

The Solemn Charge to Preach

Let's turn to our Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 4. 2 Timothy chapter 4, verses 1-5. Let us listen attentively to the word of God. I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at his appearing in his kingdom, preach the word, be ready in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers, and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you, be watchful in all things, endure affliction, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. Let us pray.

And in these exhortations, God, may your spirits help guide us to understand the importance therein for the ministry, even though none of us here, save one, is a pastor. And yet there are responsibilities related to this to others outside pastorship, Lord, not the least of which is to understand the responsibilities therein, so that he can be held accountable and they can pray accordingly, our God and Savior. May this be the case, especially this evening, Lord, as we go over the solemn charge to preach and to instruct in the flock of God and what that entails, Lord.

And guide my lips therein, that your name be glorified. And we pray this in your son's name, Jesus Christ. Amen.

As Paul winds down his writing to Pastor Timothy, this is the second and last book to Timothy that we have, he brings the young minister back to the basics, right? Preach and do your duty, he would say. In typical Pauline fashion, his exhortations and encouragements are dense, stating a number of facets important to the ministry in successive order, just boom, boom, boom, this is what it is. What these are and how it's related to you in the church is the point of the sermon.

A Solemn Charge to Pastors

Obviously, I would preach with a slightly different emphasis if I had an audience of ministers, for example, I would really hammer home, and I'm still wanting to hammer home, but in a slightly different direction, of course, for the rest of us, because this solemn charge here in point one is given to whom? Young Pastor Timothy, not to you, properly speaking. Any more than presidents and governors and police officers and judges, they have a different commission or charge than you. And yet you know you have a relationship to them, and therefore it is somewhat significant, depending on how close a relationship you have, if you're working close to a judge or not, or you have to deal with the law, how much you want to take seriously what their job is.

We ought to know what it is anyways. And so we're going to learn the job of the pastor here, at least part of the job, what Paul wishes to emphasize, because there's more, as we will see. The charge here that Paul is basically saying, in no uncertain terms, he's urging Timothy not to back off or down from his duties and responsibilities as a pastor.

God has equipped him and given him the Word of God, verses 16 to 17, all scripture is given by inspiration, that the man of God may be complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work. I charge you, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, preach the Word. Preach that very thing I was explaining a few verses earlier.

Therefore, I'm making this conclusion. So, Timothy, in other words, has a same relationship, but an additional relationship to the Word of God. We all must learn from the Bible so that we as men and women of God can grow thereby, be equipped thereby, right? Verse 17.

But Timothy has an additional job, just like Paul, to preach it and to teach it and to instruct others therein. That's the connection. That's what he's driving home here.

Such a charge is given at the first ordination of a young pastor, at least typically in Presbyterian circles. Maybe not this verse, but the implication and things like that. This is something for you, young pastor.

We've ordained you. We've laid hands upon you. This is a formal service that the world may see, that the Presbytery has laid hands upon you, right? 1 Timothy 4.14. And this would be a pretty common passage, or again, sentiments like this.

The duties of the pastorship. And one of them, of course, one of the chief parts of a pastor or a preacher is to preach the Word of God in all its fullness therein. And so that he and the congregants, because ideally, those who want him as their pastor, in the case of installation, sometimes the installation, we call it installation, he's put into the church and they voted for him.

He gets to be their pastor. But also the ordination can happen at the same time. If he's brought into a church and he's a new guy, he gets ordained, they're going to be told what his job is.

And he gets to be told what his job is, in other words. That's what this would be for. And that's how we would do it, typically.

But it's also a good reminder, in other words, that's what I'm driving at, besides that first time. Just like anything else in life, it's good for the judges to remember their charge and their duty, for police officers to know their charge and their duty, and not to lose sight of that as they go on through their work throughout their decades. Sometimes that's done, unfortunately, where our leaders and those who have these public responsibilities forget these things.

And so it's helpful now and then, I'm sure, at Presbyteries or even at the local church, for the pastors, for the sessions, to be reminded of the charge for his work as a minister. And it's how. What does he do here? The word charge can be used slightly different ways elsewhere in the other text.

Here it's clearly in the idea of charge, because it's before God. So it's almost like an oath of sorts, you know. I charge you before God.

That's a pretty serious, solemn thing, isn't it? Before God is what he's emphasizing, showing the seriousness therein, upping the significance and urging him by attaching his responsibility to the charge that Paul is bringing to him. And it's not just me. God here is watching you, Timothy.

To reinforce the solemnity and seriousness therein. It's not just the church, not just me, not just Peter, who might just jump all over you. You know, Peter's the anxious and excitable one.

But God himself in particular. That they are accountable. The implication is they are accountable to God, ultimately.

They should not fear men. They should not fear the votes of men. They should not fear the loss of money from men.

Because unfortunately, even in this day and age, that can happen. They should not fear and bind their consciences, even to the church as such, but always under God. They submit, of course, to the extent that the church and the ministry and the presbytery are not going against the word of God.

That's good and proper. But they do it as unto the Lord, which means whenever there is a violation, or when he has to preach to full counseling, he must preach and he will preach, the church should be fearful of the church stopping him. His commission, his charge is before God and no one else, ultimately, at the end of the day.

And so the implication is he should not be beholden to society, the powers that be, money, bribes, or anything else. But his divine ministry of teaching, of preaching, of instruction, therefore, is before God and the Lord Jesus Christ. There is that connection, again, between the Father, clearly where God is the title here for the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I'll remind you again, Lord often means God as well. It's just another word. Jesus Christ is involved in this charge.

And that makes sense because the office of minister of the New Testament, it's unique, it didn't have ministers in the Old Testament, but you had his prophets who did work like a minister, they also preached, but they did more. This is just more specific, and specifically for the New Testament era. We even have a listing there in 1 Timothy 3, obvious responsibilities, showing us there's something new going on here.

It's not obvious like a ruling elder is kind of obvious. Everyone has them, all kinds of societies, we know, wise men, men with experience. This is something new and it's commissioned by Jesus.

And hence the charge is before the Lord Jesus Christ as he is what? The head of the church. All power and authority has been given to him in the Great Commission in Matthew 28. But it's also proof of deity.

And I already mentioned that a little bit here, of course. The title again, Lord, here in conjunction with God and Lord. The charge where Paul is coordinating the two.

It's not just to God, but God and. It'd be like, why would someone say, I charge you before God and ruling elder Martin? You'd be like, why would you put those two on the same level? What the heck? That makes no sense. We don't talk that way.

Him speaking and writing this way in this case, clearly shows he puts them on the same level. That single charge is equally put upon or from, in the sense of God watching and the Son of God watching, the Lord Jesus Christ. The charge before these two persons of the divine trinity.

So they are both witnesses in that sense because they are commissioners of it more precisely. Jesus, of course, from the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit, the laying on of hands of the presbytery, right? And he ties it more explicitly to Christ here. Who will judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom? So he's upping the ante of this charge before God and the Son, Jesus Christ.

Who will judge? Pay attention, Timothy. He's coming back. It reinforces the seriousness of this commission that Jesus is a savior, of course, and people want to hear that.

Christians want to hear it. Good. I'm not downplaying that.

What we don't often hear and remind us in our circle sometimes is Jesus is also judge and Lord, not just savior and redeemer. Both. Who will judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom? It is coming, the great white throne of judgment, pictured there in the book of Revelation.

It is that same Messiah who saves his people, but he's now coming to bring judgment. Are you in Christ or are you outside of Christ? That's the question. Is he your redeemer and savior and a judge who has judged you in Jesus by his blood and therefore have forgiven you or are you outside that? You have none of that.

That's the great judgment. And of course, there is a judgment with respect to within the church and those who are saved, like the judgment of a father upon children, right? You can have your testament, your last will and testament. Talked a little bit about that before in my family and it's up to the father what he gives every member of the family.

They're still part of the family and the least member who's done the least work for the family, for example, or has been the worst sinner and the biggest troublemaker, still hasn't been cast out of the family because the father has forgiven him. He doesn't get much of an inheritance, does he? But he still is saved. And that's what's going to happen at the end of the day.

We have crowns of grace given to us, but we're still going to heaven. That's what we're happy about. And Christ will judge us in a different way, of course, as his people, but it's still a judgment of a father for us.

And this is urged upon him so that he would do the right thing and not lose sight of what it means to be a minister. And of course, the implication being not just for Timothy, but for all of us, although you don't have a charge, a public charge as much as such. But as a parent, that is still a public office.

Marriage is public. You were married together. When you become parents, the state's concerned about this.

That's why we watch, make sure you're not trying to attack your kids and be dangerous to them. These things are public in that sense. And so you have that kind of a charge as a parent, as a husband and a wife before the Lord Jesus Christ as well.

Don't think because you're not a church officer, you don't have public responsibilities. Of course you do. And a duty to him and to do what you were called to do and to do it faithfully as unto the Lord. And so this charge in that broader sense that we all have responsibilities, public responsibilities in particular, is applicable therein for you.

A Solemn Charge to Preach

In the second part, a solemn charge to preach in particular, right? Not just a solemn charge in general as his office, but Paul wants to drive home this point to preach the word, the Bible, the Holy Writ, the very thing he just wrote about in the prior chapter. The chapter divisions are helpful for finding verses, but unfortunately sometimes it's unhelpful because we forget, oh, it was the prior verses in the other chapter, still relevant, still same idea here going on that Paul unpacked at the end of chapter 3. Now the word preach here just simply means to announce, to proclaim, to declare, and the root idea behind it is an official activity of a herald, right? A herald.

We don't have that idea, we don't use that word as much, although we do have the idea where they go out before the king and tell the world, it's public office, public declaration, here comes the king, be prepared, he's coming to town. And he does it with authority. Unlike today where I guess it's an office of the president, one of his officers goes out and tells people, here comes the president, and they set everything up to prepare to protect the president, to set up the stage and all that stuff, and tells the media, and the media knows about it.

They don't have much authority, they're just telling information. In the old days, this idea of herald, he has some authority, more authority than the media just telling you here comes the president. Or his chief of staff is usually in charge of all that kind of stuff.

He has authority and power from the king. And I'm not going to go much further with that idea, but it is part and parcel of what it means to be a minister. He's not just proclaiming, he is proclaiming with authority given to him by Christ through the church.

It's a serious, therefore, calling, a most important job as far as the kingdom of God is concerned, and it should therefore not be treated lightly or as a passing job, as though being

a pastor were just a daytime job. It's not. You don't get on social media and say, well, I'm done being a pastor on social media.

Tempting, but no. You still have a job as you are able to say something, or admonish, or encourage, or bring up information and facts, or whatever. That's what we're called to do.

In the older literature, we have a number of movies the younger ladies like, or the older ladies like, *Pride and Prejudice* and all of them, and they have those pastors. I've never read those books, but my wife would tell me about some of that stuff. I've seen some of the movies, and you can kind of tell it's just a job for them in the worst sense of the word.

I'm just getting a paycheck. That's all I really care about. They're not really zealous for the truth.

They don't really care about the flock as much, because they don't want to offend them, because they're going to lose their paycheck. So you give them nice flowery speeches and sermons so they feel comfortable and happy. No.

A thousand times no. That's not the job of the minister. They are to preach the Word without fear of men, and preach with authority.

That's how Jesus is described in Mark chapter 1 at the beginning of his ministry, that first chapter. And they were astonished at his teaching, that is Jesus Christ, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. Very fascinating.

I remember reading that when I was younger. I was like, what does that mean, speaking with authority? I think it's just simply, he just said it. He didn't hesitate in the stammer and wasn't uncertain of himself.

You can tell by a man's mannerisms and what they say or don't say, if they're afraid or if they really believe what they're saying. It doesn't have to be a pastor. It could be your CEO.

It could be your boss. It could be just you between friends. You're like, ah, you didn't really take that seriously, did you? It's just joking with me, aren't you? Well, okay, I guess not you.

That's all the difference in the world. We know this from the way you speak, how you speak, your mannerisms, all that. It doesn't have to be something supernatural like he was glowing in the dark or something.

No. He spoke with authority because he knew what he knew. And he knew it was right and they were wrong.

And he confronted other, what, public church officers. And all I can think of in my head is let's get ready to rumble. And he did.

Unfortunately, I've mentioned this before, but we don't really allow that in our circles. This is kind of a no-no. I mean, the way, I kind of grew up rough and tumble, you know.

I was kind of weak and scrawny, but I liked to fight. I'm a guy. I had a lot of energy and testosterone.

Let's debate or whatever. And Jesus did. He wasn't ashamed at all.

And the people saw it. They understood. What the Pharisees did, what they kept doing to Jesus, you remember? They didn't often directly confront him, did they? I like to see a chart.

I should do that sometimes. Go through all the, and see what the charts are of how they did it. What often comes to my mind is what? They would ask a question and try to trap him.

The text literally says a number of times they try to trap him. No. What do men do? Let's do it.

Let's argue. Let's debate the facts or whatever the case is. No, they wanted to, you know, talk you around, position, everything else.

That's not someone with authority. Like, are you just embarrassed of what you believe? What's going on here? I think that's part of what's going on. And of course, it's offensive in this day and age.

I mentioned, I think even in our church, people get turned off by people who speak with authority. I've heard that from non-reformed people listening to reformed pastors. They're like, that guy's pretty intense.

Well, okay. It's the truth. We want to stand for God's word and the truth.

What else is there? This is the words of life. Everything else is second place. The book of Acts shows that, of course, over and over again.

The fourth rightness. We don't have that word anymore, right? Of their preaching. Apostolic preaching.

The word they have is three or four times in Acts, boldness. The other way to translate that word is openness or freeness. They weren't holding back like the Pharisees who were playing little word games and trying to trap people in word.

This is, do you believe it or don't you believe it? Are you right or you're wrong? Are you on the fence to say, I'm not sure. I don't know. Don't be mealy mouth.

Now, one thing I want to note is sometimes people try to make a very strong distinction between preaching and teaching. It gets complicated sometimes because you have two Greek words, but they can be used in overlapping sense. Just like in English, sometimes preaching and teaching just kind of use it the same way.

Often, preaching involves exhortation, pleas, and urgings, whereas teaching is more instruction and direction and not as much urging. What are you going to do with this truth? Just simply here is the truth. Even then, Sunday school is typically thought of as a teaching

time and the pastor's not going to be always as animated at the time, but it doesn't mean he doesn't have any urgings or any recommendations.

I think it's a matter of degree sometimes. They certainly aren't contrary to one another. It's not as though, well, I'm the preacher and you're just a teacher.

What kind of a pastor are you? You get the truth out. You try to convince people, as we're going to see in the next few verses, or aren't you? If you are, that's what we need. That's what we need.

However, that may look like with your mannerisms and the like. Of course, he says, preach the word, which? The Bible, the Holy Writ, the 66 books here. He mentioned it again.

It's the context of these verses. The material and the substance of the minister is the word of God. It is God's truth, black and white, no confusion, here it is.

Other things, of course, can be talked about and are talked about, and Paul the Apostle and Christ, indeed, bring up other things. Not always even quoting the Bible explicitly or directly. Jesus uses parables.

We've gone over some of those on Wednesday night. He doesn't quote a Bible verse. He just says, here's a parable.

This reminds me of a parable. I want to teach you guys a lesson through a parable. He's teaching theological truths that are in accordance with the word of God, to be sure.

It's always there, is the point. It's the substance and the standard of instruction for the minister, and that's what he's going to preach. We should never travel beyond the foundation of the word of God.

That way, of course, as good Bereans, you can compare what we teach, parables we may use perhaps in the stories that we have, with the word of God yourself. You can find it. It's not a secret.

It's not a hidden truth that the rest of you have no access to, kind of like in some other religions. They do that where their priests or the leadership or their pastors hold all the cards. Cults do that often.

We don't really know what the rules are, but the pastor does, or we call him the pastor, the leader, or whatever else. They change over time. The Mormons have changed their views on blacks, for example.

It's kind of interesting. In marriage, our God changed his mind a hundred years later. Sorry.

No. These things are public. What they preach is public.

What the pastor preaches is public, and it's the word of God in all its fullness therein. Both the law and the gospel is already preached, so I won't unpack that. In verses 16 to 17, the last few sermons.

But he ties his preaching to this interesting phraseology, right? Be ready in season and out of season. Some guys here like to hunt. I'm not one of them.

Weapons are fine. Guns are cool, but I've never hunted. I don't think I could ever hunt.

And you have to hunt in season. You've got to get even tags for that, because we want to control. We don't want everyone and their mom hunting and killing all the animals, and that's the end of that.

You have to kind of control it. Be wise about it. So I don't have a problem with that.

But you can't hunt out of season. That's a big no-no. I don't think he's referring to that, but he is referring to the idea of seasons, when things are convenient or inconvenient, when you can or can't, humanly speaking, in a relative sense that way.

But when it's convenient or not convenient, that's what he's saying. That's the idea of season, in season, and out of season. Fruits and vegetables are in season or out of season sometimes.

Here, you don't have that idea. The idea is, preach whenever you can, and whoever's going to listen to you. That's what he's urging Timothy here.

Whenever, and wherever, of course, by implication. We may say, when convenient, and when not so convenient. In the middle of the night, in the middle of the day, you should be able to preach.

You may not be able to do everything thoroughly, of course. Be able to answer everything. Some things take a little more instruction, timing, and forethought to answer some questions.

So, a mature pastor will say, well, let me get back to you on that. That's true. But certainly the basics.

What's the gospel? What's sin? Who's God? What do I need to go, to get to heaven? They should be able to answer those at any time. And the idea here is, pastors should want to and be ready to speak the truth, to preach the word of God, to proclaim it as heralds in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and without shame, whatever needs to be said and spoken in the word of God to their relevant audience. Always willing to go wherever people will listen.

Now, how? And he unpacks the how here. Be ready, whenever that may be. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all unsuffering, and teaching or doctrine.

Convince. To expose, to convict. Well, obviously, if you convince somebody, you've convicted them that they were wrong, to use the word in a more old-fashioned sense.

They don't mean necessarily, I feel guilty, I feel miserable. Just, you're convinced or convicted in your heart this is the right thing and that was the wrong way. To expose, showing the folly of atheism, for example, is what you would do.

That's the goal. Paul isn't saying, well, obviously the pastor will always be convincing and people will be listening all the time. But that your effort, that's what you're trying to do, that's the purpose of the teaching and the preaching and the exhortations of the word of God.

The goal is to bring conviction. A change of mind is certainly a change of heart that should follow the change of mind. And then he says rebuke or admonish and warn, which you can see that they may overlap a little bit with conviction or at least cause to effect.

You rebuke to bring conviction or you convince and while convincing they are rebuked, something like that. More about warning and chastising. Now, what's interesting about the letters of Timothy is it's all been about the church.

Members of the church, women of the church who are in the Lord, married to their husbands and husbands to their wives, right? And church officers and the preaching of the word. It's the church context. But certainly Paul isn't saying you shouldn't, you should not try to convince or rebuke unbelievers.

And by rebuking unbelievers, what I mean is not in the kind of childish way of what do you think you are, but in the sense of you are telling them they are wrong. And they're going to take it like a rebuke. You think I'm a little kid? Well, no, but you're wrong.

This is a sin. This is terrible. You're on your way to hell or whatever the context is for you and your neighbor or your co-worker or your family.

The situation comes up. I'm sorry. This is just wrong.

Or what do you think about that? Well, I think this is sin. This is a heinous transgression before God. They will take it as a rebuke because it's a nice rebuke.

It's a mild rebuke. It's indirect. I think you're wrong with what you're saying.

You say kindly and whatever, but it's going to, if it strikes their heart, they will take it wrongly often. And hopefully if they take it wrongly, they'll meditate upon it and come back and take it rightly. That happens too.

I mean, I know stories. I remember one story here of a church member who went to hear Dr. Coppice, our prior pastor here, and he got all angry and cranky. I think it was about baptizing kids or Calvinism.

I don't remember what the topic was, but you know, the letter was pretty blunt and this is how it is. And he just got all offended. He left.

He came back several months later. Got offended again. He left.

Came back. Finally stayed. So you never know.

You never know. People react differently by the same thing. You can say, you've done it.

You've said the same thing in a room with five different people here, five different things. It's the strangest thing sometimes. It depends on if they're paying attention or if they're busy or whatever.

And then he says next, convince, rebuke, exhort. Right? To implore. And the word, interestingly, it can even mean comfort.

So imploring with the intent to bring comfort to somebody. So to redirect the eyes of the downcast upon the finished work of Jesus. That's part of the job of the minister.

So these are different methods and means by which they speak and preach to bring about these results. By God's grace they pray. And in doing all these things, they should have it with patience or long suffering.

There's that great old English word. You're suffering for a long time for some people. Usually you do that with people close to you and family members.

And you should. It's proper. It's called love.

And pastors must have that gift and desire that they have a lot of patience. If perhaps the Lord God grants them repentance, as he says elsewhere. Especially the long suffering of the minister of the pastors should be, of course, with naive Christians who aren't well instructed.

They may be Christians for 30 years, but they know very little. They're kind of like Lot. Right? Lot, as we say, was saved by the skin of his teeth.

He's a very immature Christian. What kind of Christian would do that with his, what the heck? This is crazy. I don't want to scare my friends.

I'm sorry. But your mind is just blown away. At the same time, of course, you realize in your own sins, well, I've done some pretty boneheaded things.

Patience here, I think, for the pastor especially, is for naive Christians who haven't a lot of instruction. Or, of course, young Christians, which is almost the same thing. They don't have a lot of instruction.

It's not always by age, unfortunately, in the American scene. People can be in churches for a very long time and know very little. It's sad.

And we need to adjust accordingly. That's patience for all of us. We need all day long to suffer, not just the pastor.

Okay, pastor, you get to do all the stuff. No, we all got to have this to one degree or another, depending on who we are trying to help in our Christian walk as well. But, of course, there are times to drop the hammer.

He's not saying, well, you never do anything. No church discipline. You know for certain that people are going to try to use the verse this way.

He's not saying everything in one verse and you can't. He's just trying to unpack this a little more for Timothy's sake and for our own as well. And that last word, teaching, is the noun, adjective or noun, but it's not a verb.

Teaching, it's just doctrine. We add I-N-G to it, but it means doctrine. So, teach and instruct with truth, the truth of God's word, with patience.

It takes a long time sometimes to convince people of the word of God. And if they're going to listen, keep at it. Keep progressing.

It may take a long time sometimes. And, of course, you teach the content of the word of God and apply it to the life of the believer, just as Paul does. His letters are helpful that way.

They show us what he does, of course, to a pastor, a young pastor, but I think we can extrapolate from there for ourselves. And then why? Why do this? Why preach? Why try to convince and rebuke and exercise long patience? For the time will come when they will no longer endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers. Time is short, Timothy.

Teach them now before it's too late. That's how I read that. Those in the church, I don't believe he's referring to those outside the church, because they already don't endure sound doctrine by definition.

He's saying they do. The time will come when they won't. And that's obviously church members.

There's going to be a problem in the church soon, Timothy, because those outside the church endure no sound doctrine. That's the definition of an unbeliever. They don't want to hear it at all.

And they will not endure. They will not put up. They will not sustain the truth, but follow their own lusts, because they have itching ears.

They're dissatisfied. They want something else to heap up. It's an interesting picture, right? Teacher upon teacher, like a mound of teachers.

I want to hear these guys more than I want to hear anything else. We see this, unfortunately, in everyday life. Sometimes we've done it ourselves when we have been immature.

Politics, we see this, businesses and the like. The other way of describing this, I think, is we like to surround ourselves, people, some people, not us, I think, most of us, by God's grace, but often people like to surround themselves with yes-men. That's what I want to hear, itching ears.

I want you to scratch my ears. This is what I like to hear. Give me what I want to hear.

No. We don't want that. That's bad.

But this is what he's describing here. In the church, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears. Itching ears is tied to the idea of desires, of course.

He's adding more metaphors here. They want these teachers because they say what they want to hear. They say what they want to hear.

We live in a day and age, and that is just to the nth degree. They have so much access to so many Christians. It's all over social media.

It's locally here. You have lots of parachurch ministries in which anybody, any Tom, Dick and Harry, just says, look at me. I have the spirit of God.

Listen to me. People will. They'll just drop everything and listen to them.

They don't look at their credentials. They don't look at what they teach. They don't look at their doctrine.

They don't look at their confession. They don't look at their life. Often, when you watch them on TV, back in the 80s and 70s, they had them on TV.

You don't know these pastors. You don't know what their lives are like. They may kind of sound good, but how are they living? Part of how you examine the ministry is how they live as well.

That's the list in 1 Timothy 3. But you don't have that on TV, nor on the Internet, which is even worse, because you can't even see them in person, as it were. At least on TV, they kind of look nice, I guess, and they groom nice. That's sometimes an indication.

If you're a slob, that's usually an indication of something. So, we have it today, it seems, in spades. Maybe it always seems that way in every generation.

But this description here, in 3 and 4, so graphic, so detailed. God will give them, is another way of looking at it, what their hearts desire. They desire to have pastors who say things that they like to hear.

It's pleasing to them. And they will turn their ears away from the truth, verse 4, and be turned aside to fables. You remember that? That's been mentioned a couple of times already in 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy.

Fables and genealogies and things like that. So, some of this was tied to the Jewish way of thinking, which makes sense, because they were trying to overcome the Jewishness of the early church, because there were Jews everywhere that were converts and had a lot of bad background. And whatever else the fables may entail that we have even today.

People and false religions in America, we add false religions on top of those claiming to be Christians that are false, and it's just a multiplicity in America. It seems like we are the headquarters of all kinds of crazy cults. There is no moral or intellectual vacuum is another way of looking at this.

Paul doesn't say, you know, look, for a time will come when they won't endure sound doctrine, so they'll just be floating along a sea of indifference. No, it's going to be filled with lies. It's truth or lie is the point.

You can't have anything in the middle. And that's how God has designed us in His image, even in the fallen image. And they will go after one thing or the other.

They can't stay neutral in the middle. You can't stay neutral with respect to God. God says, submit to me, honor me, and believe my truth.

And if you don't, you're on the opposite end. It's off or on, hot or cold, good or bad. Nothing neutral when it comes to the word of God and His truth.

Now, of course, towards all of you, you're like, well, I'm not the pastor. I don't have to preach. I don't have to convince.

I don't have to exhort. But you know, you do have that place, not as a pastor, but as a friend, as a father to a child, as a child to your older parents, perhaps, who are still unbelievers, if the opportunity arises. You do it in a way not like a pastor.

I don't expect you to be blunt like Jesus or Paul or Peter. You're not a herald, that's true. But to the extent that you do these things, and you have, this is still relevant for you.

And also a reminder that you are in a church, and you are in a fallen world, and churches will struggle. There will be people in the churches, Reformed churches, and they've occurred, they've left the faith, they've left the ministry, they joined the Eastern Orthodox Church, they joined the Roman Catholic Church. And so you should know what to look for then.

Ministers who are not ashamed of the truth, who exhort, rebuke and convince, not just by dint of personality, look how handsome I am, look how waxing eloquent I am, but with proper and good biblical arguments and logical truth and facts. And who have the fruit of the Spirit, and you should know what to pray for therefore, that they would do their duty, that they would be emboldened by God and have wisdom and the like and everything else tied to these exhortations, and that they would be preserved by the Spirit of God.

A Solemn Charge to Fulfill the Ministry

And lastly, a solemn charge to fulfill the ministry. So he makes it a little more broadly here in verse 5. It's almost like he's repeating himself, but you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. He ends that section basically repeating himself in a more broad sense, I charge you to preach, I therefore fulfill your ministry, which means do your job, right? Make it to the full. Watchful in all things, that first main idea there.

Pastors, in other words, are supposed to know what is happening in their church, relatively speaking, of course, they're not supposed to be nosy. You know, we're not hands-on, you guys are adults, we're not going to treat you like kids. So that's not what it's urging.

It's more along the lines of public danger, public concerns that come upon you, right? False teachers, false teachers, and teaching the examples of what Paul goes through in 1 and 2 Timothy. We've been through that, right? They're teaching there's no more resurrection, it's a false doctrine, it's their lies, their heresies. Pastors need to be aware of these things going on in the church, or going into the church from outside the church, or whatever the case may be.

We have to be aware of these things, to know the times, so that we can protect the flock of Jesus Christ. To know specifically what causes harm, what is dangerous to the body of the church. And, therefore, we have to use the means, causes, and occasions therein, as ministers, as Presbyterians, to what? Examine new pastors? That they know the truth? Watch out for wolves already in the ministry? We shouldn't be naive as though, oh yeah, you know, my denomination, every pastor is certainly on the ball.

No, but, you know, I want to be careful that you don't be suspicious of everybody either. But, that's my call, specifically. Although, you can't be unaware of that either.

You don't want a pastor who's not godly and holy, and he's completely clueless when it comes to the Bible. So, you need to know some of this stuff. This is what a pastor needs, and I expect that from you, pastor.

And, enduring afflictions. I read these things, and I'm like, okay, so you have afflictions back then, and you have afflictions today. Can I even use the word afflictions today in the American scene? I mean, like when I say persecution, it's like, you don't really have persecutions.

Although, it's no fun losing a job because you won't bake a cake for a gay wedding. That's still a real thing. It's still bad.

It's still, I wouldn't call it persecution with lower P if you want. It's an affliction. Pastors had hardship back then, of course.

They were literally driven out of town and stoned as Paul was stoned. Stephen was killed. Blacklisting.

Now, that happens today. Blacklisting, you're put on this list. We don't like you.

You're a no-go. We'll tell everyone in the back room scenes, and you don't get to go anywhere and preach anywhere. They were doing that with Paul, right? The synagogues heard about him later on, and they were trying to send messengers to cut him off at the pass.

They finally caught him, and they brought him to Rome because he was on the blacklist. Right? He's the bad guy, and we don't like him. Unfortunately, that happens today in churches.

And it's usually the Reformed and Calvinists that are blacklisted. These other churches, whether they're evangelical or liberal, like to talk a lot in my experience. Can't we all just get along? Well, no, you won't let me preach from your pulpit.

You just simply won't. I mean, I wouldn't call that an affliction, but that's what happened to Paul, and it happens today. So it's bad in the sense of why would you not let a godly man preach? Because something else is going on.

It's unfortunate. Can you imagine being a pastor at the Church of Corinth? We went through the book of 1 Corinthians, right? All the factions and the fighting and the lawsuits and divisions and bragging about baptism. You're my favorite pastor.

I don't like that pastor, and whatever else was going on there. Wow. It seemed very childish, but unfortunately, that happens today as well.

Pastors are attacked. Churches are split. It's a very sad thing.

It's still an affliction. It's a hardship. Maybe it's a better word.

Pray for your pastors that these afflictions and hardships will not bear down so hard upon them that they give up, because it happens. Men just give up in the ministry. Work of an evangelist, lastly here.

The word evangelist is fine. It's just that today we put in the idea of he has to go across the ocean and preach somewhere. Then he's really an evangelist.

And your pastor here, he ain't an evangelist. The word just simply means one who preaches the good news. I'm an evangelist from this broad definition.

But we've specialized the word. It's not wrong. It's just how it's used.

I'm telling you, I believe he's not saying it in the very specific sense. But in the broad sense, again, 1 and 2 Timothy is about what? Timothy and his church. Don't read anything about unbelievers.

Talk about the heretics and false teachers. Where? In the church. He's saying, preach the good news to the church.

This is good stuff. And keep it up, Timothy. Don't lose sight of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And of course, again, I don't think I need to remind us that it's not only the good news narrowly conceived. It's also the call of repentance that must go part and parcel with the good news and the like. He sums it all up here with fulfill your ministry or complete to the measure.

Do your job is how we would say it today. Not, I don't think in a condemnatory sense, he's not condemning him, but exhorting him. Keep it up.

Don't lose sight of it. Just do it. And keep on doing it.

Timothy, this is your responsibility laid upon you to watch, to work, to preach, even to counsel. Counseling's not listed here, but we know that's part of the job of a pastor. In your solemn charge, therefore, brothers and sisters, you have a charge with respect to your particular pastor or pastors in general, if you have others in your life as time goes on, to support them in the ministry in general.

Of course, through prayer, through opportunities to minister and teach others, to defend the name of a pastor. I was reminded of this as I was going through the larger catechism question 127. What I try to do sometimes is think of things I've not covered before.

So it's not anything in particular. I'm not like, well, you guys aren't defending my name. Why did I pick this? No, I'm just like, I haven't covered this in a while.

I don't think I've ever covered this. 127. What is the honor that inferiors owe to their superiors? Right? Just those different relationships we have in life.

So it's all kinds of superiors, parents included, older siblings compared to younger siblings. They're superior to an inferior. The honor which inferiors owe to the superiors is all due reverence and heart.

Word and behavior. That makes sense. Prayer and Thanksgiving.

We know that. You hear me say, pray for your pastors, pray for your ruling elders, and pray for one another for that matter. And imitation of their virtues and graces.

I like that. Imitate the best of your leaders, of your parents, of maybe Christian bosses. Even unbelieving bosses sometimes have better examples for you, in fact.

Bravery, maybe, if you were in the military. I want to imitate that bravery. He wasn't a believer, but he did great things.

Bearing with their infirmities, right? You cover their sins, covering them in love so that they may be an honor to them and to their government. Paul's charge is to all ministers everywhere. There is no exception.

All must preach the word, especially the good news of redemption in Jesus Christ. May the Spirit raise up more men to do just that. Let us pray.

Father God, indeed we do pray for that, for all the Napark churches are suffering right now for a lack of ministers. And Lord, may we cry out for mercy that we would have such men who are bold and long-suffering as well, Lord, appropriate to the people in the audience that they are dealing with. Our God and Savior, be with the ministers now that are already here, that they'll be faithful to you, and the churches would love them and support them, and God, that they would feed the flock the truths of your word, we pray, by your Spirit alone.

Amen.