

2 Timothy 3: 14 – 4: 5; “Your Attendance upon the Preaching”
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on March 13th, 2011,
in the Morning Worship Service.

Our text says that Timothy, the Apostolic assistant and a pastor to pastors, must continue in the things that he had learned and had been assured of, knowing from whom he learned them. As to his coming to know the truths of the gospel, and the doctrines and practices which should be held to in the local church, he had learned them from the Apostle himself. His genuine faith was the gift of God, but His growth in usefulness in relation to that faith was very much dependent upon his being taken notice of by the Apostle Paul and his enlisting him to service to Christ in connection with the Lord’s working in his life, as was recorded in in the book of Acts, Chapter 16, verses 1-3. It says there, “Then Paul came to Derbe and Lystra.” “And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek.” “He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium.” “Paul wanted to have him go with him.” “And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.” So, we read, the Apostle had enlisted him as a soldier in the army of Christ Jesus our Lord. He was in the Lord’s army, and he needed to take seriously his responsibilities in regard to what he had been called to do. Since he was called to be a pastor and an evangelist, he needed to receive certain truths which are peculiar to the calling of a pastor. Paul, speaking to him as his son in the faith, tells him in Chapter 1, verse 1, “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.” “You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” “No one engaged in warfare (that is the spiritual warfare of being a pastor and an under-shepherd of Christ to speak to people the truth that they should live by) entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.” He now had the duties of a soldier, one whose rank (if you want to speak in those terms) was under the Apostle Paul, and over other pastors as a supervisor-helper. This was the true position of the Evangelist.

I want you to see this morning that there were certain duties that Timothy, as an Evangelist was called to. He was being called to remember the truth that Paul had taught him, and he was being exhorted to do the duties of his office believing that God would help him and bless him and let him see real fruit for his labors if he was faithful to do what he was called to do. You and I in this church are in a similar position, even if we are not called to the high level of responsibility of Apostles and Evangelists. We are a pastor and Christ’s people who have been placed here together in this church for a few short years in order to serve Christ and to learn together to do His will by feeding upon His Word, and putting it into

practice in our lives. Our object together is to bear fruit unto God, just like theirs was; to so live and work together that Christ's grace and His truth are seen and known by people around us; so that His grace and truth would spread to more and more people and they too would want to come join us and know God and follow Jesus Christ. That is our mission as a church. That is the fulfillment of the Great Commission for us. This is what it means for us to glorify God. But I am convinced that this glorifying of God can only take place if we follow the commands of this passage that we are looking at this morning. This passage is saying that there are certain things that we must do, certain duties that we must engage in, if we would glorify God together with our remaining time here upon the earth. These words were spoken directly to Timothy, but can surely be applied to ourselves here today. 1st – We must continue in the things which we have learned. 2^{ndly} – We must continue to believe that the preaching of God's Word is profitable. And 3^{rdly} – We must continue to believe in attendance upon preaching even when others abandon it. We will take the 1st two points this morning, and save the 3rd one for a separate sermon next Sunday. Let us now open our hearts and incline them to the words that I will speak to you from God's Word.

1st of all – You and I must continue in the things which we have learned.

(Verses 14 and 15 of Chapter 3)

Why is it that people grow worse and worse in this life and finally perish in their sins? Why do evil men and imposters grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived as it says in verse 13, the verse that comes before these verses? People become worse and worse because either they do not have true knowledge which comes from the Scriptures, or they have rejected the truth of the Scriptures as they have it preached and presented to them. Often unbelieving people do have knowledge of many things in this present life, but in regard to God and His being the creator of the world and all things in it; theirs is only a speculative knowledge. They will not often acknowledge Him even as the author of life. They see the "laws of nature", but they do not see the Lawgiver. They guess at the meaning of life, or the origin and continuance of the world and their own life. And then, often, you will find that they will superimpose their own ideas and their own conclusions upon the truth of God's creation or upon the truth of His Word. Theirs is often a philosophical knowledge, something which proceeds from their own observations of God's creation; or it is false spiritual knowledge; which false knowledge comes from their thoughts and the imaginations of their own hearts making judgments upon the truth of the Scriptures without having the light of the Holy Spirit working in their hearts. Their conclusions are therefore often wrong, but they believe themselves to be right. They then will often seek out their own kind of teachers. They will hold to the writings of men who have placed their judgments upon the Holy Scriptures; not realizing or caring that God gave the Scriptures to be believed and to be received by them. The Scriptures are the Word of God. The men writing the Scriptures were directly superintended by God's Holy Spirit, so that the

words which they wrote down were not only inspired by God, but the men writing them down were preserved from making any error in writing down the originals. This is why the Apostle Peter says in 2 Peter 1, verse 16, “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed (made more sure), which you would do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

Many people do not want to believe that the Scriptures are true, because they do not want to acknowledge the One and Only True and Living God who has authority over them. The Holy Scriptures have the authority of God being conveyed through them by the power of the Holy Spirit; especially when the Word is being preached. I am saying that it is in many cases because of the willful ignorance in unbelieving people, that they become worse and worse. They will not listen to good preaching. It is sinful unbelief that is working within them. It is a rejection of God’s authority. And so they do not come to have the saving knowledge of God unless God has mercy upon them. Many, because of the sinful blindness of their nature and the fallenness of their obstinate will, will not acknowledge that God has spoken to them in and through the Holy Scriptures, the Bible. Therefore our God has thought it absolutely necessary that His Word not only should be shared by individuals privately; He also thought it wise and very necessary that that the gospel of Christ and His Word should also be preached and proclaimed. Saving knowledge comes to us when someone comes and preaches to us the gospel of Christ. Or it can come to us with power when we are taken to a church where the Scriptures are preached and taught. But either way; Romans Chapter 10, and verse 14 is true – “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?” “And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?” “And how shall they hear without a preacher?” “And how shall they preach unless they are sent?”

The presentation and delivery of the true knowledge of God and His will, which is found in the Bible only, is the only thing which in the final analysis will make a difference in our lives to turn people from sin to righteousness, and from the kingdom of Satan to God, so that they will learn to do God’s will and to walk in His ways. Let me ask you if, when you came to Christ, that you ever found God by the use of your own worldly wisdom? No you never did. But you will find God if you will listen to a preacher of the Bible preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ or the truth of God’s blessed Word; if you will call upon the Lord you shall be saved. Salvation is not found through men’s philosophy. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 1, verse 20. “Where is the wise?” “Where is the scribe?” “Where is the disputer of this age?” “Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” “For since in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not come to know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.” There it is; it seems to be foolish to listen to preaching, but it is the power of God

unto salvation. It is God's way, and it is God's means. Will you not delight yourself in it on the Lord's Day? Will you not be praying as the pastor is preaching? Will you not receive all that the Lord has for you here today?

2ndly – We must continue to believe that the preaching of God's Word is profitable. (Verses 16 and 17 of Chapter 3)

“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. I want to go on to apply the truth of 2 Timothy 3: 14 and 15 to us here as we think about our duty to hear and heed the Word of God. Hearing the Word preached is a privilege which we dare not take lightly or neglect. “But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of...” Let me ask you if you are doing this? It is the Holy Scriptures that you are to continue to abide in. And how can you abide in them and have them speak to you to tell you what is right and wrong, good and bad, and what you should be doing with your life in relation to your family and your church and every facet of your life if you do not come and regularly listen to the Scriptures being preached. How can you come to greater measures of assurance of your salvation and understand what God is calling you to do for Him if you do not see the need to listen to good preaching, because this is the means that God uses. When the church is the strongest it is because she is abiding in the Apostle's doctrine. (Acts 2: 42) That means that they were gathered together there, in one place, when the Apostles taught. “They continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” “Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.” How do the Apostles teach you now? Through the preaching of God's Word through pastors and teachers who have been called to that work. It is true that believers can teach one another, and should teach one another in certain ways. But not many of you should become teachers it says in James Chapter 3, verse 1, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

There are many people in this generation who do not understand the value of sitting under the stated ministry of a pastor. They think that they should listen and heed the teaching of anyone around them the first time that they hear it. But let me assure you; you do not have a responsibility, a duty, or an obligation to hear and heed the words of just any person who undertakes to teach you something from the Word of God. But you do have a responsibility to heed the pastor of your church as he speaks to you the Word of God. Turn with me to Ephesians Chapter 4, verse 7. “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.” Therefore He says, ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.’ “(Now this, ‘He ascended’—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?” “He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)” “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 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 by every wind of doctrine. Why is it that so many Christians today are tossed about with every wind of doctrine that comes to their ears? Because they do not understand that it is in the preaching of the Word in the local church that they attend, and that hopefully they are a member of; that sound doctrine is being proclaimed. And God expects His people to receive it and to hold it fast. Not because the pastor is infallible like an Apostle. But because God's Word is infallible. Part of the value of being reformed is that you have come to see the Biblical principle of Sola Scriptura; of Scripture being the only guide to how a church should go about to glorify God; and of what should be believed and taught among us. There is a great value to holding to the sound doctrine of the Bible and believing in the primacy of preaching, so we will see the truth of God's Word save people and growing them up into Christ. A pastor who sees the great importance of preaching all of the Word of God will be of great value to your faith growing, if you receive his teaching. Because he is the one who has been appointed by God to deliver God's message to you and to be Christ's under-shepherd to you. He immerses himself in the Word. That is his calling; to devote himself to the Word of God and prayer. This is why you should come to all the services of the church. God, through the pastor, has prepared something for you to receive. This is the day to receive it. Let me ask you in all seriousness if you value what has been prepared for you? The Lord is looking to see how much you value His word to you. And He will bless you accordingly.

As a pastor himself, Timothy was instructed in 1st Timothy 4: 14 to "not neglect the gift that was in him, which was given to him by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership." In verse 16 it says that he was to take heed to himself and to the doctrine." He was to "pay attention to himself and to his teaching." (NAS) "For in doing so he would save both himself and those who heard him." If this was the case then; then surely it is still the case now. God does not want those who listen to His Word continually judging the preacher; he wants His people to receive His word and continue in it and abide in it and to bear fruit because of it. When we submit ourselves to come and to be taught the Scriptures they do have a good effect upon our hearts, even if we are children of a very young age. I believe that there was a direct connection between Timothy's knowing the Scriptures from a very young age and his becoming an Evangelist when he grew up. There were brethren and there was a church there in Lystra and Lyconium. God could build upon what Timothy's mother and grandmother and pastors had taught him. He was abiding in all the preaching and teaching of those who taught him. He, it says, was a disciple. (Acts 16: 1) The Great Commission is this: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." To

become a disciple is to abide in Christ's Word. It is to gather with God's people. It is to receive and heed, and live according to the teaching and preaching of the Word of God. It is to strive and to pray to bear good fruit unto God in good works and service to Him. Attending upon the preaching of the Word is the means to this good end. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine..." Do you know the doctrines of this church that you attend? Do you believe them; do you study them? Do you search the Scriptures to see if the things that are preached to you are so? Do you have a Berean spirit? Are you noble-minded in this way?

All Scripture, it says here, is profitable. The whole of the Bible is profitable. The books of the Bible that you think might be the least profitable, are nevertheless profitable. All of the Old Testament is profitable; all of the New Testament is profitable. This is why it is profitable to continue steadfastly upon the preaching of God's Word. It is profitable in that you will grow up to be sound in doctrine. Many people do not grow or become doctrinally sound because they attend upon 20 minute sermons. They find it inconvenient to listen any longer. But you cannot be sound in doctrine without attending upon the preaching of the sound doctrine of the Word. Many people are not in the least hesitant to attend night classes to learn some new skill or to attain to a degree in learning in the things of the world. They spend hours in pursuit of this knowledge. But some of those same persons would not commit to coming to a second service at church on Sunday so that they could attain to sound doctrine. It is no wonder that the churches of our day are weak. You grow in knowledge and wisdom as you seek for them; when you apply yourself to them. The preaching of the Scripture is profitable in every way for learning to be godly. In good preaching you will be reproved by the truth. You will be taught where your life and thoughts and deeds need to grow, or when it needs to be corrected; where it needs to be instructed. That is what Timothy learned as he studied to become a better pastor. He wanted to be complete; he wanted to be thoroughly equipped so that he could bring all that good Biblical knowledge to bear upon every good work that he would engage in. Let me ask you if this is what you are pursuing? If you will regularly commit to attending upon the preaching of the Word, you will be equipped to serve Christ better. If you do not, you will not grow up into Christ to become all that you can for Him. I ask you to think about it and to decide what you will do in relation to the preaching of the Word of God, which is the main thing in relation to both worship and living your life for Christ. "If you abide in my word," Jesus says, "you are truly disciples of mine."