



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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### The Sermons of Dan Duncan

1 Timothy 4: 11-16

1 Timothy

“Neglect Not the Gift”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Well, tonight, it's 1 Timothy 4:11-16. Let's begin with prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we look to You to bless us this evening. We thank You for the privilege we have to be here together and to open our Bibles to read the text and then spend some time considering its meaning. And, Father, we may have to enter, again, before You in the throne of grace and seek Your help in time of need. And we're always in a time of need, Father. We are never at a place when we can feel secure in ourselves or in our circumstances. The reality is we're absolutely secure wherever we are, because we're in Your hand. But we must constantly be looking to You – looking to You in terms of what You've said to us and what You've revealed through Your word, and looking to You in prayer. And so we pray that as we do both of these things tonight, You bless us, that You teach us, that You build us up in the faith, that You would give us an understanding of the Scripture we will consider, that You will make applications to each of us, and that You would bless us as we approach You in prayer.

Bless the young people as they meet this evening. Bless the youth group in Scotland. May they have an enjoyable time and a very profitable and productive time in that land. And we commit all that we do this evening to You and look to You to bless. We know that You will. We know that we cannot come to Your word without being blessed. And it won't return to You void. It will be a blessing to us. And we approach with that anticipation.

So we commit our time to You now and pray Your blessings on us in

Christ’s name. Amen.

[Message] Our text, again, is 1 Timothy 4:11-16. “Prescribe and teach these things. Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe. Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching. Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.”

The story of how John Calvin began his ministry in Geneva is famous in church history. It’s very interesting and I think very instructive. His reputation had preceded him. As a young man, he had already made a name for himself by writing the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. It was a much smaller edition than the one that we have. It was in its seminal form. But he had written it, and he had made a name for himself as a young man. They had circulated widely. And he was refugee from France on his way to Strasbourg when he stopped to spend the night in Geneva.

Reformation had already taken a hold there, had been planted in Geneva by a man named William Farel, who was the reformer of the city at that time, a fiery preacher who, as one writer put it, felt he could storm a fortress easier than keep it. Well, he had stormed the fortress of Geneva, but he did not sense that he was a gifted man in keeping the Reformation going there. He had been, as I said, very instrumental in establishing it there. But the people of Geneva were notorious for being rebellious. And Farel knew that his gift was not for long-term ministry in that city. So when he heard that the author of the *Institutes* was in town, he was convinced that God had brought him, Calvin, there to stay and to carry on the work.

He hurried over to the inn. He met Calvin, but Calvin was not particularly interested in meeting him. In fact, Calvin was interested in maintaining his privacy and his obscurity and going on to Strasbourg to

continue his study and his writing. But Farel saw Calvin’s future differently, and he kept persisting. And when Calvin resisted the invitation, he pressed even harder. Calvin tells the story in the preface to his commentary on the Psalms where he describes himself as naturally shy and timid. He was not a public person – at least he didn’t see himself that way. He didn’t have an interest in a public ministry such as the one that Farel was urging on him there in Geneva. He knew the city of Geneva was still divided over the Reformation, that there were still battles to be fought with what he called dangerous factions. And he was not up to that. So he said, “No,” and he persisted in saying, “No.”

But Farel, who Calvin described as a man who burned with an extraordinary zeal to advance the gospel would not take, “No,” for an answer. And he proceeded to utter the imprecation that God would curse Calvin’s retirement and curse the peace of his studies if he should refuse to help in a work that was so urgent and necessary. That shook Calvin. He wrote, “By this imprecation, I was terror-struck that I gave up my journey I had undertaken.” So he remained there in Geneva, and he did the work that was every bit as hard as he had imagined that it would be. In fact, it was even more difficult.

Now, I think that people are probably more like Calvin than Farel. They are drawn – maybe I’m only speaking for myself. But I think this is probably generally true that they are drawn much more to quiet environments where they can work and they can live in peace rather than to the front and to the heat of battle. Timothy seems to have been a man like John Calvin. From what we read of him in the pastorals, he seems to have been a sickly young man and a man who was timid by nature. So Paul had to exhort him. And while Paul was not as threatening as Farel, he was certainly every bit as forceful as he instructed Timothy to take up the work that God had given him to do.

We all need that kind of exhortation. We all need people to come along side of us and encourage us to do the work that we may not feel that we’re up to doing. And the exhortation of 1 Timothy 4:11-16 gives that kind

of exhortation and it gives us a great deal of instruction about the ministry and what should be done in the ministry and what should be done for the one who's doing ministry. In verse 11, Paul gives two commands, “Prescribe and teach these things.” Well, what things are those? The things that Paul has expounded in the previous verses, the things that we looked at last week, the things that were to counter the heresy that was taking root there in the church at Ephesus. He has told Timothy to oppose worldly fables and legalistic taboos. He is to teach that everything that God has created is good. And in its proper use, it is to be received and it is to be used with thankfulness.

Now, there's a lot that is implied in that instruction. There's a lot about God that's implied in that instruction. There's a lot about our relationship to Him and to one another that's implied in that instruction. And so in teaching these things, Timothy would be teaching a great deal of material. But there's the sovereignty of God that's implied in all of that. He's the one that gives everything. He's a sovereign God. He's a good God. And so implied in all that is the attributes of God, His love and His grace and much more could be expounded in that. This instruction involves a correct understanding of the Law of Moses and what it means to be under grace and not under law. So there is a lot of doctrine to be given along with much correction, exposing error, and rebuking certain individuals there in the church.

The word that Paul uses here, “prescribe,” is a strong word. It has the meaning of command. It's a military term. And it is stated in a strong way, because the word that means command is stated as a command. It's in the imperative voice, and so he is giving that strong a command to Timothy. This is not a mild term. It has some force behind it. And so Paul is telling Timothy to exhort himself, to teach these things with some vigor and with authority. Now, he's also to do that with tact, because you may remember from last week that's what he encouraged Timothy to do. In verse 6, he instructed Timothy to point these things out to the brethren. And point out has the idea of suggesting them so that he's not be overbearing in what he does. Timothy, then, was to be tactful in his instruction, but, still, he is to not

shy away from that instruction. He is to do that, and he is to do it with authority. Do it tactfully, but do it authoritatively.

And we might gather from this by implication that Timothy, as I have said, was not inclined to do that, not inclined to do these things, because he was rather timid. And I think a lot of us **in – since** are perhaps not timid individuals, but we do shy away from confrontation. We don't like to do that. It's not a pleasant thing to engage people with a rebuke or with correction, and he was going to have to deal with some pretty difficult individuals, and so deal with them strong. And that was a difficult thing to do. It takes courage to do that. It takes skill to do that, to deal with people in the proper way. And Paul is encouraging all of that, and, yet, as I say, it seems that Timothy was shy by nature. He tended to withdraw from this kind of relationship or confrontation, and the circumstances didn't help as well. He was a relatively young man in a congregation of older people, who might take offense at a younger man exercising authority over them. So Paul addresses that – addresses the circumstance. And he encourages Timothy not to be cowered by the situation or by the people. Verse 12, “Let no one look down on your youthfulness,” he says.

Now, we don't know young Timothy was – probably not as young as we might think from the statement that Paul makes about his youthfulness. We have an idea of what youthfulness is, but this word could indicate an age up to 40. And so for all we know, Timothy was close to 40 years old. But, still, in a congregation that had been under the ministry of the apostle Paul for a rather lengthy period of time, there would have been people who were inclined to dismiss Timothy as lacking authority, maybe lacking experience. Even if he did have a tactful ministry, still, he wasn't the apostle Paul. And he was, according to the definition or the term that Paul uses here, considered a young man. Well, he wasn't to be discouraged by that. But at the same time, he wasn't to be indignant either. Paul doesn't tell him to rebuke such people, doesn't tell him to stand up to them and put them in their place or anything like that. Instead, Paul tells him to answer contempt with an exemplary life. “In speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an

example to those who believe.”

Now, Paul could tell him to do that, because that’s exactly what Paul did. Paul was that kind of man. He was a very tactful man. He was a man who lived as an example to others. In fact, in the book of Philippians, in chapter 3 in verse 17, he tells the Philippians to follow his example, to pattern themselves after his life. His life fit his teaching. There wasn’t a conflict. I don’t mean to say that Paul never contradicted himself, that Paul always lived up fully to the standards and to word of God that he taught. No one does that. But Paul, as one looked at his life, showed consistency. His life lived up largely to the doctrines that he taught, to the things that he said. There was not inconsistency in his life. And that’s what he urges on Timothy. Live a consistent life. Live a life that’s in harmony with the things that you teach.

It’s very easy for a man to stand before a congregation and to tell people how to live. I think that’s basically easy preaching. Get up and tell people how to live. Basically, we know how to live. We know to be good and not bad. It’s very easy to stand up and lecture people and to lay down rules and sometimes lay down very hard rules and difficult rules. There’s a place for that, of course. But that’s easy to do.

And I think that the false teachers that were in Ephesus were probably pretty good at doing that. They laid down difficult rules, but they were hypocrites, Paul says in the first part of the chapter. They didn’t live up to the things that they said. That’s the difficulty. It’s a very different thing to say something and then live according to what has been said, to teach something and then live according to the instruction that one has given, even when the instruction is a legitimate instruction. And a man who teaches the Bible or a woman who teaches the Bible will come to those portions of Scripture where there’s exhortations, where there’s very specific instruction. We’ll come to that later on in the Book of Romans. Much of it has to do with instruction in the latter part of the book – how to live your life. Even in those circumstances, it’s difficult to measure up. And one must be cognizant of that and perhaps shape his or her words according to that.

Having said that, though, it is essential that we all do that, that we all

live up to the things that we say, live up to the things that we teach. And that was particularly true for Timothy, who’s life would come under – I suppose had already come under hard scrutiny from people in the congregation. And so Paul was advising him to offset the criticism, not by criticizing his critics and not by lashing out – not at all – but by excelling in the qualities that he’s listed here. Live an exemplary life. Take the criticism away from them by living a life that’s above their criticism.

So he gives him a list of areas in which he should excel. In speech, to show himself to be a serious man, not to be flippant. I don’t know everything that Paul means when he says, “in speech”, but I’m sure he does mean that, that he’s not to be a flippant kind of person, that he’s to be a serious kind of person in his conversation. He was to be measured in the things that he said. He’s to control his tongue. And that’s a very difficult thing to do. James gives a great deal of instruction about the tongue. It’s a fire, a very world of iniquity. It’s hard to tame the tongue. It’s like a beast. But that’s what Timothy must do, and that’s what we all must do.

His conduct was to be circumspect. Now, that’s a very broad bit of instruction that Paul gives – conduct. But it would assume that has to do with everything about his outward behavior. It was to be prudent. He was to live wisely. He was to live in a way that no one could find criticism. So he’s going to have to be very disciplined and very careful what he does, where he goes. He was to live a careful life. In fact, everything that Paul is saying here, we could describe as careful. Be careful in everything you do – in the way you speak, in the way you conduct yourself, the way you relate to people. That’s what he speaks of next when he says he’s to be a man of love. He’s to have a concern for others – not only to watch what he does, but he is to be outward going in his relationship to people. Put them ahead of himself. Show consideration for them. So be active in his concern and his care for those around him. People aren’t going to find much fault with you if you’re taking care of them, and you’re looking out for them, and you’re more concerned about them than you are about yourself and your time and what you do. So he urges him to be a man of love.

He's to be excelling in faith, and that probably means faithfulness. That's the way this word is translated in Romans 3 in verse 3 and probably has that idea because he's speaking about his relationship with other people and what they're to see in him. So faithfulness and purity, which certainly would refer to the control of his passions. In regard to sexual behavior, he's to be a man very disciplined in that regard. But it may also have the sense of personal integrity. People look at him, they're to see a man as innocent, not to see faults in him.

Well, that's how a person establishes authority. His life measures up to his word. People can't find fault with him. And so he's urging him to live that kind of life. Donald Guthrie, in his commentary, wrote, “In Christianity, authority is contingent upon character, not age.” So Timothy's a young man. We don't know how young he was, but relatively young – young in the eyes of the people there in the congregation. But Paul is saying, “You live a certain way, and that will take care of that problem.” And it is true that what is important in terms of a person's ministry and leadership in a congregation is not so much youth – that's taken into account – and not so much age. That can be a great benefit. But it's not always the case. What is important is character, whether the person is young or old.

Men like Charles Spurgeon is an example of that. He was just 20 years old when he began his great London ministry at the New Park Street Baptist Church. An incident that was pivotal in bringing him to that place occurred when he was a minister in Waterbeach, which was a small town outside London, where he had begun to preach in his teens. A significant ministry there – you can read about it in his autobiography – very significant ministry that small town.

He was at a meeting speaking to a large group of people with other ministers. And he delivered his sermon, his lesson. And then he was followed by two other men – older ministers, each of whom referred belittling to his youthfulness. One said, “It is a pity boys do not adopt the scriptural practice of tarrying at Jericho 'til their beards are grown before they try to instruct their seniors.”

Well, after the speaker concluded, Spurgeon got permission to respond to what the man had said. And he reminded the audience that those who were told to remain at Jericho were not boys. They were grown men whose beards had been shaved by their enemies, and they were to remain in Jericho because they were ashamed to return. The parallel to their case, he said, could be found in the minister who, though falling into open sin, had disgraced his calling and needed to go into seclusion ‘til his character had, to some extent, been restored. Now, Spurgeon didn’t know anything about the man who had made the belittling comment about his youth. But what’s interesting about his statement and the whole incident is he was unwittingly describing that man’s condition, who had fallen into sin. Others did not know it, but that condition became known at a later date.

That incident, by the way, became, as I had indicated earlier, pivotal in his life, because it opened the door to going to London. A man who was there in the audience was very impressed with Spurgeon, impressed with his demeanor there and his previous ministry. And he told a friend at New Park Street Church about Spurgeon, and they gave him an invitation to come speak. And shortly after this incident, he did. And then he was asked to be the permanent minister there.

So there were a couple of lessons that we can gain from that. And the first one is that person can be old, very mature in years, but lack character. Age does not determine character. A person can be very young – 20 years of age, as Spurgeon was, and have very high character and usefulness. But secondly, you never know who’s watching. You never know who’s out in the audience. You never know who’s in the crowd. You never know who is seeing you do what you’re doing. And so the lesson is be faithful in the things that God has given you to do today. Be faithful in matters of character. Be faithful in matters of duty as Paul was urging Timothy to do. And they will lead in time in God’s providence to doors being open for tomorrow, as it did with Spurgeon, as it has with many people.

Our task is for today. And we’re to know what we’re to do today and do it faithfully even when there are obstacles to it. And that is what Paul was

encouraging Timothy to do. Verse 13, he instructs him to devote himself to three pursuits in his public ministry. “Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.” Now, I think I spent some time on the subject of the importance of teaching the Scriptures a week or so ago. It may have been two weeks ago. But you remember in chapter 3 in verse 15, Paul describes the church as the pillar and support of the truth. The church is about truth. And so we come back to that issue here – the issue of truth. Truth is to be heard in the church. It’s to be heard from the church.

Each of these three issues that Paul deals with here deal with the truth, and they all have the definite article before them in the Greek text. So it is the reading, and that’s what the Greek text has, but we assume that what he means here is the public reading of Scripture. So it’s the reading, the exhortation, and the teaching, which suggests that they were standard practices when Paul was writing this. And Paul wanted to make sure that these practices didn’t slip from use. The word of God is to be at the center of Christian ministry. And nothing should be allowed to diminish it in any way, to take away from it. So Timothy is to read the Scriptures publicly, and he’s to ensure that that continues. Whether he’s the one that does it or someone else does it, the Scriptures are to be read publicly during the ministry of the church.

And that’s why we read the Scriptures every Sunday morning before the sermon is preached. And I think it’s a very good practice on Sunday evening to simply read the Scriptures. Someone may feel that he is not doing much when on a Sunday evening he reads a Psalm or reads a passage from Scripture and doesn’t expound a text, but simply reads it. And, yet, remember what one is doing, one’s reading the word of God. That’s valuable. It needs to be done. And so Paul is first of all urging that the Scriptures be read publicly.

Now, we can do that, and it can be something of a tradition, something of a formality. We can fall into that. And I think one reason that can be the case is we have our Bibles. We have them every day. We can read them

every day. We may not do that. We should do that, but the public reading, then, is not as significant to us perhaps as it would have been to them, but remember these people in the first century did not possess a Bible the way you and do. And many of these churches where the word of God was in their possession, it was probably in the possession of one, maybe two people. Maybe various people had various books. Maybe they didn't have all of the Bible. What they learned was what they heard. And so they would have been very attentive when they had the word of God. You can imagine if you were without a Bible, and you were somewhere in another land, and you hadn't had possession of the Bible for a long time, and someone had one, you would be very keen on hearing it read and just listening to it as the word of God. That was, I'm sure, more important to the first century church than the exposition of the Bible was. And the Bible that they had was for the most part the Old Testament. The New Testament was being formed. And so what they were to hear, what was being read to them was the Old Testament.

So we can gain the lessons from this, and we're to be reading the Bible publicly. It's an important part of our church service. We're to be listening attentively. And we're to be reading and listening to the Old Testament. And when it's expounded, it's to be expounded as how that relates to Jesus Christ and how it applies to us. The whole word of God is to be read. And that's what Paul is urging. Read the Scriptures. This is at the very center of the ministry of the church – the word of God. And the implications are to be brought out of the word of God. There is to be exhortation – how it applies to us – and instruction. That is instruction in the great doctrines of the faith. And so they were to be built up in an understanding of God's word in this way – reading, exhortation, instruction.

Now, the exhortation and the instruction, I take it, is to be done by a man with that gift, the gift of teaching. Those who would exhort would have the gift of exhortation. But every man has a gift and has an ability to do that. And those with those gifts are to be exercising those gifts. In Romans 12, Paul gives a list of the gifts. And in verse 7, he speaks of the spiritual gift of teaching. And those with the gift of teaching, he says, are to be teaching, are

to be doing that. They're to be exercising it. They are to be using their gift. And that's what Paul is urging Timothy to do, and he does that. And we need to be urged to do that, because very often, people feel inadequate to engage in that kind of responsibility.

Timothy evidently felt unsure about himself in doing this. It's a large task that's been given to him. And I think anybody who has a responsibility such as this might sense the heaviness of the burden, the greatness of the task, because it is a great task, a hard task to carry on such a ministry. And Timothy was evidently feeling somewhat unsure of himself. And so Paul had to exhort him to be active and remind him that what he has is a gift. Verse 14, “Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.” Timothy was not being asked to take on a huge task in his own strength. He had a gift. What that means is he had been divinely equipped. The Holy Spirit had given it to him, but it was his responsibility to use it. It would not bear fruit unless he used it.

So I think we can illustrate the point that Paul's making, at least by implication the point that he's making, with the parable of the talents. You remember the story about the lord who goes off to a foreign land, a distant land. Before he does it, he gives talents, or minas, to some of his servants. He gives ten to one, five to another, and one to a third. He goes off. He comes back sometime later and asks for an accounting of what they've done. You know the story. The first two invested their talents and got a return – a good return that pleased their master. But the third didn't do anything with his. He buried it. It made the master very angry who called him a worthless slave.

Well, the Lord is pleased with us when we use it. He's not pleased when we don't use the gift that He has given to us. And so we are expected to use our spiritual gifts and to take opportunities. All of us have a gift. And if we have a gift, we can be assured that we have opportunities to use our gift. And that's what Paul is urging Timothy – telling him to do this. That's what Farel told Calvin to do, “Use your gift.” Sometimes, we need people to do

that. We've been blessed with spiritual gifts. We've been blessed with opportunities. We can be assured of that. But the temptation that we have, and we all have it, is to bury the gift, to not use it, to not be as active as we should be. Farel knew that Calvin was right for Geneva, because there was significant evidence for it. He was relatively young – was a young man, but he had done some things. He'd already made a name for himself. He had written significant material, and it was known throughout Europe. And so Farel knew that this was a man with gift. This was a man who'd be a gifted teacher.

And Paul had evidence for Timothy's gift. There were two complementary events that confirmed that – prophecy and the laying on of hands. The prophecy, evidently, in the church, had taken place that Timothy was to minister of the word of God. Prophet had stood up in the church meeting and said that he was to be set apart, and it was an oracle of God. The elders in the church recognized that was a word from God through the prophet. And they confirmed it by laying their hands upon him. Now, we don't have prophets today. But as we seek to serve the Lord, as we make ourselves available when various opportunities are open, people will recognize the gift. They'll recognize the ability. And they'll give testimony to that. And so there will be evidence. And the church will confirm that with people. They don't need prophets for that.

But Timothy had very obvious evidences for his gift. Paul knew that Timothy was gifted. The church knew that he was gifted. It had confirmed that. And so he had these evidences. And Paul refers to that. He says, in effect, “Remember, there was a prophetic utterance. Remember, men recognized this, confirmed that, and laid their hands upon you. You have this evidence that you have a gift. And so you're to be using it.” And that's what he urges him to do. Tells him not to neglect his gift.

And then, in verse 15, instructs him to, “Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all.” The word, “take pains,” means to study, to ponder, but it also is another athletic term that he used. And I say another, because Paul's used these already. He used

in the earlier part of chapter 4 which we looked at last week. And so I would take it to be that, that the sense here has this athletic sense to it, that it means to attend to or to practice. And that is what he is telling Timothy to do.

Timothy is to apply himself to the responsibilities that he has, apply himself to the instruction that Paul has given to him. And he's to do it with the effort, with the diligence that an athlete does when he's training for a contest, which is hard effort, hard discipline.

Literally, Paul goes on to say that he is to be in them. It's translated to be absorbed in them, but strictly, it's simply be in them. But I think absorbed has the idea. And so he is to be in the things that he was to do, the responsibilities and the instruction that Paul gave him. He was to be absorbed in it. And, again, it's a reminder of the demanding nature of the ministry. A person goes into the ministry thinking it's going to be easy and comfortable, then he doesn't understand the ministry that God has for the person who is called into it. So it's a reminder that it's difficult, and a minister, I think we could say, is to be a mental athlete. Show all that kind of rigor and discipline.

But as he did this, as he took pains, as he became absorbed in his responsibilities, his progress, Paul says, would be obvious. The congregation would take note of him, of the way he lived, of the things that he did, the work that he did, the way he conducted himself and stop dismissing him as being an inexperienced individual, and it would recognize his authority. This is how it would be established in the church by the way he conducted himself, by the way he carried out his ministry.

And for all us, this is the way to spiritual progress. This is the way to development. If we want to grow spiritually, we may as well understand it's not by an easy way. It's by a life of consistency and applying ourselves to the things of God. If we want to advance in the faith and become mature in the things of God and be useful with the people of God, then we must become spiritual, mental athletes and devote ourselves to study and devote ourselves to service. I'm not saying you can't ever watch television. To go back to last week's instruction and that there's not a place for relaxation and

entertainment. There is. But we live in an age that has that as the great goal, that what are we moving toward? What’s the very end of the day or of the week? Entertainment. What’s the great goal of life? Retirement and ease and pleasure. There’s a place for all of that. But it should never usurp our study and our effort and our diligence.

And this is particularly applicable to a man like Timothy, to a man in the ministry. But it has application in principle to all of us, to be these kinds of people, devoting ourselves to study and service, because we’re all gifted, and we’re all called to do a service. So Timothy is to be devoted to his gift, to his ministry, to doing all the things that Paul has instructed him to do so that he can be effective in the church and so that he can deal with the present problem, the immediate problem, and that is delivering the church of Ephesus from false teachers. But in order to do that, in order to do that well, in order for any individual to do well the things that God has given him or her to do to have an effective ministry, he must begin with his own personal affairs, with his own inner life. And so Paul writes in verse 16, “Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.”

Moral and spiritual rectitude, integrity is foundational to orthodox doctrine and ministry. If that is missing, then the ministry will not have influence beyond the short-term, and eventually it’ll fail. I’ve seen that very thing in men who have had great promise, who have great abilities that set them apart from other people, enviable abilities, who lack discipline, who lack seriousness, and wreck their ministries. A young man, an old man, regardless must pay close attention to himself. A young woman, an old woman, must pay close attention to herself.

Now, the motive that Paul gives for doing that is, “As you do this, you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you,” which I take to mean that in this way, you will work out your salvation as Paul instructed the Philippians to do, as he instructs us to do in Philippians 2, verses 12 and in 13 which gives us the reason we’re able to do it. But we’re to work out our salvation. And as he did this for himself, and he did the

things that he was to do, he would help the others – those who listen to him – do the same through his instruction and encouragement and exhortation.

Well, these words apply, as I’ve said, directly to a man in the ministry, a man who is thinking about going into the ministry –men like Spurgeon, Calvin, Timothy. So this is a passage that gives good instruction for people in that situation. But the words of the apostle also apply to Christians in an indirect way, because we’re going to sit under men and be ministered to, and it will affect us. And so we need to be very concerned about those who do have a position of authority, who do minister the word. We’re to pray for them and encourage them. The congregation is affected as well.

And, yet, at the same time, we can say, in principle, these things do apply to everyone. They’re directed specifically to Timothy and to a man like that in that situation. But all of us need to be people who take heed not to neglect the spiritual gift that’s been given to us. And all of us need to not neglect ourselves, but to be busy paying close attention to our spiritual lives and be busy doing the work that God’s given us, because He’s given all of us a place, a position, and a gift in which to serve Him. So – and God help us to do that. Be very careful about the way we live, the way we think, the way we relate to others, and most importantly, how we relate to the Lord Himself.

Well, let’s close with a word of prayer and ask Him to bless us in that way.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You for this word of exhortation, encouragement, admonition to Timothy. And we can see how it applies to each of us. And we pray that You would bless us with concern for our spiritual lives and for the work that You’ve given us to do. May we do it well and do it in a way that pleases You. And we pray these things in Christ’s name. Amen.