

Take it Seriously

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[0:00] 1 Peter 2 verse 17.

It says, Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the King. Do we fear God. 1 Corinthians 2 verse 3. Paul says, And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.

Our message this morning is, Take it seriously. How do we treat the truth? Do we take it seriously? Do we take it with fear and trembling?

Paul said, He was with them in fear and trembling. He wasn't there in any kind of prideful, selfish, self-esteem way. He was there with fear and trembling as he stood before them, as he preached to them, as he spoke to them, as he wrote to them.

[1:07] Do we take it seriously, brothers and sisters? Christianity today, I suspect for many, their treatment of Christianity is light and breezy.

It's a take it or leave it. It's a casual, carefree world we live in, isn't it? There's a church with padded pews and pleasantries and little more.

And much effort these days goes into making meetings humorous and pleasant and enticing. The mantra is, Keep it cool, comfortable and casual.

Churches are going to extremes. They're creating a celebration, a carnival, a concert, even a circus atmosphere.

Now, there's astounding things. Julie and I have been watching some astounding things about what's going on. In some circles, it's horrific.

[2:09] It's no wonder that the Lord is physically revulsed by it. And he wants to just spit it out of his mouth.

That kind of Christianity. And no wonder that religious hypocrites abound. And they can abound in churches just like ours too. Because you can hide in a crowd.

And you can put a pretend face and just go and live like the devil the other six days of the week. You can put in a token effort.

And churches these days often want to keep it pretty non-threatening. Non-threatening, non-offensive, politically correct, interesting stories, political correctness, good advice and moral platitudes.

Just pat people on the back and give them the impression she'll be right. Yet the Lord rebukes such talk. The Lord rebukes such talk.

[3:16] In Isaiah 30 verse 9 we see our Lord says, This is a rebellious people. Lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord would say to the sinners, See not!

And to the prophets, Prophesy not! Unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, Prophesy deceits, Tell us what we want to hear, Tickle my ear, Take it seriously.

Take it seriously today. If we fear God, Fear God, We will hold fast. A holy message. A holy message.

This is a holy message. It tells us that we ought to be a people that tremble at His word. We would be a people that tremble at His word.

As far as the message we stand for. Friends today, we live in an age where the standards are virtually not there at all. Churches are conforming ever more to the world.

[4:30] It's the mantra. We need a holy fear. A holy fear that makes us tremble at the holy message. The holy word of God. What would Jesus do?

That's a new fear. It's not so new now, but one of the kind of slogans. What would Jesus do? You could get a bracelet if you want one.

What would Jesus do? How did Jesus preach? How did Jesus preach? Of course, we know He's talking to the religious crowd of His day. It wasn't that touchy-feely in Matthew 23, verse 33.

Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers. How can He escape the damnation of hell? It wasn't very politically correct.

From our Saviour's lips. Of course, we know He's talking to the religious crowd. He's talking to the churchy people. And friends, we need to take it seriously.

[5:35] Take it seriously. In an age of anemic Christianity, niceties and watered-down self-help sermon, with easy-to-digest half-truths, do we stop and consider, are we biblical?

Are we biblical? That must be what matters. The mantra must be, are we biblical? How did Stephen preach?

In Acts 7, 51. Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears. You do always resist the Holy Spirit as your fathers did, so do you.

That's challenging, isn't it? If that was spoken to you, if you are in that crowd, it's taking it seriously, isn't it? Paul talks about preaching the whole counsel of God, holding not back.

In Colossians 1, 28, he says, he preaches Christ, whom we preach warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that he may present every man perfect in Christ.

[6:44] Warning! Paul talks of a warning. The Word gives many warnings to us, brothers and sisters. Warnings of taking it lightly. Warnings of false teachers.

Warnings of the coming judgment. Warnings of the preparedness for his coming. Paul tells of a rebuking. In 2 Timothy 4, 2, he says, preach the Word, be instant, in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all. long-suffering and doctrine. Reprove, rebuke, exhort. That's a strong word.

Rebuke. It doesn't gel with today's cool hip culture with sensitive new age, happy, clappy creatures sharing and caring, hoping and coping, conforming to the world's culture to the nth degree, yet ultimately bringing a distortion of the gospel.

A distortion of the gospel. Now I'm not saying we can't use some new methods, we use some visual, audio-visual tools, I know, a light preacher, we're showing me how he uses an iPad that he talks from, he's got his notes on and they project behind him.

[8:02] There's nothing wrong with technology, but there is a need for rebuking, there is a need for warning, there's a need to get serious, because preachers aren't in the entertainment business, this is a holy thing, it's the father's business.

There's meant to be a distinction between the truth and error, and we must expose sin and error, we call to them, and that's for every one of us to be honest, like our brother was this morning, expose the sin, confess your faults, that you may be healed.

Our message is to faithfully declare the word of God, thus saith the Lord, to declare the offence of the cross. I read this quote, always remember when somebody comes up with something new, it's usually wrong.

I think there's some truth to that, I don't know that that's always the case. There's some new songs God can put in our hearts, and there's some new things he can stir us up about, but it's got to line up, doesn't it?

That's the ultimate. It's got to be the message, the holy message, not the message, Bible, but the holy message, the word of God, the true word of God. We're called to restore truth, not redefine it.

[9:19] The truth doesn't need redefining, it needs restoring. And here's what an old writer said about the truth, or you could say the word of God, the holy message, the holy message. He says this, truth is sure, truth is pure, truth is triumphant, truth is the seed of the new birth.

God does not regenerate us by miracles or revelations, but by the word of truth. James 1 verse 18, truth is the breeder of grace and the feeder of it.

Truth sanctifies, our Lord says, sanctify them through thy truth. John 17 17, truth is the seal that leaves the print of its own holiness upon us.

Truth makes us free. John 8 32, it breaks off the fetters of sin and puts us in a state of sonship, of kingship. Truth is comforting.

When David's harp and vial could comfort him, no more, truth did. Psalm 119 verse 50, this is my comfort in my affliction, for thy word hath quickened me.

[10:33] Truth, it's an antidote against error. This writer says, error damns as well as does vice. A man may as well die by poison as by pistol.

And what can stave off error but truth, truth. The reason so many have been tricked into error is because they either have not known or did not love the truth.

Truth is the ground of our faith. It shows us what we are to believe. Take away truth and our faith is fancy. He writes, truth is the best flower in the church's crown.

We have not a richer jewel to trust God within our souls, nor he a richer jewel to trust us with than his truths. Truth is an ensign or a flag of honour.

It distinguishes us from the false church as chastity distinguishes a virtuous woman from a harlot.

What then should we be violent for if not for the truth?

[11:42] We are to bid, we are bid to contend as in an agony for the faith once delivered unto the saints. Jude verse 3. There's much truth in that, isn't there?

Here's another quote from Horatius Boner. Imagine having a name like that. He says this, There is no new revelation to be given us but the old revelation which we have had from the beginning.

Ask for the old paths and the good way that we may walk therein and find rest for our souls. He says there are some things which never grow obsolete or out of date.

We don't need some new, fad, revised version. We need to take it as rare. The Word of God. The Word of God. Hold fast the form of sound words.

Now John MacArthur says, and I don't entirely agree with every standing takes, but he says this, A war is being waged against the truth. We are on one side or the other.

[12:43] There is no middle ground, no safe zone for the uncommitted. The enemies of truth are relentless. Truth is always under assault and it is actually a sin not to fight when vital truths are under attack.

Friends, look at the TV preachers that abound. You've got to question much of what is going on, much of what popular Christianity is propagating.

It's lacking in the truth and we need to be very alert to that. The treasure of truth is not shaped by the age. change. It stands sure and steadfast.

It stands the test of time. He says, my words shall not pass away. Not a speck of my word is going to be changed or taken away.

The word of the Lord endures forever and we need to stand for it. Some see preaching today, preaching the word as something out of day, as boldly confronting sin as something that's ineffectual in winning the world.

[13:54] We've heard about sin this morning. We've been stirred, I think. So consider what the word says about sin. The good that I would, I do not. The good that I should, I do not.

And that which I should not, I do. Friends, we all can put ourselves in that verse, I think. The truth has not changed. We stand still in the same need of the old past today.

And we must search out and stand for the word of truth, for sound doctrine, the doctrine of creation, of justification by faith, of salvation, of the blood of Christ.

Friends, there is need to get serious, to get serious to, if we fear God, if we fear God, we will hold fast the holy message, the holy message, the holy word of God.

And if we fear God, we will embark on a holy mission. A holy mission. Imagine if you took up the front page of the advertiser, and it had this headline splashed across the front page, 232,000 people dead.

[15:07] What a shocker. What a headline that would be. Fact is, it happens every single day. 232,000 people dead. About two people dying every second.

Let's take it seriously. Seriously. There's tracks here. We've got tracks that are gathering dust. God, have mercy on us. A holy mission.

A holy mission. We ought to be about that. The work of rescuing souls. In the light of the wrath of God. You know, I had occasion just Friday to catch up with an old friend.

A self-confessed backslider. And he was talking to me, and he was telling me that he had been saved ten times now.

Ten times. I don't know if that's a world record or what. And he considers that he's presently unsaved. He wants to dabble with sin a little longer, he says.

[16:16] He's set a date yet, though, for when he expects to get saved again. Ten times. Fair dinker. He may even start his own church, he says, when he gets saved again.

So if you're looking for a church, I wouldn't recommend that one. Brother says this today. But this man, he's sadly deceived. I'm not meaning to make light of it today.

But it's a reflection of present day gospels. Of a salvation that, it's not this salvation, it's not his salvation, it's not the truth.

God and for the present time, this sadly deceived man says that he has no salvation at the present time and he believes he's in danger of hell fire.

Friends, at least he's being honest though. He's being honest. He wants to dabble with his sin a little longer. He wants to toy with the devil and his toys a little longer.

[17:24] it. He doesn't want to make a bluff kind of falsehood of a profession of faith that he's a Christian when he's not showing the fruit of it.

I guess we can commend him for that. But yeah, it's a reflection of false conversions, isn't it? False conversions as if we can wave our hand and say a prayer and then fall away and do it all over again and again and again and again.

False conversions. It's not real. It's not the real gospel anymore. It's a deception. You know, we can err on both sides of the equation on such things.

It's the work of God. It's his sovereign work and yet it's your response. It's your response. It's an invitation that's extended worldwide and I believe it's a genuine invitation to whosoever will.

There's blood that's been shared that avails. But it's your sin. It's your sin that stops you from trusting him.

[18:31] Friends, we need a holy fear. We need a holy fear that stirs us back to a holy mission. Jude 1.23 it says, and others save with fear. Save them with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

That's the dilemma. That's the gripping, graphic image that he presents there in Jude 1.23. Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire.

I've heard testimonies of Christian firemen and of their stories, pulling them out of the fire. I'm sure people in the police services and ambulance have seen horrible things.

What more horrible thing than a man in the fire? Friends, pulling them out of the fire, there's a holy mission and we should save them with fear. In 1 Peter 3 there's a similar reference to fear in witnessing.

Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

[19:49] You have a message that should be on your lips. A holy fear should prompt you to witness to not hold back. Our world has a desperate need for the faithful gospel.

The original gospel, it's still unchanging. It's still the same gospel. It's not pleasant to the ears of most sinners today. Your sin has separated you from God.

Your only hope is nothing, nothing you can do, nothing you can ever think to do. You can't keep yourself saved, you can't make yourself saved.

It's only by the blood, it's only by the blood that you have any hope, nothing, nothing, not a scarrick of anything you can do, not even the decision that you make.

It's entirely of his doing. It's entirely of the finished work. That's your only hope this morning if you're outside of Christ today. And the saving gospel, it matters more than anything else in the whole world.

[20:51] And we that are saved, there's nothing more critical, there's nothing more important. There's no new gospel to replace the old gospel.

And yet we see there is a new gospel being preached. Here's a quote about the new gospel and the old. The old gospel was about an offended God.

The new gospel is about a wounded us. The old gospel was about sin. The new gospel is about needs. The old gospel was about our need of righteousness.

The new gospel is about our need for fulfilment. The old gospel is offensive to those who are perishing. The new gospel is attractive. What a contrast.

The new gospel is a lie. It's not about your needs. It's not about the fuzzy wuzzies. It's not about the spooky woaky feelings and the warm and fuzzies. It's not about your needs.

[21:55] Your felt needs or your unmet needs. It's about your need of Christ. It's about the cross. It's about the bleeding, dying, resurrected, saving one and returning one.

Are you ready? The same old gospel. It still brings joy and refreshing to souls today. Faithfully and soundly declared, hold fast, the form of sound words.

We have an unchanging message. Let's take it seriously. It's a holy mission that you are to embark on, every one of you, every one that is saved today, not for some select number who go overseas or do extreme things.

It's for you, for you, believer. it's for you. Let's not cheapen the truth, thinking that we have to appeal to the world by sharing in their worldliness to communicate it.

Friends, we do need to communicate it and we can use all kinds of communication means, but we must not dilute it. We must not dilute it or be distracted from it.

[23:06] Take it seriously. Declare it faithfully. Paul writes, I like how someone put this as far as making things relevant.

Relevant. There's a lot of talk about relevance. I think this is a true comment about relevance. This is the statement. We must unashamedly and uncompromisingly declare the whole counsel of God so that men in conviction will be made relevant to the gospel.

We need to be made relevant to the gospel. We need to get saved. We need to get converted. We need to submit to his almighty call and his awesome invitation.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men, writes Paul in 2 Corinthians 5.11.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men.

That's extreme isn't it? That's getting serious isn't it? There's a terror of the Lord that's why we persuade men and there is a call for us to persuade men. There is a call for us to witness, to personally witness.

[24:24] That call should fuel us, it should propel us, it should fire us. Be bold and take it seriously today. Take it seriously in holy fear, hold fast the holy message.

Don't be detoured from the holy message and in holy fear ensure at all times you are propelled into a holy mission and at all times thirdly have a holy motive.

A holy motive that motivates everything that you do. As far as the motive that should stand behind everything we do, we read in 1 Corinthians 10, 31 that familiar passage, whether therefore you eat or drink or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Whatever, do it to the glory of God. Develop a heart that is motivated for God's glory, a lifestyle that lives for God's glory, a motive that you desire to live in the light of his glory.

In Philippians 2 verse 12 it says, Wherefore my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

[25:46] That's taking it seriously, isn't it? That's not a salvation you can have one time and not another and again and again and again and again. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Take it seriously. Take it seriously. Live to the glory of God. Perfecting holiness in the fear of God. It says in 2 Corinthians 7 verse 1.

Do we consider the fear of God? It's something we don't often reflect upon, is it? The fear of God. It's a good thing to have the fear of God.

This is not a trepidation that suddenly is going to squash us, but it's a reverence and an awe of Calvary.

It's the wonder that he should deign to stoop down for me, to bear nails and a rugged cross and a sharp thorny crown for me.

[26:46] fear of God. That's the holy terror that should possess us. A healthy agony of the soul is a good thing for us.

In Hebrews 12:28, it should be evident in our worship, in our service. It says, wherefore we receive a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

Why? For our God is a consuming fire. We don't want to muck around, we don't want to toy around with our worship. Our God is a consuming fire.

God wants our worship to be reverent, to take it seriously. Now that's not to say it can't still be joyful and vibrant and exciting. We might still get some of those emotions that are good things.

To worship him, yet with reverence and fear, because our God is a consuming fire. Our worship should be with godly fear, with humility, with awe, amazement.

[28:02] Some old time preacher put this about worship. He said, if people find worship boring and irrelevant, it can only mean they have no sense of the presence of God in it.

You have to be spiritually dead to be bored by the glory of God. If the glory of God is in our worship, we should be excited, we should be enthused, we should be participants.

We should take it seriously, because everything should be to his glory. Hebrews 10. It says, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

There is a judgment to come. Some of you are lost. Some of you are lost in this very place.

Judgment is coming. Friends, I urge you, I urge you, take it seriously, take it seriously.

Don't pretend to be a Christian if you're not. Better be honest like that guy, I mean, if you're not saved, just be honest. There will be a day, there will be a day when everything is laid bare before the eyes of him, with him we have to do.

[29:10] No secrets then. Everything will be laid bare and open, naked, before his eyes. The awesome truth is our accountability to God.

Something we should take seriously, isn't it? Do you believe the book? Do you believe it? Do you hear his voice? Do you take it seriously? The driving motive for our lives and worship in this Laodicean church age is not meant to be our felt needs, but his demands.

Let's beware lest we take things lightly and carelessly. Friends, I'm stressing this, I know, yet we must not offend a holy God. It's not something to take seriously.

We don't want to join the cowardly, limp-wristed compromises. We'll be blown around with every wind of doctrine. We want to stand solidly, uncompromisingly for the truth.

And we're human. We fail. Especially this one here. Pray for me that I will not fail. Pray for me that I will not compromise. Pray for this church that we will not deviate.

[30:22] We want to be where we can worship, study, fellowship and pray with fear and trembling, with a holy terror that makes us want to tell others of the danger they're in.

Do you really believe it? Do you believe there's a hell? Come on. I know there's some atheists, I think, but, if I really believe that, I crawl over broken glass for miles to take that message to someone.

Be honest. Christ. What about the Lordship of Christ? Think of that. The Lordship of Christ.

Do you believe that? Are you living it? Friends, we can all be challenged, I can be challenged, to study your Bible prayerfully, take it seriously.

Ask yourself, what's hindering me? What is hindering me from becoming a Christian today? What's hindering me from being a fruitful Christian today? What's it going to take to jolt you back on track for God?

[31:30] Perhaps a healthy dose of the fear of God would be a good start for all of us. What about sanctification? What about being set apart?

What about the scriptures that say draw near to God, to that communion with Him, to that intimacy with Him, to that discipline of His Holy Spirit?

What about scriptures that talk about fighting the flesh, of overcoming the world, of wrestling the evil one? We want to be biblical people, be biblical and that means taking it seriously.

You know, I guess I'm just underlining that aspect this morning, that in contrast to the way the world and the way that the majority would go, we don't want to take it flippantly and carelessly today.

Take heed to yourselves, take it seriously. You're giving, take that seriously, you're praying, take it seriously, you're fellowshiping, take it seriously, you're witnessing, take it seriously and that

means, wow, I need to wake up.

There's opportunities to do all of those things, let's take it seriously, let's not miss out on the blessing that God can give to us, draw near to God and he'll draw near to you.

[32:50] Let us pray.