

**FOUNDATION OF FAITH!
ECCLESIOLOGY
THE STUDY OF THE CHURCH
PART 4**

In our series Foundation of Faith we have been looking at the church and what the church is all about. Last time we looked at the mission of the church and saw that one of the things the church is to do is to glorify God. That just makes sense, to worship the One who has given us life. This morning we are going to focus on another important issue or mission of the church and that is to edify itself or edify the body and I will show you what I mean in a minute.

First of all Paul reminds us what the church is about in I Timothy 3:14-15, **“These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground [foundation] of the truth.”**

We have the truth, and some may say as Pilate did, “What is truth?” It is very simple because Jesus answers that question for us in John 17:17 when He said, **“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”** So if a church is not bringing the Word of God to the people guess what the people are missing out on? They are missing out on the truths of God that are found in the Word of God and thus, they no longer are the pillar and ground or foundation of the truth!

Now you may not agree with me on that but if you are not teaching people the Word of God, if you are not taking them through the Bible then you are giving them your ideas, your philosophies or the philosophies of this world and that is empty, not because I said so but because Paul tells us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Remember in Colossians 2:8-10 Paul said, **“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”**

Did you notice the warning by Paul, **“Beware”** and the reason he wants them to be on guard, to pay attention is that this world is trying to cheat them, rip them off, but how? Through philosophy, through deceit, through the traditions of men and all these things are just basic principles of this world, there is nothing deep in them, there is nothing that will truly help like the Lord will as you read and apply His Word to your life!

If you want to know what God is all about, if you want to be complete in this life then you need to come to Jesus and fill yourself up with His Word, which is truth! Let me share this story with you and you will see what I mean. We are told,

A dozen carpenters sawed boards to make flooring. The foreman measured every board with a carpenter’s square, an L-shaped rule that forms an exact right angle. If a man cuts a board at other than a right angle, the fit will be crooked, and the board must be re-cut to conform to the carpenter’s square.

For the Christian, the bible is the instrument by which every spiritual thought is to be squared. Every idea is to be accepted or rejected according to whether or not it meets the standard of the Word of God as illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

- Donald Grey Barnhouse, Timeless Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching, p. 9

We are going to see that this morning, the importance of the Word of God being taught in the church. It is amazing how far many have gone from what the church is to be, the pillar and foundation of the truth!

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

2. TO EDIFY THE BODY

Now this may surprise some of you but the basic task of the church is to teach sound doctrine. I know, some argue that will not draw the people into the church, it is boring, it is this and it is that. Thus, we have come up with ways to draw people into the church by entertaining them, making them laugh, making them feel good, catering to them and you know what? In the end, if that is how you brought them into the church then you will have to keep coming up with ways to keep them in the church or they will get bored and leave and we see that happening today. It is all about the individuals and not what God desires.

Let me show you what I mean in regards to the church's primary task being to teach sound doctrine and it is not my idea, not at all. Paul tells us in Titus 2:1, "**But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine.**" And if you still don't believe it let me share this verse from Titus 1:9, "**holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.**"

Make no mistake about it, sound doctrine leads to sound faith and sound speaking, it helps us to grow in the Lord! The Greek word that Paul uses for "**sound**" is HUGIAINO, (hoog-ee-ah'-ee'no) and from this word we get our English word "hygienic" from. Thus, Paul is speaking of healthy doctrine, wholesome doctrine, uncorrupted doctrine. If a pastor is not bringing healthy doctrine, sound doctrine to his congregation then he is responsible for making them unhealthy!

Regarding this issue John Stott writes,

Expository preaching is a most exacting discipline. Perhaps that is why it is so rare. Only those will undertake it who are prepared to follow the example of the apostles and say, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the Word of God to serve tables. . . . We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:2, 4).

The systematic preaching of the Word is impossible without the systematic study of it. It will not be enough to skim through a few verses in daily Bible reading, nor to study a passage only when we have to preach from it. No. We must daily soak ourselves in the Scriptures. We must not just study, as through a microscope, the linguistic minutiae of a few verses, but take our telescope and scan the wide expanses of God's Word, assimilating its grand theme of divine sovereignty in the redemption of mankind.

“It is blessed,” wrote C. H. Spurgeon, “to eat into the very soul of the Bible until, at last, you come to talk in Scriptural language, and your spirit is flavoured with the words of the Lord, so that your blood is Bibline and the very essence of the Bible flows from you.”

- John Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait*, pp. 30-31

You see, the pastor is responsible for giving to the sheep that God has entrusted to him sound doctrine, healthy doctrine and that will only happen as he studies the Word of God and then brings to the people what God has shown him as he teaches through the Word of God! And make no mistake about it. If the church is to be protected from false doctrine then they must be taught sound doctrine!

Let me explain the danger to you like this. In America today we have a weight problem and it is very dangerous. I just saw on one of those news shows that because of the increased weight of children, they are what is called morbidly obese, they are developing diabetes, heart disease and other diseases that are associated with older people, and yet they are in their teens!

The solution they came up with to rectify this problem is gastroplasty which is also known as stomach stapling. This procedure is a restrictive operation for weight control. What they do is with a band and staples they create a small stomach pouch. In the bottom of the pouch is an approximate one-centimeter hole through which the pouch contents can flow into the remainder of the stomach and from there on to the remainder of the gastrointestinal tract. In other words, they make your stomach smaller so you won't eat as much. And this procedure for kids, teenagers is increasing tremendously!

Now here is the problem. Instead of dealing with the issue, we try to rectify the affects of this problem by doing something that is very invasive and we do not know the long term affects of this kind of surgery! And believe me I am not saying it is easy to lose weight but the solution is a healthy diet and exercise. Yes, it will take time; maybe years to get back down in weight but it is worth it.

Now let's apply this to the church. We have been feeding the people for years now junk food, garbage teaching and the church has become lazy and sick. And like an addiction, they just can't stop taking this stuff in and the churches are more than happy to give it to them as long as they keep coming and tithing! And what you see is churches where you have mostly spectators that sit in the pews and chairs but are not involved in the work of the ministry. They expect everyone else to do it for them while they reap the benefits. They are there because of what they can get and not what they can give to bless others.

Now I am not saying that even when sound teaching is given that people will be healthy spiritually speaking. It is up to them to take in God's Word and then apply it to their lives, be involved in ministry because that is what we are called to do. We are the body of Christ and a healthy body takes care of itself!

In Ephesians chapter 4 Paul speaks of the gifted men that Christ has given to the church: the evangelists, the pastor/teachers and teachers and the reason Christ gave these to the church is **“for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head - Christ - from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”** Ephesians 4:12-16.

Did you see that! Christ gave these gifted men, and they are only gifted because of the grace of God and not that they are so special, for the equipping of the saints so that the saints can go out and do the work of the ministry! That is why I teach the Word of God here at Calvary Chapel. We have been through the entire Bible once and we are on our second time through. We have done in-depth studies of the book of Revelation and Romans. You see, I teach you the Word of God – I give to you the whole counsel of God because it is that important and it is what God has instructed me to do! Now I know, some don't see this as important but it is. Listen to this story and you will see what I mean. We are told,

A churchgoer wrote a letter to the editor of the newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. “I’ve gone for 30 years now, “he wrote, “and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. But for the life of me I can’t remember a single one of them. So I think I’m wasting my time and the pastors are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all.”

This started a real controversy in the “Letters to the Editor” column, much to the delight of the editor.

It went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher: “I’ve been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this: They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me those meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!”

- Author Unknown

The prime duty of a pastor is to teach the Word of God and if he is not doing that then you need to ask him why. Listen to these words by Charles Spurgeon and if he had a concern back in his day, imagine where we are at today. He wrote, “Everywhere this is apathy. Nobody cares whether that which is preached is true or false. A sermon is a sermon whatever the subject; only, the shorter it is the better.” He wrote that over 100 years ago and I wonder what he would say today if he was around!

I truly see much of the church today on life-support and they don't even know it. They see themselves as alive, as rich, as clothed with garments of beauty and yet when you look at them they are spiritually dead, they are poor and they are naked! Why is the church in this condition? Listen carefully and you will see. In a survey of local pastors and churches in America they found that 94% of the churches failed to specifically present the Gospel message in the calendar year 2008! In other words, they gave part of the Gospel, focusing on the love of God without describing the need to be saved, that their sin has separated them from God, that salvation only comes through Christ! Did you get that, 94% of churches in America failed to preach the Gospel message the whole calendar year back in 2008! That is amazing and it is very sad for Paul reminds us, "**For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'**" Romans 1:16-17.

And make no mistake about it; this is very dangerous when you move away from the truths of God found in the Word of God. Let me give you a few examples to show you what I mean. We have Phyllis Tickle who is a best-selling author and the founding editor of the religion department at *Publishers Weekly* and a friend of the emerging church, and she spoke at a communion service at Rob Bell's church (Mars Hill Bible Church in Grand Rapids, MI) early in 2009. She said in part,

“As we’re about to do that, let us remember what we are doing. We not only celebrate that death and that promise of return, but we’re feeding by eating God, which is what we’re doing here, by eating the body and blood of our God, **we are feeding the God within us.** For as we take those elements, the Spirit also feeds within us, and is reinvigorated as he, or she, or it is by our faith.”

Did you get that, “**we are feeding the God within us.**” Is that healthy doctrine, sound doctrine? Absolutely not! It is dangerous and it is leading people to hell and yet she is given platforms to speak in churches across America and she is speaking doctrines of demons and not the Word of God!

Then there is Tony Jones who is moving away from Sola Scriptura or Scripture Alone! And Rob Bell who is proclaiming a universal salvation as God, in his mind, has painted blood over the doorposts of the universe. Rick Warren who tells us we should give God a 60 day test drive to see if He works out or not! This is what happens when people move away from the Word of God, they are not taking in healthy or sound doctrine but a doctrine that is dangerous and can lead to spiritual death!

Why are people taken in by these things? Paul tells us in II Timothy 4:3-4, “**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.**”

Notice the reason why they don't want sound doctrine, healthy doctrine. It is because they no longer desire it; they are seeking after what they themselves desire instead of what God desires! In fact, the Greek word that Paul uses for "desires" is EPITHUMIA, (ep-ee-thoo-mee'-ah) and it speaks of lusts. In other words, because of their own lusts they will find teachers who will teach them unhealthy doctrine!

Also, they will not "endure" sound doctrine, healthy doctrine. They will refuse to hold on to it, they will no longer tolerate it. I find that interesting because there are many in the church today who refuse to tolerate sound doctrine but, because of their itching ears, will find teachers who will tell them what they want to hear, things that will satisfy their lusts, their fleshly desires. And the sad thing is there are many out there who are willing to give them what they want instead of what they need!

John MacArthur put it like this in regards to what he sees going on in the church today. He wrote,

That also is the situation in much of the church today. Even in churches that once were genuinely evangelical, where the Bible was the divine standard for belief and for living, God's Word is compromised. Sometimes it is stripped of its clear meaning or is relegated to a place of secondary authority behind personal "revelations" claimed to be from God. In many churches who once preached sound doctrine, evils that God's Word plainly and repeatedly condemns are touted as acceptable. Women are ordained to ministries the Bible restricts to men, and radical feminists even reject the idea of God as heavenly Father. Homosexuals not only are welcomed without reproof or repentance into church fellowship but also are welcomed into the pulpit.

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.

Not surprisingly, therefore, such false Christians will accumulate for themselves ungodly teachers in accordance to their own ungodly desires. Noted Bible scholar Marvin R. Vincent wrote insightfully, “If people desire a calf to worship, a ministerial calf-maker is readily found” (Word Studies in the New Testament, vol. 4 [New York: Scribner's, 1904], 321). . . .

Many churches today are filled to overflowing with those who want their ears tickled with the myths of easy-believism and the many variations of selfism and so-called positive thinking. They come to have their egos fed and their sins approved, not to have their hearts cleansed and their souls saved. They want only to feel good, not to be made good. Tragically, such myths serve to religiously insulate people from the true gospel and drive them still further from the Lord.

- John MacArthur, II Timothy 4:3-4

Here's the thing. When you turn from the truth, you still believe in something and Paul says that these people who turn from the truths of God's Word believe in fairy tales. Do you doubt that? I hope not because it is true. Let me give you two examples to show you what I mean. First I will give to you a religious fairy tale and then a non-religious fairy tale.

In regards to being religious, not a Christian, believing in a lie instead of the truth of God's Word, you tell me if this is a fairy tale or not. "Our destiny, when we die, is to make it through a series of heavens and after-life's, until one day we become god over our own planet, like Elohim is god over earth, living on a planet named Kolob. When we are gods over our own planets, we spend the rest of eternity having celestial relations with a harem of goddess wives, producing spirit babies to populate the earth we are god over." Joseph Smith and the Mormons have turned aside to **FABLES!**

In regards to non-religious beliefs, you tell me if this is a fairy tale or not. This is from the Los Angeles Times:

In the beginning, there was light – but also quarks and electrons. The Big Bang spewed out energy that condensed into radiation and particles. The quarks joined into protons and careened wildly about in a hot, dense, glowing goop as opaque as a star.

Time (300,000 years or so) passed. Space expanded. Matter cooled. The electrons and protons, electrically irresistible to each other, merged into neutral hydrogen, and from this marriage, the first atoms were born. Space between atoms became as transparent as crystal – pretty much the way it looks today.

The rest, as they say, is history. Atoms merged to form dust clouds, which grew into stars and galaxies and clusters. Stars used up their nuclear fuel, collapsed and exploded in recurring cycles, fusing elements in the process.

Occasionally, a stable planet condensed around a second-generation star, where carbon-based life forms grew into, among other things, cosmologists, the better to contemplate it all.

- Los Angeles Times, The Big Bang and What Followed It

As you can see, when the church moves away from the Word of God, sound teaching, healthy teaching they are no longer the pillar and foundation of the truth but they are holding onto and sharing fairy tales that do not lead people to eternal life, but eternal damnation. I want to take the rest of our time this morning looking at several verses that deal with sound doctrine, healthy doctrine to show you how important it truly is and maybe we can share these truths with others so they will not be taken away with these fairy tales that are being spoken from the pulpits of many churches today!

Paul reminds Timothy in II Timothy 1:13-14, “**Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.**”

Notice what Paul is telling Timothy to hold onto! It is not the most entertaining pastor, it is not a program, it is not a club, it is not anything except the Word of God. You see, we need to hold fast to sound doctrine, right doctrine because it is our standard to live by. God's Word is that important, at least it should be! Many churches across America have become atheological or they are without any solid theological convictions, the Word of God is not important to them. What tends to be important is the latest fad, the newest technique to grow a church, this new band, and the list goes on.

I can't tell you the last time someone called looking for a church to attend and they asked me "What do you teach?" or "Do you teach from the Bible?" They tend to ask me, "Do you have any single women or men at your church?" Or "Do you have a kid's ministry?" Or "How big is your church?" And that list goes on! Paul wants Timothy to hold onto sound doctrine or healthy doctrine, not to let go of it, but to teach it to others! How important that is for us today to hold fast to healthy doctrine and not be tossed to and fro by the winds of doctrine that come blowing through the church. The regular teaching in the church should be the teaching of sound doctrine, healthy doctrine, the Word of God!

Next, in II Timothy 2:1-2 Paul said, "**You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.**"

The sound doctrine, the healthy doctrine that Paul gave to Timothy is now to be shared with others with the idea that they will then take this and pass it on, the Good News, the Gospel message, the Word of God! And Paul tells Timothy to “**commit**” these things to faithful men and the idea here is that this is something that is valuable and is given for safe keeping. The Gospel message is valuable and it needs to be given with great care, not watering it down or negating any part of it. To pass it on completely to the next person so they may pass it on to another.

John MacArthur had this to say regarding these verses. He wrote,

Some years ago, two teenagers were discovered in an attic room chained to their beds, where they had been confined since early childhood. They were totally disoriented and almost animalistic in behavior. They had been undernourished and unloved, and, as would be expected, were underdeveloped in every way - physically, emotionally, socially, and mentally. They were the product of child abuse at its most malevolent [wicked] extreme.

Equally tragic is the condition of many children of God today who are undernourished spiritually and, consequently, are underdeveloped, confused, disoriented, and immature in the things of the Lord. There are more popular preachers today than at any time in church history, but few powerful ones. There also are more popular churches, but few powerful ones. There is much activity, but little spiritual fruit; much talk about Christianity, but little conviction; high moral proclamations, but little accountability; doctrinal creeds, but much compromise.

In the great majority of cases, weak churches are the result of weak leadership, especially weak pastoral leadership. Spiritual weakness makes both leaders and congregations subject to almost every religious fad, no matter how frivolous. Like an undernourished and anemic physical body, they have little resistance to disorders and maladies that weaken them still further. And because they have no resources but their own, the smallest difficulty is distressing. Because they have so little understanding of and confidence in the Word of God, they turn to psychological bandages and worldly solutions. They have little defense against Satan and are easy prey for false teachers. They are spiritual “children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming” (Eph 4:14; cf. Heb 13:9). Because they have left “the elementary teaching about the Christ,” and failed to “press on to maturity” (Heb 6:1), they may even find themselves “paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons” (1 Tim 4:1).

- John MacArthur, II Timothy 2:1-2

Make no mistake about it, a pastor is to teach his congregation sound doctrine, healthy doctrine so that they can teach it to others, they can pass on the truths of God found in the Word of God!

In II Timothy 2:15 Paul said, **“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”**

When you are teaching God’s Word you are not doing so to please the people but to please the Lord, honor Him. If you do that you will benefit the people! You see, being a pastor is not a popularity contest. I look at the prophet Jeremiah, a spokesperson for God and yet no one listened to what he had to say, no one repented and got right with God. Many today would look at a ministry like that and see it as a failure. But God was pleased with Jeremiah because he was faithful in service; he was a God pleaser rather than a man pleaser. Thus, the people hated him because they didn’t like what he was saying to them, but God was well pleased!

It drives me crazy when I hear people say, when I hear teachers say, “I just wait till I get behind the pulpit on Sunday morning and see what the Lord has to say! That is what I will teach on.” There is no preparation, no study and that is wrong. I hate these web sites that have sermons for pastors, just pay your fee and you can get your sermon for Sunday! No preparation, no studying God’s Word! Paul is telling Timothy to work hard, be diligent in the work he is doing. There are times when people should be ashamed at the work they are doing because it was done poorly. But that should not be the case in our service to the Lord, and as a pastor, Timothy was to **“rightly divide”** God’s Word or “to cut straight.” The Geek word, ORTHOTOMEIO, (or-thot-om-eh’-o) was used of a craftsman cutting a straight line, or a farmer plowing a straight furrow, or a mason setting a straight line for bricks. Thus, there is a right way to teach God’s Word, to share what it means, and a wrong way!

Several years ago, when we first moved up here, I guess that would be some 17 years now, my wife took some of the women to a Precept Ministries Bible Study in Green Bay. Kay Arthur produces these and my wife did not go long to these studies and the reason is simple. They did not have a Bible teacher there, the person was a facilitator. And what this person did was let anyone and everyone make their comments on what the Bible verse they were studying said, be it right or wrong. And they were not corrected! My wife would keep raising her hand and saying, "That is not what that verse is saying" to their dismay.

Not only that but since Precepts Ministries and Kay Arthur did not trust the facilitators, hey I would not trust this one either, they had you watch a video or listen to a tape by Kay Arthur on the topic that week. That is not what we are to do. We are to rightly divide the Word of God and we should be instilling in people, building people up in the faith so they can share their faith, they can lead Bible studies!

Let me give you this graphic example to show you what not to do, or what is not rightly dividing the Word. There was this young woman who posed nude for a pornographic magazine, supposedly she was a Christian. She even used the Scriptures to support what she did as she claimed this experience of posing nude for these pictures had drawn her closer to God. She quoted the first part of James 4:8, to justify her actions, giving her Scriptural support for what she was doing. That verse says, "**Draw near to God and He will draw near to you . . .**"

Sounds good but that is not rightly dividing the Word of God, for if she would just read the rest of that verse she would see that her actions are wrong. It says, “. . . **Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.**” James 4:8b. Don't twist God's Word to make it say what you want, to use it to justify your sin. God means what He says and says what He means and we must not only proclaim it but also live by it! That means that a pastor, a teacher needs to not only teach sound doctrine, healthy doctrine, but he must be diligent in his study of God's Word before he presents it to the people!

In II Timothy 3:14-17 Paul said, **“But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”**

Paul is calling for Timothy and truly all of us to swim against the current of this world that is leading to destruction and move towards Christ! And make no mistake about it; we are guided by God through His Word and by His Spirit. We gain wisdom from God's Word, applying it to our lives and it is God's Word that leads us to salvation as the Spirit of God opens our hearts to Jesus. For Timothy, as a child, he was taught the Scriptures and as he grew, that is what led him to saving faith. How important it is for our children to be taught the Scriptures, they are never too young. That is why our Sunday School classes teach the kids the Word of God, the Bible and when they go home, they should also be taught the Scriptures by their parents, it is that important.

As Paul goes on he tells Timothy and us that all of Scripture is given to us by God, breathed from the mouth of God to us. Not just some of the Scriptures, not even most of the Scriptures, but all of the Scriptures, from Genesis through Revelation is given to us by God, breathed from His mouth to us!

And have you ever thought about what you have in your hands right now? You see, the Bible was written over a 1500-year time span. More than forty different authors from all walks of life – from kings to peasants, wrote it. It was written on three different continents – Africa, Asia and Europe. It was written in three different languages – Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. There are a variety of literary styles. It addresses hundreds of controversial subjects and yet there is harmony. And it is the unfolding story of God's love for sinful man.

Prophetically it is awesome because what God has said would take place, has or will. There are over 300 prophecies of Christ's first coming and all of them were fulfilled down to the tiniest detail. Some argue that the Bible, over the years has many errors as it was copied. Look at the facts, the New Testament alone we see not more than one-one thousandth of the text is in question and not one significant doctrine is in question. The Old Testament is no different. Thus, God's Word is accurate, it is truth!

And so Paul tells us that God's Word is profitable to us, it is helpful to us because it gives to us doctrine or what is right. It gives to us reproof or it tells us what is wrong. It gives to us correction or it tells us how to get right when we have gone astray. And it gives to us instruction in righteousness or it tells us how to stay right.

In other words, God's Word makes us complete, it equips us for service. As you read God's Word, as you apply it to your life, by the power of God's Spirit, a believer will be able to meet the demands of righteousness, he will know what God desires of him and he will be able to stand strong, not for salvation but as evidence that a person is saved. Thus, Satan leads pastors and people away from God's Word because God's Word is living and it is powerful and it will transform our lives if we allow it to. Paul's warning to Timothy and to us is to be students of the Word of God if you want to stand strong against the perilous times and the perilous men that have come in and are coming in these last days! Be students of the Word of God if you want to serve the Lord and we are all involved in ministry in some way! What a powerful lesson for us!

Now let's read Psalm 19 because David makes several powerful points about God's Word in this Psalm. We will read the whole Psalm and then focus in on verses 7-9. We are told, "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language Where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, And rejoices like a strong man to run its race. Its rising is from one end of heaven, And its circuit to the other end; And there is nothing hidden from its heat. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer."

We have talked about this in our Psalms study but I think this is important for all of us to see. In verses 7-9, in these three verses David makes six important statements about the word of God and I think we would be wise to listen and apply them to our lives.

They are as follows:

A. The Law of the LORD is perfect – it converts the soul

For those who would like to deny the sufficiency of the Scriptures, these verses shoot that down. David says that God’s Word is “**perfect.**” The Hebrew word that is used is TAMIYUM, (taw-meem’) and it means without blemish, complete, without spot, full! It is so sad today that many don’t believe that God’s Word is perfect and thus, they listen to the words of men instead of the Word of God which is perfect!

And the problem comes when they reject the Word of God because it is not only perfect, but it converts the soul. Paul said in Romans 10:17, “**So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**” Notice that it is not entertainment that builds our faith, but the teaching of the Word of God. I wish pastors would understand that fact. And notice what Peter has to say in I Peter 1:23, “**Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.**”

B. The Testimony of the LORD is sure – it makes us wise

The Hebrew word for “**sure**” is AMAN, (aw-man’) and it speaks of being reliable, not only firm but it is confirmed, that is the Word of God! And as we stand upon the sure Word of God it makes us wise! You see, you don’t have to be the smartest or wisest person in the world; in fact, those that profess to be wise are many times nothing more than fools. We have a God that is all wise and if we obey Him through His sure Word, it makes us wise! But to disobey an all knowing God only makes us fools.

C. The Statutes of the LORD are right – it brings joy to our hearts

Yes, the statutes of the LORD are right and that means they are morally right, they are practically right, they are universally right! In other words, they are right because it is the revelation of God who is right. Clarke put it like this, “To make straight, smooth, right, upright, opposed to crookedness in mind or conduct; showing what the man should be, both within and without.” And notice what this produces in our life, joy! Many reject Christianity because they want their freedom. The thing they don’t realize is what joy we have walking down His path. For those that reject His way, they are the ones who fined themselves in bondage and not at peace. They are looking for joy in all the wrong places, they need to come back to the Lord and follow His ways that are right and they will find that joy they are looking for!

D. The Commandment of the LORD is pure – it enlightens the eyes

God's Word is pure because it comes from God and God is pure, He is holy. And as we read and apply God's Word to our lives it opens our eyes up to the things of God. In other words, we can see clearly now, the darkness of this world is gone, the light of God's Word is turned on and thus, it will bring the comfort and knowledge and confidence that a light in the midst of darkness brings.

E. The Fear of the LORD is clean – it endures forever

As we read God's Word, as we fear the Lord we are told that it is clean then to us. In other words, a person who reads and hears and studies the Word of God, meeting Him in His Word, will have an appropriate appreciation of God's awe and majesty, he will fear the Lord. And the reason the Word of God is clean is that it comes from God Himself, in which there is no darkness in Him at all. And thus, that which is clean will never rust, fall apart, fade away, it will endure forever!

F. The Judgments of the LORD are true – they are righteous altogether

And David finishes us by speaking of the judgments of God, that they are true. He uses the Hebrew word EMETH, (eh'-meth) which speaks of assurance, that it is established, it is right, it is trustworthy. Make no mistake about it, God's judgments are righteous altogether and they will come to pass whether a person believes them or not! God is going to judge those who have rejected Him!

Make no mistake about it, if Christians are to become spiritually mature, then church leaders must preach from all of Scripture!

And lastly, in II Timothy 4:1-2 Paul said to Timothy, **“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”**

This word that Paul uses for **“charge”** is a very strong word. In the Greek it is the word DIAMARTUROMAI, (dee-am-ar-too'-rom-ahee), and it carries with it the idea of giving a solemn testimony, something that Timothy is to heed. Stott explains it like this, “The verb diamartyomai has legal connections and can mean ‘testify under oath’ in a court of law, or to ‘adjure’ a witness to do so.” Paul hasn’t stated what he is charging Timothy to do, but it is so important that he brings this before the members of the court – the Father and Jesus who will judge us at His appearing!

In other words, he wants Timothy to testify before God that he is going to fulfill the request that Paul is going to give to him in verse 2. Remember, Paul is now on death row, he doesn’t have long to live, and he wants Timothy to continue on in the work, a strong appeal for him to continue on in the cause for Christ.

The weight of verse 1 rests upon this statement here in verse 2. This is what Paul is calling Timothy to do, charging him to do, to make a testimony before God that he will preach the Word! Why is that important? Because the Word of God is inspired or breathed from the mouth of God and is profitable to the hearer and thus, it must be preached!

What if people don't want to hear the Word of God being taught? What if the Word of God is not popular? What did Paul charge Timothy to do – **“Preach the Word! Be ready in season and out of season.”** In other words, you preach the Word of God no matter what because it is what they need, not always what they want!

Notice what the Lord said through the prophet Hosea in Hosea 4:6, **“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.”** And in Isaiah 5:13 we are told, **“Therefore my people have gone into captivity, Because they have no knowledge; Their honorable men are famished, And their multitude dried up with thirst.”** Do you realize that less than 3% of evangelical churches across America have a midweek Bible study! God told Israel that His people were destroyed because they not only lacked the knowledge of God but the leaders, the priests rejected it, they did not teach it to the people. That is exactly what we see happening today and look at the number of Christians that are in bondage to sin because of it!

The Word of God is to be taught, the whole council of God, from Genesis through Revelation, when you see fruit and when you don't see fruit, when people want to hear it and when they don't want to hear it, when it is popular and when it is not popular!

Paul, in speaking to the Ephesian elders at Miletus on his way to Jerusalem exhorted them by telling them in Acts 20:26-28, **“Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”** In other words, don’t starve the people, don’t hurt the people that God has entrusted to you, the ones He purchased with His own blood by not preaching to them, by not teaching them the Word of God! I wish more pastors would listen to Paul’s charge to Timothy and then act upon it in their own congregations!

As the Word of God is taught it will comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable, and that is a good thing, that is what it is suppose to do! Paul tells Timothy that as God’s Word is taught it will convince those who are in error to turn to Jesus, to correct their ways. As the Word of God is being taught it will rebuke those living in sin. And as the Word of God is being taught, it will exhort and encourage believers in whatever they are going through! Thus, as God’s Word is spoken it will minister to the hearts and lives of the people who hear it and act upon it as Isaiah 55:11 tells us, **“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”**

The bottom line is this. The only way we can please the Lord is to obey the Spirit of God and preach the Word of God, preach sound doctrine, preach healthy doctrine! And thus, here we see the mission of the church is to edify itself by the teaching of God's Word because it is the Word of God that will build people up in the faith, it will draw them to Jesus, it will help them to grow, it will make them complete for every good work!