities, give a public testimony to the truth
- Secondly, preaching includes a call for the hearer to respond
 - Like teaching, a truth is delivered to the ear
 - But unlike teaching, preaching demands a response from the heart
 - Preaching takes a teaching, proclaims it publicly and demands the audience come to a conclusion about what they hear
 - Paul wants Timothy to drive the people of Ephesus to make a personal response
 - Here again, Timothy was leaning toward working only in safe places, with existing Christians where he could avoid rocking the boat
 - A pastor thinking like that can "preach" to the converted or choose his moments to avoid drawing attention to himself
 - But Paul demands that even as the culture was pressuring Timothy to be quiet, Timothy should pressure the culture to decide for Christ
- And the thing Timothy was to preach was the word, meaning to proclaim the scriptures
 - Timothy wasn't free to preach whatever message he desired
 - He was called to preach the word of God
 - Paul's saying that all good preaching is predicated on teaching the Bible
 - Any so-called preaching that does not unfold the meaning of scripture has no authority or power
 - It's merely pontificating
 - It lacks the authority of scripture
 - Furthermore, the conclusions of that teaching must agree with scripture
 - A pastor's interpretation must be exegetically sound

- His conclusions must be those intended by scripture
 - The preacher is not free to invent his own message, his own theme, his own response
- In short, the Lord doesn't need men to repackage His word or to dress it up with gimmicks or distill it down to three perfectly aliterate points
 - Contriving a preaching style that places the attention on ourselves, rather than on the meaning of the text, only distracts people from the word of God
 - Honest preaching emphasizes the power of the text and leads the preacher to fade into the background
 - Preaching the word means approaching the word of God honestly, dividing it rightly, and returning to it consistently
- Paul issued this charge to protect the church, but Paul knew his charge would not be popular
 - Many pastors wouldn't like the demands and risks that come with preaching the word amidst persecution
 - And many congregations won't be happy to sit under the word of God
 - Especially if the result was conviction or a call to suffer for Christ
 - Which is why Paul adds in v.2 that this charge must be kept "in season and out of season"
 - A season refers to a period of time, whether short or long
 - So in season means a period of time when preaching the word of God is acceptable, easy and approved
 - Conversely, out of season means a time when preaching the word is unacceptable, difficult, and likely to result in rejection or persecution
 - Timothy's charge – and the charge of all pastors – is to preach the word of God without interruption and without concern for how it will be received
 - Preach it in season means taking full advantage of those times when preaching the word is acceptable
 - Out of season means the opposite of course
 - The church has been enjoying a season when Bible teaching was acceptable, going back to the 18th century
 - Even today, most places in the world still allow the Bible to be taught
 - And some still desire to hear it
 - But that's changing
- Today, it's easy to find pastors and churches that have forgotten Paul's charge
 - Many claim to preach the word from the pulpit but do nothing of the sort
 - Some even have the phrase "bible church" in their name
 - Yet when you listen to what is actually preached on Sunday, you find very little true

preaching and even less of the word

- In other cases, churches have intentionally moved away from preaching the word
 - They will tell you they've done so intentionally
 - And their justifications are usually many of the same reasons why pastors in Timothy's day were retreating from doing so too
- Some pastors will tell you their congregations won't tolerate the word, since they will likely be confused, offended or "turned off"
 - Others will tell you that they are more comfortable with topical, "light" sermons (usually they aren't qualified to divide the word)
 - Others don't see why teaching the Bible from the pulpit is necessary (another indication of biblical illiteracy)
 - Still others claim they do preach the word, but in reality their sermons don't meeting the biblical definition
- What's most ironic about our situation is that Paul gave Timothy this charge to counteract those same situations in Ephesus
 - In Ephesus the church had those who wouldn't tolerate the word or were ready to persecute the church if it preached about Jesus
 - And there were those who preferred ear-tickling worldly chatter about myths or other favorable topics
 - And there were those who remain forever untaught though they were always pursuing some novel teaching
 - And there were those who taught falsely
- This is the biggest shame in the church today
 - Weak pastors who refuse to teach the word who are setting themselves up for a poor judgment having failed to keep this charge
 - But even worse, their disobedience has resulted in generations of believers unequipped to serve Christ
 - The apathy or outright apostasy of pastors has contributed to millions of believers entering Christ's presence poorly prepared for their own judgment
- In vs.3-4 Paul says this pattern will only grow worse as our age progresses
- Paul says a time will come when the church itself will not endure sound teaching
 - The Greek word translated time is literally season
 - So a time will come when Bible teaching will be out of season
- You'll know it when you see it because the church will be anti-doctrine but pro-myth and excitement
 - Believers won't just be disinterested or ignorant of doctrine
 - They will be *against* doctrine
 - They will call it divisive, boring, unnecessary, confusing, etc.

- Instead, they will seek for other, more exciting teaching, which Paul calls ear-tickling teaching
 - The term tickling of ears is particularly revealing
 - Tickling produces laughter in a child
 - But it's counterfeit joy, because it's not coming from the inside
 - It's external stimulation, and once the stimulation stops, so does the joy
- Tickling the ears refers to a satisfaction or joy that is temporary and external only
 - It's teaching that never penetrates the heart to create lasting impact
 - And its enjoyment or value ends the moment the preacher stops talking
 - It's entertainment instead of edification
- When this season comes upon the church, congregations will gain the upper hand over their shepherds
- Congregations will begin to seek for (or as Paul says, "accumulate" or collect) teachers that meet their desires
 - Collecting suggests people maintaining a stable of religious teachers, like the way we collect recipe books
- The point is no one is truly submitted to authority in this area
 - If someone says something we don't like, we simply walk away
 - And we pick another teacher off the shelf
 - We only stick with the guys or gals that give us what we want
- It's a key problem in the last days church...no one submits to authority
 - That's why Laodicea is the city Jesus chose to represent the last days period of the church
 - The name of the city means the people ruling themselves
 - So it is in the last days church with everyone collecting teachers that tell them only what they want to hear
- Secondly, the word desires is literally translated lusts
 - The desires the last days church wants fulfilled are lustful desires, not spiritual desires
 - The church isn't seeking to collect strong theologians who advance their spiritual growth
 - Rather, they look for men who feed their desire for money, power, strength or other lusts
- Of course, a church that won't tolerate sound doctrine, and wants easy, feel-good entertainment, will embrace myths instead of the truth
- The truth of scripture is always hard to hear because it challenges the sin of prideful hearts
 - No one's flesh likes to hear they aren't perfect and lovable as they think they are

- No one likes to hear they may face sufferings in this life
- Everyone finds doctrine difficult at first
- That's true because our flesh is in constant rebellion to God and His word
 - And those who follow the pattern Paul outlines here are Christians living in the flesh
 - No wonder our church has become such a fleshly, carnal community
- Paul said the antidote for this is to preach the word
- Preach the word to build up your congregation's ability to hear and appreciate the wisdom of God
 - Preaching the word keeps pastors from falling into a lazy pattern of repeating ear-tickling, folk-wisdom sermons
 - Preaching the word will correct the church's shameful descent into biblical illiteracy
 - And preach the word to counter false teachers
- Name a problem in the church and I'll name the solution: preach the word
 - This charge hasn't changed down through the centuries
 - When it's been observed, the church has been strengthened and prepared to serve Christ
 - It's been ready to rebuke false teaching
 - And it's been prepared to face persecution
- But when this charge is set aside, ignored or forgotten, the church grows weak
 - Godliness wanes...
 - Faithfulness is in short supply...
 - And false teaching becomes endemic
- We're watching a changing of seasons happening today
 - Congregations are increasingly intolerant of in-depth Bible teaching
 - They demand ear-tickling messages from the stage
 - So many pastors are moving their preaching in that direction to keep and attract larger audiences
- We're entering a time when the word is decidedly out of season, which is all the most reason why we need pastors to reprove, rebuke, exhort and instruct their congregations with the word
- To reprove is to convict a person of sin by an appeal to their emotions (an emotional appeal for repentance)
 - To rebuke is also to convict but through an appeal to the intellect by explaining why a change is needed
 - To exhort is to encourage action in response to the preaching
- To get people to move away from the wrong things and toward the right things, we need a fulcrum capable of dislodging their disobedient hearts

- And the word of God is that divinely appointed tool
- So when they don't want to hear the word, that's when they most need to hear it
- That's why Paul adds it must be done with instruction and patience
 - You have to teach people from the word to prepare their hearts to understand and obey it
 - And you need patience for that process, especially in times when people don't want to sit for the word
 - Like a parent trying to get a young child to eat their vegetables
 - They won't like it at first, but if you stick with it, they will come to appreciate the benefits
- Then Paul turns again to encouraging Timothy to do better

2Tim. 4:5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

- Paul gives Timothy three steps to fulfilling his call in ministry
 - First be sober
 - To be sober means to be level-headed, ready for whatever comes
 - So don't live naively without an awareness of the dangers and trends
- Secondly, endure hardship
 - Don't take the responsibility of pastoring without appreciating that it comes with difficulties
 - Pastors who take the path of least resistance, or whatever makes their congregations happy, aren't fulfilling their ministries
- Finally, do the work of an evangelist
 - Timothy probably wasn't an evangelist, but Paul is saying his pastoral ministry must not forget it's evangelistic potential
 - A pastor is always an evangelist if they work their ministry properly
 - That is by preaching the word publicly and with a call to repentance
- This is the call for every minister, but Paul is particularly concerned that Timothy takes up this role

2Tim. 4:6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.

2Tim. 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;

2Tim. 4:8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me,

but also to all who have loved His appearing.

- Paul uses two euphemisms from the daily Jewish life to speak about his impending death
 - First Paul says he is being poured out as a drink offering
 - Every day priests performed daily sacrifices in the temple
 - The final act of the sacrifice was to pour out a drink offering on the ground
 - Paul compares his life of service to the Lord as the contents of that offering cup
 - His entire service was like that precious liquid being poured out
 - Eventually, the cup goes empty, and so it will be for Paul's earthly life
 - Like the liquid, Paul's life will be a sacrifice given to honor the Lord
 - Secondly, Paul was preparing to depart from the earth
 - Departures were a common occurrence in ancient life
 - Journeys were required for commerce, religious observance, family visits, etc.
 - And journeys took significant time, requiring separation for a time
 - So Paul is implying he will be separated from Timothy soon but only for a while
 - In both examples, Paul is referring to a death he must of known was coming soon
 - In Acts 9 Jesus says He would show Paul what he must suffer for the sake of Christ
 - So I presume Paul may have known when and how he would die
 - And therefore, he had insight to know his death was coming soon
- So to encourage Timothy, Paul shares his state of mind as he faced death in Nero's prison
 - Paul was reflecting on his testimony of service
 - He says he fought the good fight, that is the fight for the Gospel
 - He finished his course, which means he fulfilled his mission and calling as revealed to him by the Spirit
 - And he kept the faith, meaning he has kept the very same charge he put before Timothy
 - Notice these phrases tie back to the metaphors Paul used in the previous chapter
 - He told Timothy to think like a soldier or an athlete
 - And here he says he knows he has fought and run as he should
 - That's the best any servant of God can hope to know at the end of a life
 - That our testimony is a testimony of faithful execution of our duties
 - That's the call Paul is placing on Timothy, hoping to inspire him to an equally good testimony

- If Paul had reason to believe that Timothy could emulate Paul, then certainly any of us have the same potential
- Don't ever believe the lie that Paul was special and the rest of us stand no chance to do as well
- What Paul received he has given us in scripture
- So if we take advantage of what we've received in the word, then we too have potential to equal his testimony
- When we do, we might also equal his reward
 - Paul says that there is a crown of righteousness laid up for him in Heaven
 - This crown refers to Paul's reward for fulfilling his ministry
 - The Bible often speaks of our eternal rewards as crowns of one kind or another
 - We see believers in the throne room in Heaven casting their crowns before the throne

Rev. 4:10 the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

Rev. 4:11 "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."

- But scripture also says our rewards are tangible gifts in the Kingdom on earth
 - Our reward will be a portion of Christ's inheritance of land in the Kingdom
 - And it will be an opportunity to reign with Him
- So where do crowns fit in?
 - The answer is that crowns are the symbols of our reward
 - We receive the crowns like badges of honor while we are in the throne room waiting for the Kingdom on earth to begin
 - Once the Kingdom begins, we move from Heaven back to the Earth with Christ
 - At that point, we will receive the tangible rewards represented by our crowns
- Notice Paul says that this crown will not be his exclusively
 - It will be shared by all who loved His appearing
 - This is a subtle way of referring to a life of faithful ministry
 - A person who "loves His appearing" is a person living with eyes for eternity
 - It describes someone who was focused on that moment all the days of their walk on earth
 - So Christians who live their lives with an expectation for the Lord's return and all that it brings will be motivated to serve Him well, as Paul did

- In that faithful service they will be well-rewarded
- That's Paul testimony
- And it can be ours as well
- It's not out of reach...it's not too late
- We have this book to motivate that outcome, so use it as it was intended
- Now the letter comes to a close with Paul giving final instructions concerning men who he knew or worked with in ministry

2Tim. 4:9 Make every effort to come to me soon;

2Tim. 4:10 for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

2Tim. 4:11 Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.

2Tim. 4:12 But Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.

2Tim. 4:13 When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments.

2Tim. 4:14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds.

2Tim. 4:15 Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching.

- Paul begins asking Timothy to visit him in Rome before he dies
 - Evidently, he didn't expect to live much longer
 - We don't know if Timothy made it or not
 - When Paul did die, he would have died the death reserved for Roman citizens
 - Roman citizens were not crucified
 - But that hardly means they died easily
 - As Walter Lock explains:

The constitutional method of inflicting capital punishment on a Roman citizen was by the lictor's axe. The criminal was tied to a stake; cruelly scourged with the rods, and then beheaded.

- Next Paul gives Timothy instructions concerning a number of people, probably to remind Timothy what was at stake
 - These men were probably other leaders in Asia, perhaps the men Paul mentioned earlier in the letter
 - He seems to have wanted Timothy to understand how high the stakes were

- So as to give him added motivation to stay the course
- First, Demas was a Christian who chased after the pleasures of the world
 - He deserted Paul as we read, running to Thessalonica
 - Others, Crescens and Titus (not the same as the book) did the same fleeing to Galatia and Dalmatia
 - The word flee suggests that Paul's arrest was cause for all three of these men to flee
- Paul says Luke remained, which is a strong testimony to Luke's faithfulness
 - As a result of staying so close to Paul, Luke was able to write the Gospel by his name and the book of Acts
 - Luke's primary source for both books would have been Paul
 - Faithfulness leaves open a door for the Lord to accomplish great things through us
- After Luke, Paul mentioned another interesting name
 - Mark had previously abandoned Paul and Barnabas during an earlier missionary journey, which Luke records in Acts 13
 - Now Paul asks Timothy to bring Mark with him to Rome
 - Because Mark can be useful to Paul
 - A simple example that a moment of unfaithfulness doesn't have to be the last work in our testimony
 - Pick up and move on in faithfulness and you too can be useful again to the Lord
 - Paul then mentions Tychicus was coming to Ephesus to see Timothy, perhaps to accompany him to Rome
 - And when you come, bring a cloak Paul says
 - The cloak was left at Troas with a man named Carpus and perhaps Paul was enduring cold weather in prison
 - It's the closest Paul comes to letting on about his suffering in his circumstances
 - He also desired books or scriptures
 - These would have been Old Testament books that Paul wanted to read
 - Imagine Paul, a man who probably had the scriptures memorized, still wanting to read God's word as he faced death?
 - It's perhaps the best example in all his writings of how much Paul valued the word of God
 - One commentator observed:

There is an interesting historical parallel to Paul's request. William Tyndale, who translated the first New Testament printed in English, was imprisoned in Vilvorde Castle near Brussels before his execution in 1536. In the year preceding

his death he wrote to the governor, begging for warmer clothing, a woolen shirt, and above all his Hebrew Bible, grammar, and dictionary.

- Then Paul warns Timothy about Alexander
 - He's probably the same Alexander mentioned in 1 Timothy 1
 - He did much harm to Paul, and we might guess it was either false teaching or maligning Paul's character
 - Either way, Paul warns Timothy to steer clear of the man but asks for no retaliation or punishment
 - The Lord is judge and that man would see the consequence of his actions
- Lastly, Paul wraps up the letter with a few instructions

2Tim. 4:16 At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them.

2Tim. 4:17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth.

2Tim. 4:18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

2Tim. 4:19 Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.

2Tim. 4:20 Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus.

2Tim. 4:21 Make every effort to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, also Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brethren.

2Tim. 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

- These are the last recorded words of the Apostle Paul
 - He sums up the desertions as "no one" supported him, but he doesn't want the offense counted against them
 - Paul's words are similar to Christ's situation at death
 - No one was with Him and yet He asked that their offense be forgiven
 - Paul reflected Christ's heart even as he reflected his death
 - Including knowing the Lord stood with him in his suffering
 - And more importantly, Paul knew that the Lord was at work accomplishing eternal things through Paul's sufferings
 - Paul was able to preach his message in Rome again and write a few more letters
 - Paul makes an intriguing reference to being rescued out of a lion's mouth
 - It was probably meant metaphorically, drawing from the book of Daniel
 - A prophet persecuted by a godless ruler, yet God uses the situation to bring

Himself glory

- So it has been with Paul for many years as he ministered in and around the Empire to Gentiles
 - But eventually every prophet dies, even Jesus
- The ultimate rescue, of course, is our rescue from the second death
 - So that as we pass from this life we enter a new eternal life
 - In v.18 Paul talks of that rescue
 - That kept Paul's spirits up and gave him the strength and courage to face death without denying the faith or concealing the message
 - This testimony of how he was preparing for death must have strengthened a young pastor worried about persecution
 - The seeds of the faith have been watered by the blood of martyrs over the centuries
 - And Paul's example illustrates how this works
 - One man standing firm in the face of death inspires the next generation
 - Not because we share a death wish, but because we share the same perspective of death
 - It's a rescue from a fallen world and a sinful body to live in glory in an eternal Kingdom with Christ
 - The letter concludes with greetings
 - Priscilla and Aquila were living in Ephesus leading a house church
 - They are mentioned in the book of Acts and were obviously important to Paul
 - And then Onesiphorus who is mentioned in Chapter 1
 - Paul then informs Timothy of what came of two of Timothy's associates
 - Erastus remained at Corinth
 - But interestingly, Paul left Trophimus sick at Miletus
 - Paul had the apostolic gift of healing, but he either didn't use it here or the Lord didn't allow him to heal
 - This reminds us that the apostolic gifts were intended to serve a greater ministry purpose
 - They were not ultimately to serve earthly needs
- Paul adds an urgent request for Timothy to travel before winter, when travel would have been harder and Paul would have been missing that cloak all the more
 - He adds greetings from a few men who were in the church of Rome and must have known Timothy from Ephesus
 - And most importantly, Paul tells Timothy that the Lord is with him in Spirit
 - The Holy Spirit living in each believer is the Lord living in us

- So while we await for the appearing of the Lord, He is literally present with you now
 - That's why Paul ended with grace be with you
 - You have been saved by the grace of God, but His grace didn't end there
 - The grace of God is with you, living in you, teaching you and leading you into righteousness
 - Lean on him for understanding and let him bring you to the end of your life one day with a similar outlook
 - And one day, we'll all be together with him, admiring each others' crowns