

# The Epistles to Timothy

## Part 4

Speaker	Frank Wallace
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*Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.*

[00:00:01] 1 Timothy Chapter 4 and Verse 1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, speaking lies and hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every picture of God is good, and nothing to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, [00:01:03] nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.

Now Verse 11 These things command and teach.

Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things.

Give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all.

Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine.

[00:02:04] Continue in them.

For in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.

If you look at this chapter carefully, you'll find there are some very important words. We'll find mention of the faith, and the truth, and doctrine.

And this is what we want to speak about tonight, very simply. Before we begin to speak about teaching, as is presented in this chapter, perhaps it may be necessary to say a few words in general about this great matter of teaching. First of all, man after the flesh lives in absolute ignorance of the things of God.

You remember in Acts chapter 17, [00:03:02] Paul says, The God whom ye ignorantly worship, him I declare unto you.

Paul said to the brethren, I would not have you ignorant, brethren. And there are other scriptures that stress the same thing. That man after the flesh, and even Christians, who don't go in for the things of the Lord, it's possible for them to be in a state of ignorance. Now that's a very serious thing, because God desires that his creatures should be intelligent as to his mind, and should know his things, and should know about God, and should know about the Lord Jesus, and should know about the Holy Spirit, and many other things.

Hence, we have divine teaching.

Now, to know the things of the Lord, it's a waste of time to turn to the philosophies of men, because they don't know anything about it. It's in vain to turn to the religions of men, [00:04:01] because they are in darkness as to God. So if we want to know anything about the things of God, there is only one source to which we can turn, and that is the Word of God. Enshrined in the Word of God is the knowledge of God himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and all the truths that are proper to this day in which we find ourselves. To neglect the Word of God means to be in a state of ignorance as to God's mind.

Now, I think it's extremely important that we remember this at the very outset, that God the Father teaches, and God the Son teaches, and God the Holy Spirit teaches, and we just need to quote a few scriptures to prove it. In 1 Corinthians chapter 4, we're more accustomed to speak about the coming of the Lord in that chapter, but prior to Paul's teaching regarding the rapture, he says, and you yourselves are taught of God [00:05:03] to love one another.

Therefore, we can deduce from that that God teaches, and in this particular context, he taught them to love each other. Now, in the Gospels, there are many, many scriptures where the Lord is referred to as a teacher. I think you'll find in the authorized version, this word is translated master, but the real meaning behind it is teacher. Not always, because in Luke's Gospel, a particular word is used as master which doesn't mean teacher, but generally speaking, we find he is referred to as a teacher. Do you remember in John chapter 13, the Lord said to his disciples, ye call me teacher and Lord, or master and Lord, and he says you do well to do that.

Now he says, if I, your Lord and teacher, he reverses the order, if I, your Lord and teacher, showed you these things, then you ought to do it, [00:06:02] because I have set you an example. Now I think the inference is this, that unless we know something about vowing our wills to the Lord as Lord, we'll never really get the gain of his teaching.

Absolutely essential to submit our wills to him. And if we do this, we'll make rapid progress in the knowledge of his things. Then of course we have the well-known chapter in 1 Corinthians 2, where we are told that the Holy Spirit teaches and teaches by particular words.

That is, the inspired words of the Holy Spirit really convey the truth of God.

Now, unfortunately, we haven't those original manuscripts existing today, but by careful study of all the ancient manuscripts that are available, those who are competent to do this thing have given us a very exact translation so that we can rely upon it [00:07:01] with the utmost confidence that it is the

word of God. I understand the percentage of error is extremely small, and we can have the utmost confidence that we have the word of God in our hands. And the Holy Spirit inspired those particular words to convey the truth of God.

Beware of so-called paraphrasing of the word of God, because by so doing, much of the truth of God is really destroyed.

Now, in order to get the full gain of what the Spirit has inspired, the full gain of the truth that the Spirit has inspired, we should make sure that we have a reliable translation in our hands.

Now, much of the modern paraphrasing is really destroying the truth instead of making it plain and true to us.

And then, of course, we have the Lord's words about the Holy Spirit.

He shall teach you all things.

[00:08:01] Now, there at the outset, then, we have those scriptures referring to the Father teaching, the Son teaching, and the Spirit teaching. And dear brethren, who can teach as they can teach?

Surely their teaching is perfect, and if we imbibe their teaching, we are going to be extremely well-equipped Christians, and we are going to have an abundance of truth in our souls.

I think it's right to say that when we come to the Christian era, the responsibility of conveying that teaching rested, to begin with, uniquely upon the shoulders of the Twelve Disciples, the Apostles. Hence, we get at the beginning of the Church period, the new converts, they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine or the Apostles' teaching. And what was resident in them was what the Lord Jesus had made known to them when they were with him. [00:09:01] He was the center of that fellowship. They were gathered around him, and he made known to them all that was in his heart. He kept nothing back. All that was essential for their health and blessing. Oh, what wonderful blessing they had.

They were the depositories of wonderful truth received from the Lord Jesus himself. But then, as the truth spread, and of course it spread rapidly in those early days, the power of the Spirit there in the preaching of the gospel and in the ministry of the truth, it became perfectly apparent that the Twelve could not bear the burden of conveying the truth because so many were converted. And so we find the Holy Spirit gives gifts to the assemblies.

And one of the gifts he gave was the gift of a teacher so that the assemblies were equipped with those who were able to teach the truth of God and build up the hearts and minds [00:10:02] of the new converts.

So there we have, I believe, simply, much more could be said, but I believe simply, we have the line of divine teaching. The source, divine persons themselves, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The human means conveyed to begin with, the Twelve Apostles.

And then gifts given by the Spirit in all the assemblies that were formed by the wonderful work that took place at that time.

Now we have the Lord Jesus with us today, neither have we the Twelve, but I believe we still have the teaching that comes from them as the source, and we have the teaching in the gift of the Holy Spirit, and all based upon this wonderful book. Now it's good to remember that in the Reformation period, the Reformers, they stood for three things.

First of all, justification by faith to overthrow the errors of Rome [00:11:02] in relation to salvation. Secondly, the right to question everything that was said. Because prior to this, they had been fed with error, and there was to be no question as to it. If the church taught it, it was right, and no one had the authority to question it. And so they contended that every man had a right to question what was said according to his conscience. And thirdly, and I believe the most important, they contended for the authority of the word of God in all matters pertaining to the faith. And that was a remarkable step forward. Now I think it would be right to say that if we read the history of the Reformation, we would say they went a good distance in destroying much of the errors of Rome that existed at that time, but they didn't go far enough in following the directions of the word of God and breaking down totally [00:12:02] the ecclesiastical system as it existed at that time. Hence, there was a long, long period of adherence to many ecclesiastical errors before the Lord gave further proof that helped the saints to get clear of them. But so today, thank God, we have this book, and the Reformers contended for it as the sole authority for faith and for teaching. And any teaching that comes before the saints of God that cannot be found in this book ought to be refused very definitely.

This is where we get the basis of our teaching. Now having set out in principle the, what shall I say, the progress of teaching from divine persons to ourselves today, we have also to say now, what have we to do?

What have we to do in order to obtain this teaching?

Because it's perfectly obvious to us [00:13:01] how often we hear things and so seldom does it stick in our minds or affect our lives.

We seem to be unable to appropriate it properly. And I think you will agree, after 50 years attending Bible readings and listening to addresses, we ought to be extremely good Christians. We ought to be extremely well-informed Christians. And yet, sad to say, it's not always so.

That perhaps there is a lack of apprehension on our part for some reason.

And I think there's three very definite reasons that we, or rather three definite exercises that we ought to follow in order to gain divine teaching.

Now, the first thing I think is that we ought to very definitely be disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, through the Gospels we'll find that the Lord taught his disciples.

The beginning of Matthew 5 [00:14:03] says the Lord went up to the top of the mount with his disciples with him and they sat down and he sat down and it says he opened his mouth and he taught them.

Now, we read chapters 5, 6 and 7 and we find a concentrated form of teaching that covered a very, very wide scope of instruction.

Now, these people were there not just as casual hearers.

They were there as disciples.

That is, they wanted to learn.

It wasn't that they just happened to be there by chance. They were in the presence of the Master. They were his followers. He had chosen them and they in obedience were following him and now he was teaching them and they had to take time and I'm sure they were willing to take time to listen to what he had to say to them. And so, for that concentrated period [00:15:01] he expounded to them the principles concerning the kingdom. And I'm sure this is absolutely essential for us today that we as disciples of the Lord listen to what the Lord has to say to us through his word, either by addresses or Bible readings or open ministry or in whatever way the word of God is presented to us.

If we're casual about it, if we're careless about it, then we won't get the gain of the Lord's teaching. If we're earnest, if we consider ourselves disciples of the Lord, if we really exercise, to use that word, then we will make progress.

The Lord Jesus, in the Gospel by John, he says, if any man desires to do his will, he's talking about the Father's will, if any man desires to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine.

And I think the inference here again is perfectly obvious [00:16:02] that if anyone really, really and truly desires to do the will of the Father, then immediately he's going to make progress in the knowledge of the truth concerning the Father. I'm sure this is true in many walks of life.

Now this is the second thing. To really desire to do the will of the Lord, it won't be long before we make progress in the knowledge of that will. It's very akin to Romans 12.

You remember there Paul says that we should deliver our bodies as a sacrifice to God.

And then, after that, we prove what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God. The one follows the other. Now the third thing is faithfulness in our lives.

You remember Abraham was an extremely faithful man. He followed God. He was obedient to God.

And you remember God said, [00:17:02] shall I hide from Abraham what I'm going to do? My friend Abraham, I'll make known to him what I'm going to do. Now this is absolutely essential in the Christian life.

Faithfulness, obedience to God, and then we very quickly make progress in the knowledge of his will. Now in secular things, a man can have an extremely acute mind.

He can lead a debauched life. He can be a very evil man.

But that doesn't hinder him in acquiring knowledge in a particular realm, some particular form of knowledge he wants to acquire. By applying himself assiduously to that, he can acquire it.

And his life, his private life, doesn't matter one bit.

But no Christian can make advance in the knowledge of the Lord if he's not living a life that's consistent. If he's living an evil life, [00:18:01] a worldly life, and that's possible for a Christian, unfortunately, he'll never make progress in the knowledge of God's will. The Holy Spirit will not unfold such truth to a Christian of that kind. And we find this exemplified for us in the epistle to the Corinthians, where in spite of all that had been given to them by God, they were allowing evil in their midst. And Paul says, I would like to have fed you with strong meat, but I've got to speak to you as babes. You see, their spiritual life was stunted because they were entirely indifferent to what was due to God.

So, dear brethren, I believe these three things, and there might be other things, I'm only suggesting these three, as being essential on our side for the apprehension of the truth of God. We go over them again briefly. Being disciples, not casual in our approach to it, but desirous of learning, [00:19:01] because that's what a disciple means. Desirous of learning the mind of the Lord. And then, like Abraham, being faithful and receiving the knowledge of the Lord's mind. And then, the other one, I think we quoted second, was the question of being subject to the will of the Father, knowing the will of the Father, and doing it, and then the doctrine is made plain to us.

Now we come to this chapter.

I want to say a word about verse one. It says, The Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils or demons.

I think we should say that this is one of the great truths in the house of God, that the Spirit speaks in the house of God, and speaks distinctly and emphatically [00:20:03] so that all can hear and understand.

You remember when God gave instructions to Moses to build the tabernacle, we read at the end of the book of Exodus that Moses did everything that was commanded of him by God.

The glory of God filled the tabernacle. And then immediately at the beginning of the book of Leviticus, we hear God speaking from out of the tabernacle.

God speaking out from his house and instructing his people how to approach him. Now this is very akin to that. God is in his house and he's speaking to us by his Spirit. And the Spirit is speaking expressly. Now what he's drawing attention to here is the latter times. I want to draw a distinction between the latter times of the Christian period and the latter times of Israel. [00:21:01] In the Old Testament prophets, whenever we find the expression the latter days or the latter times, those are days of blessing.

The old failures of Israel are dispelled with and they are brought into blessing and power and glory under their Messiah.

The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former and many other scriptures. The latter days in relation to Israel refer to blessing.

The latter days of the church refer to failure of the most grievous kind and is anticipated in the period prior to the coming of the Lord for his assembly. So here the Spirit is saying in the latter times there are those who shall leave the faith and they'll pay attention to the doctrines of devils, the doctrines of

demons and seducing spirits.

Now that's very serious dear brethren. That there is a form of teaching in this world today [00:22:01] that is energized by Satan himself.

It's not yet the time after the church is gone that we read about in Revelation. This is when the church is still here but it's at one of the darkest periods of the church when so much has gone astray. And we have to face this because we are living in the latter times, the latter days. They are here now. What the Spirit of God prophesied is now upon us.

And there are teachings abroad which are of Satan himself and they are the doctrines of demons. That's a very, very serious thing to consider.

Now there are many warnings against bad doctrines in the Bible.

The Lord Jesus warned his disciples against the doctrine of the Pharisees and the doctrine of the Sadducees.

Now the doctrine of the Pharisees was hypocrisy and the doctrine of the Sadducees was infidelity. [00:23:03] They were the modern intellectuals who dispelled portions of the Bible saying that they can't be relied upon. They are myths, they are legends. We'll cut out the miracles and these things that reason cannot accept. These are the modern Sadducees. They are preachers of infidelity.

They don't adhere to the Word of God. You remember the Sadducees? They didn't believe in spirits and they didn't believe in the resurrection. And the Pharisees were guilty of the utmost hypocrisy. So there are teachings which promote this kind of thing in the lives of people.

Denial of the truth of God. A form of pride and arrogance and presumption that is contrary to the teaching of our Lord Jesus. We find in the book of Revelation the teaching of Balaam who led the people of God astray. His particular form of evil was greed in relation to the things of God. [00:24:03] You remember the king hired him and hired him through giving him gifts to curse the people of God in total opposition to the revealed mind of God. Then there is the doctrine of the Nicoletans. I understand that there the word means the will of the people. And we find much of that today. The democratic spirit that jacks as good as his master. And people can club together and form opinions and then this is more important than the declared word of God. Now all these things are extremely serious.

In the fourth chapter of Ephesians we read about Paul warning the saints that they should be built up in their souls with the truth of God so that they might be able to stand and not be blown about by the devil's wind of doctrine. And the kind of doctrine which he says is systematized error with a view to leading the saints of God astray. [00:25:02] We might think as we sit in our meetings well we aren't in any danger of that kind of thing. Thank God we have the truth. All this kind of thing is circulating about us day by day.

And it creeps into Christian periodicals. It creeps into the preaching of people. The doctrines of devils. And behind it is Satan's endeavor to lead the saints of God away from the truth.

Now to counteract this kind of thing we read in verse 6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of

these things thou shalt be a good minister and by the way that word minister is what we were speaking about the other night deacon, so it's the brethren. Thou shalt be a good deacon of Jesus Christ.

Now it doesn't go on to say Timothy would be given some job in the house of God as men think of it.

It says you'll be nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine [00:26:02] whereunto thou hast attained.

Now look at the words. Nourished up in the words of the faith I think it should be.

Nourished up in the words of the faith and of good doctrine.

I think four times in the New Testament we get the expression sound doctrine and that word sound has a connotation which means strong, physically strong in contrast to weakness and sickness, physical weakness. Now here is something that is really worthwhile sound doctrine that is it can stand the test and if people invite it and take it into their souls they are nourished up and they are able to withstand all this kind of thing that we've been speaking about the doctrines of demons. Now this is what Timothy was to do. He was to be nourished up in the words of the faith and of good doctrine [00:27:02] whereunto thou hast attained. You see words.

In 2nd Epistle Paul says to Timothy have an outline of sound words. Have it in your mind.

Have it in your mind.

You have a grasp of the thing. You have in your mind an outline of God's operations from glory to glory.

Perhaps you don't understand all the details. Who does?

There is much that we don't know but at least we have an outline in our minds how the church was formed because of the death and resurrection of Christ and his ascension and the descent of the Spirit. We know something of the Spirit's activities on earth, in the assembly and in individuals.

We have some ideas through the course of things. We have an outline in our minds. Now it says Paul to Timothy have this outline and you see if you have that well it's a great barrier to prevent it from coming into your mind of erroneous thoughts [00:28:02] and you're going to be able to withstand and you'll be nourished. A constitution that is able to stand against these evil things that Satan has presented.

Now if we turn over to the second portion which I particularly want to draw your attention to from verse 11 to verse 16 there are many things that are mentioned. First of all he says these things command and teach.

Now I think that expression goes over a little of the ground that we were speaking about one other evening when we spoke about the commands of the Lord.

Now what Paul is saying is this teaching is not an optional kind of thing, not a thing that we can say



well it doesn't matter very much. Paul says command and teach.

There's authority in this teaching.

[00:29:02] Now we've got to be very careful here. The Church of Rome through the Pope makes what is called ex cathedra statements.

When he does this he's speaking as the infallible mouthpiece of the Lord or so he claims to be.

Now these things are binding upon all loyal Roman Catholics. Whether they like it or not, this is a command it's the Church that makes the command through the Pope. The Church teaches these things and they are binding.

Now the Word of God nowhere presents any kind of thing like this connected with the Church of God upon earth. The Church does not teach. There is teaching within the sphere of the Church but the Church itself doesn't teach. The Father teaches, the Son teaches, the Spirit teaches and they teach through the Word of God. And if any man, doesn't matter who he is, says anything that is contrary [00:30:02] to the Word of God then he's teaching error. And so we judge everything that is said by the Word of God.

Now some time ago amongst certain Christians a pamphlet was published and it was called The Authority of the Ministry.

Now this in itself was on the road to Rome because it meant that certain people who were ministering certain things had to be obeyed. There was no question as to whether this ministry was to be judged by the Word of God. There was authority in the ministry and one would say yes there is authority in the ministry when it is according to the Word of God. By all means yes, let's hold on to that. But no man, no matter how spiritual or how gifted he is can stand before the saints of God and claim that his ministry is divinely inspired. Because even in the best [00:31:02] of men it's possible for error to be spoken.

And so it's always wise for those who are listening to turn up their Bibles and make sure that what is being said is according to the Word of God. Never adopt a certain thing in your mind by saying well if brother so and so says it, it must be right. It's not a question of what brother so and so says, it's a question of what the Word of God says. And so you turn up to the Word of God and make sure definitely in your own mind that what is presented is true. Now when Paul said to Timothy, command and teach, there was no doubt in his mind but that Timothy would speak the Word of God and that that Word was binding upon those who heard it. And of course when Paul too spoke he spoke inspired by the Holy Spirit and there was no hesitation in accepting his words. Now in verse 12 he says to Timothy, let no man despise thy youth but be thou [00:32:02] an example of the believers in word, in manner of life, that's the meaning of conversation, in word, in manner of life, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Now here we find a very great challenge. First of all Paul says to Timothy that he was to command and teach. Now he says to Timothy, you make sure that your life is in consistency with what you're preaching. And that's a very great challenge to any brother who seeks to instruct the saints of God. It's very important at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles to read about the things which Jesus began to do and to teach.

Now that's always the order. In the Old Testament we read of a man called Ezra who set his heart to learn the law of the Lord [00:33:02] and to do it and then to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

There's the order.

Learn, do, and teach.

And here we find Paul saying to Timothy, now be a model of the believers. Don't just be a teacher. Let your life be such an example that they will not despise the teaching nor despise the vessel who gave the teaching. In Acts chapter 20 Paul went over all the wonderful things that he presented to the saints. The counsel of God, the kingdom of God, the gospel of the grace of God, all the wonderful things that he unfolded to them. Then he says, I have showed you. And I understand that that phrase means, I have showed you by example.

No one could turn around and say to Paul, Paul, you're a very fine preacher, you're a very fine expounder, [00:34:02] but you set us a bad example. No one could say that about Paul. He not only taught the truth, he lived the truth.

And that's a very, very great challenge to every Christian.

Not only to talk about it, but to live it. And so Paul says to Timothy, be an example in the way you speak.

Be an example in your manner of life. That people look at you and they don't see any disparity between what you say and what you do. And then he says, be an example in love.

Be an example in spirit, in faith, in purity.

You see, we're coming back to what Paul says to Timothy, how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God.

This is true behavior for all those who form the house of God. Not only speaking about divine truths, but putting them into expression in what we say and what we do.

Now, in verse 13, [00:35:02] he says, till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Now, I know that this verse is often used, especially in relation to young people, to exhort them to read the Bibles, and to exhort them to read ministry. And of course, it's an excellent application. But it's not the true one. Because when the Christians were there at the beginning of the Christian period, they hadn't Bibles as we had. They hadn't the ministry that we had.

And also, many of the Christians couldn't read. Most of them were drawn from the ranks of bond slaves. And were illiterate people. Now, says Paul, if my letters are sent to you, you stand up in the midst of those people and read them. Make sure that those people get to know something about my mind. Now, thank God, we are not an illiterate community. There's a great deal of good, solid learning [00:36:02] in this land. And thank God for it. And we don't need this kind of thing in our meetings, where a person has to stand up and read the Bible, or read portions of the Bible, because people can't read themselves.

But I do think that it is a good service where perhaps people are blind. Where perhaps people are grown so feeble that they can't perhaps read for themselves. And it would be a good exercise to say, well, old sister so-and-so, or old brother so-and-so, they don't get out to the meetings now. Well, we'll go along and we'll read them a portion of the Word, and we'll seek grace and guidance from the Lord that it might be for their encouragement. So that might be an application of it for our paths today. And it certainly would be a good service. I can remember one old brother who was quite blind. He had every contrivance to help him to see, but none of them were good enough. And I used to go along and read a portion of the Word, and he never got enough. [00:37:02] And he was always wanting some more. But it was a joy to him just to have someone go along. There were many others who did, apart from myself. But this was something he loved. Just someone to read the Scriptures to him, and to speak about them, to have a word of prayer, and although he couldn't get out to the meetings, what a joy it was to his spirit. Now, here again, then, is something we could be concerned about, and we might be able to fill a little niche for someone's blessing.

He says, give attendance due to exhortation. While there is the realm of teaching, in laying bare, or laying a good foundation in the hearts of the people by expounding the Word to them, such a thing as stirring them up. A stirring word that causes them to be more concerned than they were, and to be more anxious and diligent to acquire the things of the Lord, and to enjoy them.

Then, he says, to doctrine. It's a sad thing when you hear people saying, oh, don't give us doctrine. [00:38:02] Give us something practical. And there's so much about doctrine in the Word of God, it's scarcely understandable how people can speak in this way. The Lord spoke about doctrine.

All through the New Testament, we find it mentioned again and again. It simply means teaching. That's the true meaning of the word, teaching. Now, it's absolutely essential that we be properly taught. That's true in secular things, isn't it? Just think for a moment, if all the schools in the country closed, if all the technical schools closed, all the colleges closed, and there was no learning of any kind whatsoever, I suppose with what we have at the moment, we could go along for a long time. But then children are born, and there are no schools for them to be sent. And gradually, the level of education sinks, and in our foreseeable future, we could see a time when nobody would know anything at all that was worthwhile. It would all die out, and we [00:39:02] would go back to the Dark Ages, would we not? So in secular matters, it's absolutely essential that teaching is maintained in all walks of life. And hope how much more in connection with the divine realm. You see, the cause of the Dark Ages, as far as the Church was concerned, was because teaching was neglected.

Philosophy, man's imagination, superstition, tradition, all these things were taught diligently, but the truth of God wasn't. Hence, the condition of the saints sank and sank and sank, until there was very little for God. Neglect through teaching, and spiritual condition and exercise sadly declines.

So it says, Paul to Timothy, you give attention to doctrine, to teaching.

Now he says in verse 14, neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Now our [00:40:02] good friends in the Presbyterian Church in Scotland would tell us that this is the verse that they depend upon for the ordination of their clergymen, the laying on of hands of the presbytery. That the elders, they are the people who can lay their hands on the chief elder, who is the minister, and this is their form of government by the presbytery, or by the elders. Now, we believe that Timothy was called of God, was chosen by God, and prophecy was made in relation to him. He had a faithful grandmother, he had a faithful mother,

and there were prophecies in relation to this young man, and then those who laid their hands upon him were not ordaining him, or choosing him, or calling him, or qualifying him to be a preacher or to be a servant, they were identifying themselves with [00:41:02] him and saying, yes, this man is obviously called of God and we lay our hands upon him and identify ourselves with him. You remember the same thing happened in Acts chapter 13 when Barnabas and Saul were called by the Holy Spirit, and then the persons in the church they laid their hands upon them and said, yes, we identify ourselves with your service, and they were sent out, not by them, by the Spirit, and there was this happy communion in relation to the service. So this was true of Timothy. He had a good start, the brethren had identified themselves with him, in relation to him, but there was just the danger that he himself was neglecting this gift that he had, and that's always true of every one of us as Christians to allow neglect, carelessness. It's not so much neglecting the gospel, [00:42:02] it's neglecting the calling that we are in. We are inside, we belong to the house of God, we have the opportunities, and yet we can be so careless that we neglect this wonderful opportunity to serve God. Now neglect can be a very serious thing. Neglect can be a serious thing in every walk of life. I remember one young man in our hometown who was quite a brilliant young man. His parents weren't wealthy, but they gave him the opportunity to go to college, to obtain a degree. Well, for a little while, he pursued his studies with diligence, and then he began to be found in the billiard room, and playing cards, wasting his time.

Well, it wasn't very long before his studies slipped behind, and eventually he had to give up. He didn't pass his exams, his parents couldn't afford to keep him at college any longer, and then he had to take a labouring job. Now he [00:43:02] neglected his opportunity. How many Christians have neglected their opportunities? Brought up in Christian homes, brought up, perhaps, in a good company of believers. Every conceivable opportunity there is for them to make progress in the things of the Lord, and they've neglected their opportunity. They haven't applied themselves with diligence to the things of the Lord, and as time goes on, it becomes more and more apparent that they aren't growing. They're not making progress because they've neglected the things of the Lord.

The book of Proverbs is a very interesting book to read, and very often the writer draws attention to the slugger, and it says many things about him. One of the things it says is the slugger desires and has nothing.

Not enough to have right desires. The next part of the verse says but the soul of the diligent shall be made fine.

There's just no short road [00:44:02] to the acquiring of divine things. There must be diligence, constant diligence to the things of the Lord in prayer and in study before the Lord. Now, I know that in this modern age, time is one of the things that we find at a premium. Long working hours, many calls upon our attention, studying in various ways.

There was a little book written once by a dear woman, and the title of it was Little is much if God is in it. And I believe that's a great encouragement to give the small portion of time that we really have, and give that to the Lord, and you'll find he'll make it up. He'll make it work, and he'll make you advance. Now, if this is the great problem, the real desirable part of that there, then you can be sure the Lord will support and help in a very distinctive way. But in Proverbs we find when we pass [00:45:02] by the garden of the slugger, it's all but grown with weeds, the walls are broken down, nothing attractive about it, simply because he neglected what he ought to have been paying attention to. It's very sad if at the end of our lives it has to be said of us that we're like the slugger. We haven't applied ourselves to the things belonging to our Lord Jesus Christ. Now I see the time is about gone.

Verse 15 says, meditate upon these things, or occupy yourself with these things. Give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. We're just going over the same ground again, that if you occupy yourself in these things, very soon it will become apparent that you're growing, you're making progress. It will be evident to all. Now lastly, verse 16 take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine or unto the teaching [00:46:02] continue in them for in doing this thou shalt save thyself and them that hear thee.

Why is it we have so little influence with people when we speak to them? Our words seem to have no power. Well, here Paul tells us the secret. He says, pay attention to yourself first. And if you do that, and then apply the teaching, you'll find that there's gain for yourself and there will be gain for other people. In the epistle to the Romans, and I can tell you dear brethren this verse is often a challenge to me. Epistle to the Romans at the beginning, Paul says thou that teachest another dost thou teach thyself? Now that's a great challenge. Do we read our Bibles simply to get substance for a lecture or for the Bible readings or for gospel addresses or do we read the Bible to build up our own souls [00:47:02] food for our souls bringing its challenge to us so that our lives might be governed by it. Because if we do this, if we are nourished up as Timothy was exhorted to be, then we're going to be strong, not only for our own benefit, but for the benefit of others. So I think dear brethren we've said enough about divine teaching as it comes from divine persons themselves in all its greatness and glory and I think there are a few things that should be said here that that teaching makes us knowledgeable as to themselves and that's the greatest truth of Scripture the knowledge of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And it also makes us knowledgeable as to the church, its various aspects how it functions here in responsibility and privilege and it makes us knowledgeable as to ourselves it makes us knowledgeable as to the future with Israel and the nations and so we have a comprehensive view of the mind [00:48:02] of God if we apply ourselves to that and obtain it and it will be a blessing to us So may these few thoughts be a help to us all and encourage us all in these difficult days to make sure that our hearts and minds are built up so that there will be no entering into our thoughts and hearts of the doctrines of demons. They're all around us dear brethren and we need to be aware and we need to be strong to withstand them and may God give us the grace to apply ourselves more diligently to the knowledge and understanding of these precious things.