

2nd Timothy Ch 4:3-5

“Fulfill Your Ministry”

Surely we live in such a time whereby if there was ever a need for evangelism, the time is now. It would seem as though the window of opportunity for man to get right with Jesus Christ thereby getting right with God is rapidly drawing to a close. It seems as though the ever-looming threat of global cataclysmic catastrophes is always hovering over us. As we speak the eyes of the whole world are on the situation concerning Iraq, there's uncertainty as to what's going to happen, what's the fallout going to be as the results of the invasion. How will this impact the streets of America with terrorist activities? The wounds of Osama Ben Laden are still fresh in the side of America, and even still he hasn't been apprehended, and we haven't even began to entertain the idea of North Korea yet until we're finished with the issue in Iraq, which began before we finished what was started in Afghanistan. and We're seeing wars and rumors of wars, nation rising against nation, and as I mentioned Wednesday evening surely through this war hell has opened wide it's mouth and expanded it's borders to receive the souls of the lives of those who are taken from this planet who don't know Jesus Christ in a personal way.

The fact is that whether an Arab nation, or an American nation, or a Korean nation, or an Afghan nation or whatever, Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, - God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that whosoever would believe upon Him would not perish but have everlasting life. Don't ya know that, “*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, (that is regarding His coming again) but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*” 2 Peter 3:9 “*As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.*” Ezek 33:11 People are slipping off this planet in droves with out Jesus Christ only to spend eternity in hell and the lake of fire where the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever, and they have no rest day or night. and I wish that I could stand here and tell you that the scriptures say that in the end times the church will wake up to this reality, be shaken from her lethargy, evangelism would be on the up rise, and a revival unparalleled in human history would break out and things would get better and better as multitudes were turned to Christ and the Kingdom age would be ushered in.

But what do we read? Jesus said that, “*Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.*” Matt 24:11-13 In other words where there should *compassion*, there'll be *callused-ness*, where there needs be *kindness*, there'll be a *coldness*, where there should be *love* there'll be *lethargy*, and when there should be *outreach* there'll be *resentment* and indifference. In his 1st letter Paul told Timothy, “*The Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron.*” 1 Tim 4:1-2 Look at ch 3 of this epistle, Vs 1-5 (read). and Here in our text today we're reading (notice vs 3-4.)

Vs3-4

Jesus put it like this, “*When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?*” Luke 18:8 In other words when the church is *needed* the most, it’s the most *negligent* concerning its responsibilities. Why, because the church as a whole (if you want to get down to it) is drunk on sin and inebriated having consumed and been given over to the lusts of the flesh. Now by God’s grace there are those who are in love with Jesus Christ and people like you have availed themselves to the Spirit of God. But unfortunately this seems to categorize the “church” as a whole in the world today. Apathetic, lethargic, and negligent, no longer enduring sound doctrine.

Sound doctrine makes for sound living, because *doctrine* translates into *duty*, what I *believe* translates into how I *behave*. and So it naturally follows that impure doctrine translates into impure lifestyles, if I believe that which is unhealthy for me, then it will translate into my lifestyle in a manner that’s not only unhealthy for me, but for everyone around me. You see, I’m either the salt of the earth, or I’m not, now salt has an impact on that which it comes into contact with, it has a definite influence on those situations it’s brought into. It preserves meat from putrefying, it creates a thirst in me for water, it brings bland foods to life and adds flavor to them. and So I consider that and I ask the question; is the church as a whole preserving this world from further putrefaction? Are we as the church as a whole creating a thirst in the dying world around us for living waters? Are we bringing life into otherwise bland and desperate circumstances, impacting the lives we come into contact with and having a godly influence on the situations we’re brought into?

Now again I realize God has His remnant and there are those who are doing just that (Praise the Lord). But overall I have to answer a resounding no, so what’s then our conclusion? The time *has come* when the church is no longer willing to endure sound doctrine. That’s who this “they” is in reference to, it’s not saying that non-believers won’t endure sound doctrine, the world is never interested in sound doctrine, the inclination, and gravitation of man is naturally towards the things of the flesh. But this corresponds with that which we read in ch 3 so as to say that the church will begin to flow in the same flood of dissipation/debauchery as the world, having a form of godliness, masquerading as godly individuals while in reality being lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

No longer being willing to hold up under, or tolerate, or receive and accept, or as we have it here “endure” sound doctrine. Now as you may know this word that’s been translated into “sound doctrine” is the Greek word h-u-g-i-a-i-a-n-o from which comes our English word “Hygiene” it means that which is healthy for you, that which is good for you, it nourishes your inner man, it’s solid doctrine. But the problem is that solid doctrine goes against the grain of the flesh, it seeks to mortify, or crucify the deeds of the flesh, that you might walk in the Spirit in a manner that’s worthy of your calling and pleasing to the Lord.

We don't like that because the flesh dies hard, and so what we're reading here is that rather than crucifying the flesh, the church will come to a place (and in reality has come to the place) where it seeks to justify the indulgence of the flesh. and You don't have to look to hard to find a church, or a denomination somewhere that willingly commends that which the bible condemns, that readily accepts that which the bible rejects. Be it women being placed in positions of spiritual authority over the men serving as "Pastoretts" or whatever they're referred to. Homosexuality accepted not only in the church apart from repentance, but into the pulpit as well. Even those radical feminists movements who refuse to acknowledge God as our Heavenly "Father" but rather they'll ascribe either a feminine or neuter gender to Him. and These are just a few of the things that various limbs of the church have gone plainly against the clear teaching, and in the face of the Word of God.

Why, we read it here, because they've given themselves over to their "own desires." I had you mark that last time because that's pivot point of this vs, rather than denying self, and dying to self, and decreasing in self, it's how does this benefit me, what's in it for me? Peter parallels this passage with these words, "*There will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words.*" 2 Peter 2:1-3

In other words they'll deceive you through appealing to the lusts of your flesh, "By covetousness", and give you a feel good doctrine wrapped up nice and tight in a few out of context scriptures, and people will swallow it right down. Don't be deceived, the flesh, "self-will" is a powerful foe that you and I do well not to underestimate. John MacArthur makes this comment, "It was the self-will of Adam and Eve, **their own desires**, that led to the Fall, and it is that naturally transmitted self-will that has driven their descendants ever since." You see if I can find a place that gives me scriptural justification for the fulfilling of the desires of my flesh, then that's where my carnal nature wants to take me. Because I can do what I want and still be right with God, I can enjoy that passing pleasures of sin, and still reap the benefits of sanctification through Christ. But that's not what the bible teaches, the bible teaches us that, "*Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*" Gal 5:24

Instead we seem to live in a time that parallels the days of the judges, when, "*Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*" Judg 17:6 Or as we're reading here, "According to their own desires." Those things that enter in and choke out the Word so that it becomes unfruitful in our lives, renders us ineffective for the Kingdom. You remember when Jesus spoke of the parable of the sower, and He began to speak of seed that was sown on various types of soil. In His explanation of the parable He revealed to us that the soils were like unto the various positions of the human heart, be it stony, or hardened, thorny, soft or whatever, and the seed was the Word of God that was being scattered into the hearts of mankind. He said, "*Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.*" Mark 4:18-19

I believe that in large part this is the condition of the church today, sidetracked by the cares of this world, negligent in our pursuit of eternal riches because of our pursuit of material, worldly riches, and walking after the desire for other things rather than the things of God, and the desires of His heart. Therefore we're unfruitful and ineffective, the bible says, "*There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.*" Prov 14:12 and That way is the way of our own desires, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, these things will destroy your life.

We're told why people are acting according to their own desires, notice the last ½ of vs 3, "Because they have itching ears." Or another way we could understand this is that they have an insatiable appetite, or unquenchable thirst, but unfortunately their appetite, their thirst isn't for sound doctrine. Jesus said, "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.*" Matt 5:6 But the flesh is never satisfied, the proverbs tell us, "*Hell and Destruction are never full; So the eyes of man are never satisfied.*" Prov 27:20 The flesh never gets enough, contentment is just ever out of reach for those bent on their own desires, for those who have itching ears, insatiable appetites towards whatever it is that makes them feel good for the moment.

Because so many want a feel good doctrine that's non-confrontational but rather justifies their own desires, and because no true man of God will feed them the junk they're after we read here that, "They will heap up for *themselves* teachers." If I want someone to justify my sin, or my rebellion, or my non-biblical position, all I have to do is look hard enough and I'll find that person. and According to what we're reading here, this will be no small thing in the time of it's happening, it will be an epidemic of cataclysmic proportions, they'll "heap up" teachers. Meaning they'll accumulate into piles, or there'll just be masses of them waiting to tell you what you want to hear (and I would add) for the right price, or that position of power or prestige and a platform of influence in your life, that they might make disciples of themselves rather than disciples of Christ.

The "Church" notice in vs 4, "Will turn their ears away from the truth" you guys this is scary stuff, what a radical indictment against the generation that falls into the time of these vs. The implication here is that they will of their own volition turn their ears away from the truth. They don't want to hear it any more; it "rains on their parade." and Again quoting from MacArthur on this passage, "Instead of receiving **sound doctrine**, such churches fiercely reject it, **wanting rather to have their ears tickled** with unbiblical notions that raise their comfort level, justify or overlook their sins. They also reject as unloving anyone who presumes to hold them accountable to doctrinal beliefs and moral standards they deem outmoded and irrelevant. Consequently the preacher whom they least like to hear brings the message they need most to hear."

Like Elijah to Ahab, here he was following after his own desires, he was a wicked King in Israel, and Elijah comes on the scene to show him his need for repentance. and Ahab's estimation of Elijah was that he was the troubler of Israel. He tried to blame that conservative Christian sect for all of Israel's problems when in reality it was Ahab himself who brought troubles upon the nation through his own sin and rebellion and Elijah was seeking to stir him to repentance.

Today if someone stands up and seeks to hold the people of this nation accountable for their sin, calling sin "sin" and preaching the need for repentance. You're looked on as the root of all the problems we're faced with, because people are turning their ears from the truth. Now follow me here, because to turn one's ears away from the truth is in reality to turn from the reality of Jesus Christ Himself who is the way and the "truth." It's to turn away from the straight teaching of the word of God. As when Jesus was praying to the Father and said, "*Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.*" John 17:17 They become like those of whom the Lord told Isaiah, "*Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand.'*" Isa 6:9 Because they've turned away (in essence) repented their ears from the truth, and have been (notice) "Turned aside to fables."

What does that mean? It simply means that if one rejects the truth, they'll accept the lie, you only have one of 2 choices in life, to believe the truth, or believe a lie, there's no other options. So you can place your faith in Jesus Christ and truth of God's Word, or you can believe some sort of fairy tale that appeals to your own whims and wishes. People find churches (not that feed them, and teach them the word of God, and bring nourishment to their souls) but that entertain them, have all sorts of extra curricular activities going on. They'll go to church much like going to the movie; the only thing missing is a bucket of popcorn with extra butter and a box of hot tamales. But as far as what they get out of it, it's just about the same, an hour and a ½'s worth of entertainment and something to do on the weekend.

Again they become like those of whom the prophet Jeremiah records, "*The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule by their own power; And My people love to have it so.* (But notice this last question) *But what will you do in the end?*" It all sounds good now, but how will that help you in the end? It won't, the Lord told Ezekiel, "*So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain. Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them.*" Ezek 33:31-32 God help us not to be such a people, a people who are only hearers of the Word but not doers, just deceiving ourselves into believing everything's Ok.

This vs reveals to us that if we're unwilling to heed the truth, there will be plenty of individuals who will lead us into a lie. Into fables, and fairy tales, "Wear these holy underwear all your life, knock on doors, do the necessary works and rituals, and one day you'll ascend into Godhood, and you'll rule a heaven of your own, having celestial sex with perpetual virgins, you'll populate your own planet and be to those people their God."

Sounds like a twisted fairy tale doesn't it? Yet that's at the heart of the Mormon doctrine. Brigham Young said that Adam was the God of this world and the only God with whom we have to do! "Just believe with out doubting, sow your seeds of faith into this ministry and the Lord will repay you 100 fold in this life, you'll have health, and wealth beyond your wildest dreams, every thing your carnal heart desires you can have if you'll just believe, God wants you to be rich and never suffer hardship in this life." Who doesn't that appeal to?

Yet it's a fairy tale, it's not true, it's not biblical, I was flipping through the channels the other night and landed on TBN and this guy was giving away a book for anyone who would have the faith to pick of the phone and order it called, "Miracle Money." and He said, we're all entitled to it, and it's out there if we'd just reach out and grab and God wants you to have it. That's so weird because I thought Jesus said that the desire for riches choke the word so that we become unfruitful. I thought Paul said, "*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*" 1 Tim 6:10 Doesn't the bible say, "*Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*" Col 3:2 But as Peter said, people are led astray through covetousness. It's not wrong to be blessed financially, but that's not our pursuit in life, Paul said the things that were of benefit to him in this life he counted as rubbish that he might gain Christ, being conformed to His death if by any means he might attain to the resurrection of the dead. He was eternally minded; it's unfortunate that not every "believer" is. Things will only escalate in a manner that is repulsive to the teaching of the word of God. But as for you- notice vs 5.

Vs 5

The whole world seems to be flowing down the river of debauchery, and the church is right there with it. But as for you, you be watchful in all things. That is, be sober minded concerning the call of God on your life, don't go with the flow, but stand firm (and uncompromisingly) in the truth of God's Word.

We spoke about the 9 imperatives in vs 2-5 this is # 6 here in vs 5 "Be watchful" don't become lethargic, or lulled to sleep, don't be intoxicated by the flesh, but be alert to your surroundings and what's happening about you. The bible says, "*Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.*" 1 Thess 5:6 Jesus said, "*Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*" Matt 26:41 Finally Peter said, "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*" 1 Peter 5:8 Be watchful in all things, don't be ignorant of your enemies devices.

The 7th imperative, “Endure afflictions” if you’re leading a life that’s set apart to Jesus Christ affliction will visit your life, it’s guaranteed. The more in love with Jesus you are, the more Satan wants to take you out. Jesus told Peter that Satan wanted to sift him like wheat, but Jesus prayed for him, and He’s praying for you as well. The bible tells us regarding Jesus that, “*He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.*” Heb 7:25 Some people come to Christ believing that all their problems will be over only to find they’ve opened to themselves a whole new batch of them, because now you’re the light of the world, and people love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. and So when your life starts exposing their lives for what they are, persecution, affliction is sure to follow. Paul says, endure it, they won’t endure sound doctrine, but you’re to endure the affliction. “*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*” 2 Cor 4:17 In other words, no matter how bad it seems now, it’s nothing compared to what awaits you in the eternal. We’re to maintain the eternal perspective, and this life is but a vapor, you just hang on to Christ, and He’ll see you through, He’ll never leave you nor forsake you.

#8 “Do the work of an evangelist” or as one man put it, “Evangelize, or fossilize” doesn’t necessarily mean we’ve all got the gift of evangelism, but if you can memorize John 3:16 you’re equipped to share the gospel and lead people to Christ. and That’s we’re to be about, not going with the flow of apathy, but doing the work of an evangelist, sharing the love and grace of Jesus Christ Not letting people slip off the planet as we sit idly by, but rather when God opens those windows at work, you share Jesus Christ, when God gives you opportunity at school, be ready to give an answer for the hope that lies with in you. Make people accountable; don’t be ashamed of the gospel for it’s the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes. Aren’t you glad someone took the time to share the gospel with you, don’t deny those around you that same opportunity, do the work of an evangelist, and finally, this is where it all culminates. #9 “Fulfill your ministry.” That is, bring to completion, to full fruition that to which God has committed to your trust. In regards to his role in the church, Paul said to the Colossians “*I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God.*” Col 1:25 Later on in that same letter he said, “*And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.*” Col 4:17 Has God called you to a certain individual till death do you part, fulfill your ministry that you received in the Lord. Has God given you a family to be responsible for, children to raise and impart the truth of God’s Word to? Fulfill your ministry. Maybe God has placed you in service here at the fellowship, or has called you to missions work or whatever. Fulfill your ministry, it doesn’t matter how anyone else performs, you’re to finish well. We live in a day when more than ever the world needs the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified for the sins of the world. People everywhere (even in the church) being given over to their own desires. If God calls you to some 3rd world country to proclaim the message of the gospel, than do it, but believe me there’s plenty of work to be done in the very city that God has planted you. Where God sends you, go, but where God plants you, grow, fulfill your ministry.

You may be here today and you don't have a ministry to fulfill, because you've never received Jesus Christ into your heart and into your life. and God has brought you here today so that you could hear the message of hope that we have in Jesus Christ How He bore your sin and mine, He took our guilt upon Himself so that we wouldn't have to bear it. Forgiveness can be yours, but only in Christ, He alone is the way the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father but by Him. He didn't promise comfort and alleviation from all your problems. He promised forgiveness, and everlasting life. So if He's knocking on the door of your heart, and you'll hear Him and open the door and let Him in He'll come in, and though your sins are as scarlet He'll wash you white like snow.