

2025-03-23 - Continue in the Truth - Shawn Mathis (32425248415926) SermonOnly

Let us turn to our Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 4, verse 16. Let us listen attentively to verse 16, chapter 4. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine, continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you. Let us pray.

Spirit of illumination and life, continue Lord to keep us awake and alert in our minds and our hearts as we go through this passage to see how it applies not only to the pastors and leaders of the church, but God even to ourselves as we are on the other side here, those who hear, who hear the likes of Timothy, who hear the pastors and preachers and teachers of the church of God for thousands of years, our Lord. And we are too therefore called to continue in them and to grow thereby and to embrace Jesus all the more we pray. Amen.

In this verse we have a short description of the importance of public teaching and preaching, but more than that, the significance of the content of that preaching, that God's truth is needful for our salvation. For in preaching and in continuing in these things, you will save both yourself and those who hear you. And because of this, you must continue in that truth until the end.

By we I mean both the pastors and the parishioners, as the verse brings both into one grand call, both yourself and those who hear you. We are brought into this together. Since there are two groups described here in verse 16 by the Spirit of God, the urging here to persevere in this truth, I think, is also given to both of us therein.

As he perseveres, that is, he continues in the teachings and the doctrines by, of course, preaching them and instructing them and unpacking them to his audience, they should, what, continue to hear and to grow thereby as well. Continue preaching the word that is for pastors in particular. Take heed, he tells us, church leaders need to examine themselves as well, in particular, as he's written this in other letters, epistles in the New Testament for church leaders in particular, yet still applicable for us.

It's a reminder that the church leaders also need to take heed to themselves. That is, they need to be careful of these things, not enough of them saying, I'm a pastor, I've passed the exams, I've gone to college, I'm good enough, the rest of you need to listen to this. But they need to always be on top of it with respect to themselves, always growing in sanctification and walking in this path and of warring against the world, the flesh and the devil.

And part of that call of righteousness is to take heed and to be careful and to pay attention to. He mentions that three different times in the last three verses, as you recall, that priest a few weeks ago. And uses different words to describe what this means to take heed or to pay attention or meditate, as he says, on these things in verse 15.

And specifically that they teach only the truth, and nothing but the truth, and take heed to this doctrine and the like, and take heed to their own examination as well. Because he tells us, as you continue here in verse 16, I want to get to what I want to emphasize, to continue in them. Continue in them.

What's the them here? It is certainly the doctrines, or doctrine, it is singular. Many commentators think it's simply them, the doctrines, the teachings. But also, I think it also involves taking heed to yourself, Timothy.

Take heed to yourself, examine yourself, right? Don't neglect the gifts that's within you, verse 14, which was given to you by prophecy. Meditate upon these things. Give entirely to what? Attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, verse 13.

He hasn't changed the subject here. The things that he must pay attention to and examine and apply to himself, but also to take heed that he has the right doctrine that he is applying to himself. That he has the true teachings in the word of God, in the gospel of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

And to continue, therefore, it seems to me, in this self-examination, and of course, in the doctrine or teachings, as that word also means, given to everyone, including himself. To learn and to apply to his family as well. That's why we have chapter 3, that he has to have a family in which he is the leader and the one who cares for them.

And of course, especially in teaching others, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you. It's not just your own life that's on the line, as we like to say today, but everyone else as well. We are in this together, brothers and sisters.

And the pastors that you need to pray for, and the preachers and the teachers and the churches of America, need this exhortation and need this warning and need the spirit of God that they would examine themselves that they are also following the truth of God's word and not just spitting out whatever sounds neat or the latest fad. Now he says, saving here, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you. The word saving there is used in different ways in the New Testament, from being justified or declared righteous in God's law courts, to being sanctified or even glorified in heaven where our salvation is complete.

In all cases, the truth of the gospel must be believed. The doctrines here must be embraced by us and by, of course, our pastors as they examine these things, the truth of what Jesus has given us and the like. And in doing this, you will be saved, Timothy and you pastors, and those who hear you, presumably saying the same thing that you're saying to yourself, will be saved as well.

That's pretty high calling. It already tells you how significant and important it is to teach the truth, that the minister has a high calling in this regard, an important calling. The idea here of salvation as well as saving is both the beginning and the continuation of our Christian walk.

We are saved by faith in Jesus Christ. We are sanctified by faith in Jesus Christ. We must always believe in the gospel and the truth therein.

We continue, we persevere, as that word could also be translated here, in these truths, in this great, holy gospel of our Lord and Savior. This continuing therein is by abiding in the truth of Jesus, and it's not by willpower, but by faith and faith alone, and trusting in Him and

abiding in Him. And that means, of course, we need to read His word and listen to His word, but that's the second part of the sermon.

Here we're talking about the pastor again, and who is he going to save? Himself from heartache and spiritual trouble, of course, and our sanctification and the life in which he walks, the pastor, oblivious to his own spiritual life, is a bad pastor indeed. That's a very bad situation. Clueless on doctrine makes it doubly worse.

Now, there's a spectrum, of course, because they too are sinners like you, and they may have a blind spot here or a blind spot there, to one degree or another, with respect to and comparison to other pastors, and maybe even to yourself. There is a spectrum, to be sure, but here, in which he's emphasizing the seriousness of the matter, I want to emphasize that as well. It's important that they know the word, and that they also are the object of the preaching, preaching to themselves, as it were, although you just happen to be here.

Of course it's not you just happen to be here. We're all in this together. In his meditation throughout the week upon the Bible verses and related other matters at the church, he ought to be applying it and being very careful in these matters.

But the other part of his audience is not just himself. He has you as well, the parishioners, that he is preaching to. How? What's the relationship here? What's the particular word used in verse 16? You will save, you will help them be sanctified and grow and persevere and continue in these truths and teachings, both yourself and those who what? Hear you! Well, if they're hearing, what's Timothy doing? Speaking! He's either reading the Bible or preaching from the Bible, but he's using his mouth, and you are called, therefore, to listen.

He is called, therefore, to be careful, because people are listening. His is a public office, and he should not just be saying whatever comes to the top of his head. By preaching in particular here, Romans 10, 14, and 17 through 17, I want to talk about now, drilling in here, of what he's doing.

He's clearly teaching slash reading slash preaching. Something along those lines. I want to focus especially on preaching, because that's what you see often in the New Testament.

Continue Preaching the Word

There are acts in the life of Jesus, and many verses, this is one of the classic verses of Romans 10, 14, and following. It's about the importance of preaching, and we see why from this verse, of course, because through it, you will both save yourself and those who hear you. Hear what? It's not the preaching as much, of course, but the message itself, Jesus Christ, but the method is still there and given to us by God Almighty.

How, then, shall they call on him on whom they have not believed? Paul asks his audience. It's a rhetorical question of sorts. How shall they call on him? Call on him in what sense? How can they believe in Jesus and be saved? That's what he's saying, by saying call on him.

Call for deliverance, call for mercy. How shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? And how shall they

hear without what? A preacher. Isn't that significant? I'll remind you again, they had books back then.

They were called manuscripts or papyri and the like and scrolls, especially. It took more work. They didn't have a printing press, that's true, but he could have said, look, God's going to go ahead and make the office of scribe, the Jews had a scribe, and he's going to pump them out, pump out these books.

We're going to do that, and it happens over time, that's true, but what we have first and foremost here is preaching. That's what he's emphasizing. God has so deigned it that especially preaching, and we mentioned that in the larger catechism, that the ordinances God has given us, the reading of the word, the hearing of the word, and especially preaching is pleased by the spirit of God.

He is pleased to use it to bring many to him. And how shall they preach unless they are sent, verse 15, as it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things. So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing what? By the word of God.

And how did you hear the word of God? Well, you literally heard it. I mean, someone preached it to you. I mean, that's what he just said earlier.

So this chain of questions that he has here points to the message of Jesus, but also in the midst of it, how are they going to hear about Jesus unless someone is sent, someone who is preaching, so they can hear and believe. And I'll remind you here on the side that someone who is sent is what? Someone by whom who is officially set aside publicly, i.e. ordained by God to be a pastor or leader in the church. And Jesus was sent as well.

And here he tells us they had to be sent, and God sends them through the church. 1 Corinthians 1.21, another passage about how the spirit of God is pleased to especially use preaching, not only or uniquely again, but especially, for since in the wisdom of God the world through wisdom did not know God, that is their supposed wisdom. So he's using the word ironically there.

It pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. He says the message preached. That's good to read the Bible.

He doesn't say the message read. You can read, and we should read, and we do read. And it's mentioned elsewhere in the Bible.

You should read on your own, not just wait for the pastor to read the Bible passage for you. But again, it's significant that Paul emphasizes in 1 Corinthians 1 in the midst of him writing at the beginning there of all the factions in the churches of Corinth and how I had Peter as my pastor, I had Paul who baptized me, even Jesus baptized me and whatnot. They were being so prideful and arrogant and he's like, no, it's Jesus Christ and him crucified.

But in the midst of that he makes it clear it's the message preached. That's the method especially used, the preaching. And so we have that here.

In other words, those verses just reinforce what we read here. They're hearing Timothy preach. And probably reading as well, but certainly preaching.

For Christ he says, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1.17, for Christ did not send me to baptize, but to what? Preach the gospel. And Jesus in his own ministry does this over and over again. Now of course it's not in the content therein of this preaching is not whatever a man fancies, but he's supposed to take care of the doctrine and continue in them the preaching of Jesus.

1 Corinthians 1.18, for the message of the cross is foolish to those who are perishing, but to us who believe are being saved it is the power of God. But to us who are being saved it is the power of God, that is the gospel, the content of the preaching. You can have the most ordained pastor in the world.

What does that mean, most ordained? It's the most holy church, the most holy presbytery. They lay hands on this man. He's so well trained.

He's so eloquent. He's so marvelous. And yet he preaches foul heresies.

What's the point? He must be preaching Christ and him crucified. Acts 9.20 Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues. That is the churches of sorts of the Jews at the time.

That he is the son of God. This is his message. This is part of his message anyways.

The hub and the center of his message is probably a good imagery to use there. Christ, of course, means Messiah or anointed one. That is one set aside by God the Father.

He too was appointed as we expect pastors to be appointed. And Jesus, his name means the Lord saves, right? The anointed one who's come to save his people. We preach Jesus and him crucified to proclaim salvation through the personal work of Jesus.

This is the content, the hub of the matter, the nub of the matter, to proclaim him as Lord and Savior, not just a good teacher of good works, but one who has come to save his people from their sins and deliver them. And that's why that message is so significant. For in doing this, continuing in especially the doctrine, the teaching of Jesus Christ, you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

Because it is Jesus who saves. And that's the content of his message. That he is the son of God.

King of kings and Lord of lords. He is both man and God. As man he identifies with us and as us, one of us, the second Adam.

And as God, of course, he merits us redemption eternal. So pastors must proclaim not just any Jesus, but a particular Jesus, God himself. Paul doesn't go through the particulars here in Timothy, because he presumably believes in these things.

And so Paul doesn't go and hash out all these other things, but deals with particular matters he wants to encourage and strengthen Timothy in this regard. But Timothy also must preach

the whole counsel of God, which is the outer wheel of the nub of Jesus and the center of the message. Acts 20, as you recall, the elders of Ephesus Paul tells them, I failed not to preach the whole counsel of God to you because Jesus speaks of his work of redemption as well, but he also speaks of giving the Holy Spirit.

He also speaks of a life of holiness and repentance, sanctification, as well as justification, and adoption and perseverance and everything else. And the letters therein in the Bible, we must preach it and preach it faithfully. That is the leaders of the church the pastors.

And in these things, if you continue in them you will save both yourself and those who hear you, because we must hear the whole truth and nothing but the truth that Christ has presented to us. This is the call of the pastor, and it's a heavy burden because people are listening to him. Now he doesn't present it this way Timothy, just give up because lots of things are weighing upon you, this is a very high calling and responsibility.

No, because ultimately it is the power of the Holy Spirit working through the preaching of the word, and especially the message of the word, our Lord and Savior in the gospel. That's where redemption comes from. We must not exalt the pastors beyond what God has given them, that is to honor them too high.

They are just a messenger, that's it. We must remember that. Next we have continuing hearing of the word, that is for the parishioners.

Continue Hearing the Word

The other half. Saving as well, it's saving Timothy and those who hear him, the parishioners, those who are listening to his ministry. That is sanctification, more holiness, to be more like Jesus Christ.

It is not enough to say, I believe in Jesus, but Christians must keep believing by growing in what? Grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And people like to hear the grace part, more mercy, more compassion, more long-suffering by our Lord and Savior. But the other part is knowledge.

I'm quoting from Peter, by the way. We know Paul is really all about doctrine, of course it's more than doctrine. But he emphasizes doctrine, but so does Peter.

To grow in the knowledge, the understanding, because you cannot grow as a Christian if you are ignorant. I don't read the Bible, I don't memorize it, I don't meditate upon it, I don't hear it, I don't attend to the preaching therein. And unfortunately, this is a problem in America.

And we need to help our brothers, sisters, or ourselves if we struggle with these things. This is significant. Here's a Bible verse.

Use this Bible verse. You want to keep growing? You want to be saved in holiness and righteousness? Continue in these doctrines and these teachings that we hear from the Bible. It should all be rooted in His Word.

Now, how? They should continue in them just as much as Timothy should continue in them as well. All Christians must have a self-examination of their own hearts and of their own doctrines because they shouldn't think that we're going to do it for them. Oh, the session examined my confession, that's sufficient.

No, it's just for our sake. For your sake, you should already know what you believe in your heart. Are you faking it? That's the question.

I don't know. I have high hopes you haven't, and you are not. At the end of the day, this is what you are called to do.

And herein, therein, in this continuation of taking heed to yourself, verse 16, but specifically take heed to yourself how? By what standard? How do you examine your life? By doctrine, by God's teaching, by the Word of God. Question 90 of the larger catechism, we read, how is the word to be read and heard that it may become effectual to salvation? You see that? Effectual to salvation. Right out of verse 16 here, to save both yourself and those who hear you.

The answer is that the word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, taking heed, preparation, and prayer, receiving it with faith and love, light up in our hearts, and practice it in our lives. So it's, in other words, receiving the Word of God here, hearing the Word of God in verse 16, is not a magical enterprise. It's not a hocus-pocus, I just sit here and somehow the words of the pastor bounces off my ears and it's going to help my redemption.

You are called to be actively involved in your sanctification, in your holiness, in your growth, right, to walk, to present, to yield, to fight for God's truth in your heart and your life. You cannot grow as a Christian if you're unattentive to the Word of God. Sadly, I know a couple of stories in my own life in which I have spoken to the children of pastors.

In both cases they were in the military, it turns out. They didn't know a lot of doctrine, they didn't know a lot of truth. And I'm not saying, oh, pastor, did you quote the Confession? No, I quoted Romans 7 and Romans 8. And they're like, I didn't know that.

That's not good. And I think, again, I don't want to quote them. I've said them a number of times over the years.

The numbers show over and over again the gross widespread ignorance of basic teaching in the Word of God and it's a very sad thing to behold. Part of this, calling to receive, to hear, to hear efficaciously, that to bring fruit in your life means preparation diligence. 1 Peter 2.1 we read, in 1 Peter 2.1, therefore laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking.

Take these wickedness and these wicked practices and things of the heart, cast them off, throw them away. As newborn babes desire the pure milk of the Word that you may grow thereby. Just like the baby back there.

That's what you have to do. This is what I want, God. I don't want anything else getting in the way.

Because these things, hypocrisy, envy, evil speaking and the like, will get in the way of you hearing the Word of God. And you can't blame the pastor, you can't blame the Word, you can't blame the humidity or the lack of humidity, the distractions from the babies and the like. Although all those things may be something there, but at the end of the day, if you have these things in your heart, or in your mouth, evil speaking, that's a mouth thing, obviously, not just your heart, that's going to hinder your spiritual growth, and your hearing, and hearing to a good end in the preaching of the Word.

It will be hampered, but we must therefore prepare ourselves to receive the Word as necessary. A prayer beforehand, in fact, the Elijah Catechism mentions prayer. Psalm 119, there you go, 119 verse 18, Open thou my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

He is speaking to whom? God. Open thou my eyes. Prayer is speaking to God.

This is a prayer. Give me illumination that I may better understand your truth, Lord God Almighty, and not take it for granted. And of course, it must be mixed with faith.

I'm going through the Bible verses that we have in our confession on the larger Catechism, question 90. Mixed with faith, Hebrews 4.2. In Hebrews 4.2 we read, For indeed, the gospel was preached to us as well as to them, but the word which they heard did not, what, profit them. It brought them no good, not being mixed with faith and those who heard it.

You can hear the preaching of the Word, you can hear the truth, but if you do not have faith, it will avail you nothing. In fact, it is a greater judgment against you. Hide it in your heart, Psalm 119.11. Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

Memorize the Ten Commandments. This is one reason why we speak it, it's the Word of God, in church. Kids grow up and hear it.

We used to say it in school. I think they stopped that in the 50's. Because it was causing so much trouble back then.

Right. I think we've seen quite the opposite. Lay it up in our hearts, this language there of question 90, from James 122 and following.

Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourself. Just talk about it. You've got to apply it in your life.

I know you're going to fall short, but that's your endeavor, as we talked about in Sunday School. That's your purpose. You're going in that direction in your Christian walk.

Particularly to lay up what? In doing this you have saved both yourself and those who hear you, hearing the truth of God and His Word. Now some practical suggestions for the parishioners, of course myself included, as I should also continue in these things, for our sake and my sake as well. Practices by which we can hear with profit.

Mixing it with faith. That is, we believe in these things. We believe this is good for us to hear and read the Bible, to listen to it preached, and to apply it in our lives.

Practical suggestions. When Sunday comes around of course, that is by Saturday, Saturday night perhaps, or even before then, read the verses ahead of time. Sing the songs and Psalms sent out to you that week.

Memorize the verse once you hear about it today or tomorrow or when you hear about it Saturday. I try to send it Friday night or Saturday morning. Take notes of the sermon.

That's what I like to do. None of this is set in stone. It's not like if you're not doing this, there's something wrong with you.

But there are practical ways, you may have other practical ways that are helpful. Avoid lots of excitement in whatever else you would do on a Saturday night that can make you even more tired on Sunday morning. That's very practical.

It has nothing to do with specifically knowing the Bible verse and singing the Psalms and songs. But just preparing your body and your mind before the Lord's Day so that you're not distracted when you wake up the next day. Have food ready.

Have a good breakfast. Don't rush. You know, these last three or four examples are what you would do in any other similar situation if you had a job interview.

You don't want to come to a job interview with your mind distracted with you rushed and your tie hanging off. You give yourself plenty of time because you know it's, what, important. And you want to have an efficacious or a helpful or a profitable meeting.

So these are what? Natural ways in which we would do any other thing in life that's of equal, not quite equal weight, but of similar weight and significance like worshiping God. Right? So I think a lot of you already know what you need to do is what I'm saying. You've been around the block.

You know some practical things you've got to do. Listen to the recording during the week. It's one reason why we record it so that you can have it later on.

Go through the series again perhaps a year from now. Put it on your calendar. Let's go through the series.

Ask questions. You can write them down. You can email me.

Write them down throughout the week. Meditate upon the verses between the Bible, between morning and evening worship. You come home today.

You've got the notes. You wrote down. You have the outline in front of you.

Read the Bible verse. You can skip my whole part altogether if you want. Go right to the Bible verse and read it this afternoon and meditate upon it.

Or find a Bible commentary. Matthew Henry is one I would more or less recommend, even though I haven't read everything in Matthew Henry. I haven't run across a problem with Matthew Henry yet.

And all these things, of course, pray for more illumination and strength by the Spirit of God. That you would be profiting from hearing, reading, listening, and meditating, and not come with a half-hearted effort and a sloppy, distracted mind. There's another way of saying this.

All this is implied here because the hearer must hear actively, not passively. We don't believe, for example, the sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper, the way the Roman Catholic teach those things, is that they are virtually magic. You don't have to have faith as such.

Just taking it gives you grace. And I fear sometimes Protestants do the same thing. I hear the preaching, isn't this great? Something wonderful is going to happen to me.

No, you've got to take it and use it. I can't always give you the specifics. I don't know where everything is in your life.

I'm not your best friend. I don't live with you. I'm not your spouse.

In some cases, you don't want me being too noisy. Thank you very much. I don't want to be noisy.

In some regards. And take it and say, what can I do with this? It's not always about you. It may be about you and how you can help someone else.

You may look at this and go, sure, I'm a sinner, but I don't see anything particularly here. I know what I'm supposed to do and I fall short of it, but I pretty much got the doctrine and I understand this. Okay, great.

Take it and give it to someone else. That may be what's relevant for you. I don't know.

And help them understand. Go to this verse. This is helpful for me.

Wow. You want to grow as a Christian? You want to be saved? You will save both yourself and those who hear you. Hear the preacher, who is, of course, presumably faithful in preaching.

This is good stuff. This is important stuff. Let's bring our friends and tell our friends, if they're out of state, to go to a good church.

Please, go. Here's a verse. What does this mean? Let's talk about it.

I don't know. But I do know, brothers and sisters, in the Lord, to continue in the doctrines of our Lord and Savior and to mix it. Mix the word.

Mix the hearing therein, whether read or preached, with faith and more faith and pray for more of God's Spirit in your life. Let us pray. Our God above, we call upon you in more of your Spirit, we pray, that is more strength and illumination from the Holy Spirit, God, that

we may be more holy as we embrace more truth of the word of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Be with us, we pray, in spite of our shortcomings, that we may continue and persevere as you promised in your word, by the blood of Christ Jesus-- [cut off]