

Two Pastoral Priorities

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Preacher: Cedric Moss

[0 : 00] Well, please turn your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 6, and this morning we are concluding our sermon series in the letter of 1 Timothy.

! Our attention will be directed to the concluding two verses, verses 20 and 21. 1 Timothy chapter 6, verses 20 through 21.

Paul writes, O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge.

For by professing it, some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you. Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you this morning for the privilege of being able to gather as your people on the Lord's Day. Lord, thank you for the privilege we have had of singing together and lifting our voices in song, in praise, and in adoration of your name.

[1 : 27] And Lord, in this moment, as we sit under the authority of your word, I pray that you would speak to us. Lord, these concluding words in this important letter are so easy to overlook.

Lord, in many ways, they carry the burden of the letter. In many ways, they carry the heart of what is contained in this letter of 1 Timothy.

And so, Lord, I pray this morning that as we conclude this sermon series, that you would encapsulate the burden of this letter in these verses and in this message.

And I pray that you would use it for the good of this church, for the good of this church, for the building up and the strengthening and maturing of this church.

And Lord, do it for the glory of your own name. I pray that you would posture all of our hearts to hear the truth. I pray that you would grant me much grace to proclaim the truth.

[2 : 45] And Father, we trust you to do this and more. In Jesus' name. Amen. These two concluding verses that we just read are a statement of the pastoral priorities that Paul gave to Timothy.

In a sense, they summarize the pastoral ministry to which Timothy was called in the city of Ephesus. But more than that, these two verses are a faithful summary of the two key pastoral priorities.

Not just for Timothy, but also for all those who have the responsibility of leading and caring for God's people. And so in these two verses, what the Apostle Paul says to Timothy and to all pastors by extension is, pastors are called to guard the deposit of the faith as well as avoid diversions away from it.

Pastors are called to guard the deposit of the faith as well as avoid diversions away from it. And Paul was saying to Timothy, Timothy, as I conclude this letter, I call you to guard the deposit of the faith that has been entrusted to you.

And I call you to avoid all of the diversions that will take you away from it. And so as we consider these two verses, what these two verses do is they identify two key pastoral priorities.

[4 : 29] And in our remaining time, I want to consider each one of them and their implications for us as a church today. The first priority is this. Number one, guard the deposit of the faith.

Guard the deposit of the faith. Paul says this to Timothy in verse 20. He says, O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you.

When you read these words, there's a sense that there is an awareness in the heart of the Apostle Paul about what is at stake. And so he addresses Timothy in this most solemn manner.

Now, O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Now, this deposit that the Apostle Paul is referring to is the deposit of the faith.

It is the body of teaching, the apostolic doctrine that had been entrusted to Timothy. Right over the page in 2 Timothy, chapter 1.

[5 : 40] Look at verses 13 and 14. We see Paul repeating these instructions to Timothy. And in so doing, what he does is he makes it even clearer that the deposit that Timothy is to God is the body of teaching that he had learned and received from Paul.

Look at what it says, starting in verse 13 of 2 Timothy, chapter 1. Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you. Now, the heart of this deposit that Paul is talking about, this deposit of sound words, this apostolic doctrine, the heart of it is the gospel.

It is the good news that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and that he lived a perfect life and he died a substitutionary death on the cross for sinners.

It is the good news that because of what Jesus did, because of his finished work, God is able to reconcile men and women to himself. He is able to forgive them of their sins, whatever those sins might be.

[7 : 00] That is the heart of the deposit that Paul has entrusted to Timothy. The body of teaching. But we are entrusted with the word of God as a whole.

Though that is the heart of it. And though the body of teaching, the apostolic doctrine that was being taught, that came out of the New Testament, that they had to make sense of as they were this fledgling community of faith coming up.

And they had to make the distinctions between what continued and what did not continue. And Paul was transferring all of this to Timothy.

But the seedbed of it or the container for it all is the word of God itself. And so what we are called to do is we are really called to guard the word of God that has been entrusted to us.

And when we rightly understand and believe the word of God, then we will guard the word of God. And here is what I mean by that statement.

[8 : 13] Systematic theology is the study of God in an orderly, systematic, and logical manner. And therefore the study of systematic theology begins with the doctrine of scripture.

It begins with understanding the word of God, its nature, and how it applies, and how we are to receive it. Any study of theology begins with the word of God.

And the reason is because all that we know about God, and about the Christian life, and what we are to do, and so forth, it's all contained in the word of God. So the starting place for studying theology in a systematic way is the scriptures.

The doctrine of the word of God, the doctrine of scripture. What does scripture teach? And how are we to view scripture? What are the characteristics of scripture?

In the study of the doctrine of scripture, there are four important characteristics of scripture that are to be understood and accepted if we are going to rightly guard the good deposit that has been entrusted to us.

[9 : 33] These four characteristics are, number one, the authority of scripture. Number two, the clarity of scripture. Number three, the necessity of scripture.

And number four, the sufficiency of scripture. Understanding and holding to biblical convictions about these four characteristics of scripture is essential to guarding the deposit that has been entrusted to us.

Now what I want to do is I want to give us, and this I know will be helpful to you, it is essential to understand this, to appreciate what Paul is saying to Timothy and by extension to all of us in these two concluding verses.

So I want to give you four succinct definitions of each of these characteristics of scripture. They are all taken from Rain Grudem's systematic theology.

The first one is the authority of scripture. What is the authority of scripture? Here is what he says it is. The authority of scripture means that all of the words in scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.

[11 : 01] That is what the authority of scripture means. If we do not believe in the authority of scripture, if we do not believe that scripture is authoritative, we won't guard it.

We will look elsewhere for our authority and the devil will accommodate us. The second is the clarity of scripture, and here is the definition that Dr. Grudem gives.

The clarity of scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God's help and being willing to follow it.

So scripture is able to be understood by every single person who is willing to read it, seeking God's help, and being willing to follow it.

See, this dispels the myth that I can't understand the Bible. This is one of the fundamental characteristics of scripture. We need to believe this when we approach God's word, that if I approach God's word seeking his help, and I am willing to obey whatever I find in scripture, scripture is clear to us.

[12 : 24] Scripture is clear to us. But if our approach to scripture is kind of tentative, and we are going to accept it if we like it, if we are good with it, well then, we are already postured not to understand scripture clearly and in a helpful way.

Scripture is clear, and scripture is clear even to the youngest child who is able to read it, and who is going to depend on God to seek to understand it.

This must be a conviction of scripture. Number three, the necessity of scripture. The necessity of scripture means that the Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and knowing God's will, but is not necessary for knowing that God exists, or for knowing something about God's character and moral laws.

So scripture is necessary to show us and to teach us the gospel, and to teach us how we are to live in light of the gospel, how we are to respond to the gospel.

But we don't need scripture to learn some basic things about God. The Bible says the heavens declare a lot of things to us about God, and about his nature, and about his character.

[13 : 51] We read about it in Romans chapter 1, that in nature God reveals himself, but men, being darkened in their minds, and being blinded by sin, they suppress the knowledge of the truth.

So we don't need scripture to be able to know things about God, and to see things about God, but we need scripture to understand the gospel, and to be led in the way of salvation, because that's where God has chosen to reveal the way of salvation in his word.

And then the fourth one, the sufficiency of scripture. The sufficiency of scripture means that scripture contained all of the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.

That's what the sufficiency of scripture means, that scripture is sufficient. And brothers and sisters, if we do not believe that scripture is sufficient, we will look elsewhere. And so believing these characteristics of the word of God, of scripture, is essential to guarding the deposit, to guarding what has been entrusted to us.

again, if we don't, we will look elsewhere and the devil will accommodate us. So we're to guard the doctrine of scripture and in so doing, we will guard the deposit of the faith that has been entrusted to us.

[15 : 40] Because all of these things that we hold to these beliefs that we have, the doctrines that we teach, they are rooted and grounded in the word of God. And we have to believe these things about the nature of the word of God if we're going to hold on to it, especially when there are competing ideas floating around and coming at us in every way.

And the truth is, if we lose one part of it, eventually, we're going to lose all of it. If one part falls away, eventually, the whole thing is going to fall away.

Now, from this first pastoral priority that we see in verse 20, we're able to see that what was entrusted to Timothy and to ministers of the gospel by extension is valuable.

That's why it's referred to as a deposit. It is referred to as something of value, something that is to be guarded. We're also reminded that it is entrusted, that what is entrusted to ministers do not belong to them.

It is a stewardship. And therefore, ministers don't have the right to alter it or tamper with it or try to be innovative with it.

[16 : 58] Their only responsibility, their duty, is to guard it and to protect it. By its very nature, it belongs to another.

another. It is not our deposit. The deposit was entrusted to Timothy. The deposit is entrusted to ministers of the gospel and that is a sacred trust that they have been given.

Another feature of the deposit that was given to Timothy and is given to ministers is that they are authorized to entrust it to others as it was entrusted to them.

And again, if you look over to 2 Timothy chapter 2 verses 1 through 2, we see Paul making this very point. He says, You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. He says to Timothy, he says, Timothy, what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust the faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

[18:19] Now, at the time that Paul would have written this to Timothy, the faith was very much verbal. It was an oral tradition. It was passed down. The scriptures were only being written then.

They were not fully written. They were not complete. Now, we have them completed but at that time it was an oral tradition. And Paul was saying to Timothy, Timothy, you can entrust this to other men who will also be able to teach others as well.

Now, when we consider these words, in particular the first priority that Paul gives to Timothy, it is obvious that Paul is addressing Timothy and certainly by extension he is addressing other church leaders who are custodians of the faith.

But in a sense, every single person who is a follower of Jesus Christ, at some level, is a custodian of the faith that they have received.

They are custodians to guard the precious faith that they have received, and in particular, to guard the heart of the faith, which is the gospel.

[19:37] That is a responsibility that we all have at some level or another. And I believe that we need to see that we are positioned to do this, we are empowered to do this, when we understand and accept what scripture teaches about itself.

These things that we talked about, the authority of scripture, the sufficiency of scripture, the clarity of scripture, and the necessity of scripture, we learn these from scripture itself. Scripture itself teaches these, and we have to hold on to these truths, because if we do not, we will risk being diverted, and we will risk shipwrecking our faith.

And this brings me to my second and final point. The second pastoral priority is this, avoid diversions from the faith.

Avoid diversions from the faith. Notice how Paul says this, starting in the second sentence in verse 20.

Notice how he says it. He says, avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge.

[21:02] For by professing it, some have swerved from the faith. Paul is in essence telling Timothy what to avoid in his guarding of the faith.

He says you are to avoid irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge. And he reminds Timothy of the reason that he needs to do that.

The reason that Timothy needs to do that is this danger that is cited in verse 21. For by professing it, some have swerved from the faith.

Some have diverted from the truth. They have diverted from the faith because they did not guard the deposit that was entrusted to them.

Evidently they gave air to the novel teachings that were floating around in that day and it led them in a different direction. Now when you consider what Paul had called Timothy to do while he left him in Ephesus, you can see that this required wisdom.

[22:10] It required wisdom because Timothy had to be able to engage these people, refute and rebuke the false teachers while at the same time avoiding giving air to what they were saying.

It required wisdom for him to do that. It also required humility. It required humility because Timothy was being called to reject this so-called knowledge.

and those who were outside of the church or those who were trying to infiltrate the church were saying oh we have this superior knowledge. We have this secret knowledge that puts you in a different place and at a different level of spirituality.

And Paul had to therefore be humble and in their eyes be seen as ignorant to protect himself and to guard the gospel.

And we don't like to be seen as ignorant. We don't like to be seen as not smart. We tend to like to be looked up to in a very favorable way.

[23:22] But Paul said to Timothy you are to avoid that so-called knowledge. That irreverent babble that many are engaging in.

And the reason was because it was going to eventually lead to a shipwrecking of his faith. Now I know a lot of times when we read the Bible and in particular when we read passages like this we often times think well that's not so relevant today.

Not so relevant to me and to us in this modern age. but I want to assure you that what Paul said to Timothy is as relevant and perhaps even more relevant today, more important today for us to hear than in Paul's day.

And one of the reasons I think is more relevant for us today is that false teaching and this kind of irreverent babble that Paul is warning against can move much faster and is more accessible today than it was in Paul's day.

For it to be taught people had to walk around and they had to espouse it, they had to do it verbally. Not so today. You can sit in your home and someone who is dead can speak false doctrines to you. [24 : 46] Just a click away on the internet. You watch a television program like Oprah. If you watch Oprah you will hear this kind of thing in the droves.

Any kind of self-help TV show you will hear those who promote this new kind of spiritual knowledge. Some time ago the Nassau Guardian ran a story in its lifestyle section that was entitled An Unorthodox Approach to Christian Worship and Living.

I'm going to read some excerpts from the article. This is what it says. It's unorthodox but it's a religious experience designed to be a self-help show to inspire people on a range of life issues. Infinite Works Metaphysical Apostolic Fellowship is a new kind of church church that many people may not agree with. But it tackles issues everyone can relate to.

The church advocates a deeply personal spiritual experience focusing on the psychology of religion. religion. It's not about the traditional route to heaven.

[26 : 22] But one more interested in a deepening understanding of the self. According to Infinite!

Metaphysical Apostolic Fellowship President Betty Clare, they will be looking at the soul specifically to answer questions people struggle with, like who they are and what their destiny is.

She said, the self-help strategy of the church is targeted towards a proactive recognition of self and destiny.

And this is a quote from her now. There's a physical world behind everything. There's a spiritual world as well, says Clare, who has a doctorate in metaphysics and teaches her members about the psychological aspect of religion.

We focus on everything to do with the soul. Infinite Works teaches its congregation the value of exploring the soul through astrological and biblical avenues in order to achieve greater consciousness of self and destiny in life.

[27 : 49] Clare said they examined four elements of astrology as in sun signs, which she said tells people about themselves.

Again, a quote. In essence, we relate the astrological side of ourselves in relation to our spirituality. It helps us to understand ourselves and our surroundings.

Members of the congregation are encouraged to use the astrological signs attributed to their birth date to engage in finding themselves and knowing their characteristics.

Clare said knowing characteristics and who you are will help individuals in dealing with life struggles. Clare said the Bible is used as their guide to find and know themselves.

Infinite Works, which meets on Saturday and Sunday mornings, takes a different approach to the worship experience. They start services off with affirmations or chantings taken from Bible verses to encourage and create a positive consciousness and dispel negative energy.

[29 : 09] This is a group of people who meet on this island. And some of you who may have connected dots and remember may recall if you attended Patrice Heparin's sister's funeral, there was a young man who brought remarks and he was from this church.

And if you would recall what he spoke was what Paul said in these verses, it was a reverent babble. It's what it was.

He just got up and he babbled. Now, you may think that this person, this Betty Claire, is someone who just is off left field and she is in some respects, but she wasn't always there.

This is a person who grew up in an Assemblies of God church, a sound denomination, and she and her husband were leading a church and some years ago, we all heard that they were going through a divorce.

They were divorcing and they made it very clear to the congregation that there was no infidelity, there was nothing of any kind of betrayal of their marriage vows, but they simply no longer wanted to be married and so they were divorcing.

[30 : 41] And so she went up the street and she started a church and some of the people went with her and some stayed with her husband. Here's why I share this this morning.

I share this this morning because all the devil needs is a very small opening, a very small opening, and something as simple as that to not hold what the Bible says about marriage and about divorce. Scripture gives no grounds for any of us to end our marriage simply because we don't want to be married and even more so for someone who says, I'm a minister of the gospel.

But once you start down that path and you no longer see Scripture as authoritative in your life and that you will obey it in your life, you eventually begin to put yourself in a position where you begin to pick and choose what you're going to obey.

And the devil knows where we need to start. He knows where to start us out. He's not going to come and tell us do nine yards on day one. He's just going to tell us, well, you know, God understands.

[31 : 53] He don't want you to be unhappy. He don't want you to be locked in a bad marriage. You know, you can just end it and don't get married and be faithful and he gives that line.

So she didn't start there. And I imagine that she probably picked up some book feeling scripture not being sufficient, feeling that scripture wasn't addressing all that she wanted it to address for her and cracked open some book and led her down a particular path.

I want to say that this kind of thing is growing certainly on this island. I don't know what's happening elsewhere, but this is growing. There's another group that is here on the island.

It's called Universal Truth Ministries. They meet over in the Dugad Plaza. and they're part of a group that's called the Universal Foundation for Better Living and they call themselves a New Thought group.

This stuff that Paul is talking about, this knowledge, this new knowledge that is floating around, they call themselves part of the New Thought movement. And here's how they define New Thought.

[33 : 16] This is on their website. New Thought is practical Christianity that empowers people to realize their potential by becoming consciously aware of the spirit within them.

New Thought teaches universal spiritual principles that enable people to build happy, prosperous lives. New Thought helps people to change their circumstances by changing their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs.

And then they say, they talk about the text they use, the core text, is what they say. The Holy Bible is the core text of UFBL, Universal Foundation for Biblical Living.

We interpret the Bible allegorically in order to discover the teachings embedded within the scriptures, meaning the teachings are not so obvious so you've got to dig into the scriptures to pull them out in some allegorical fashion.

tradition. We believe the Bible offers nourishment for the soul, and we use its lessons as reminders of our divine origin and purpose. In addition to the Bible, we study the teachings and writings of leading new thought philosophers and scholars, including Charles Fillmore and Dr. H.

[34 : 39] Emily Cady. A group that's meeting about ten minutes away from where we are this morning.

What Paul says to Timothy, brothers and sisters, is relevant to us this morning. And what Paul says to Timothy will be increasingly relevant to us and we need to be aware of it.

And we need to be on guard against it. And we need to recognize that what has been entrusted to us, what has been handed down to us over the ages, over thousands of years, is something that is precious and something that is worth guarding and something that we don't need to hold up to some new thought, some new idea that is being floated about so that we can be seen as in the know and be seen as knowledgeable.

And again, what protects us from all that stuff? What protects us from all that stuff is our foundational belief that scripture is authoritative, that it is clear, that it is necessary, and that it is sufficient, and we don't need to look elsewhere for anything.

When you read, when you listen to what this new thought group is promising to those who espouse it, in a sense, it sounds like a complaint against the Bible.

[36 : 10] It sounds like a complaint against the Bible that if you believe this new thought, then all of these things will come your way.

You'll be able to improve your life and be happier, and be able to work through the problems and the challenges in your life. What they're essentially saying is scripture is not sufficient.

Now, I've not done a whole lot of study on the people who founded this group, but here's my suspicion, and I believe I'm right, even though I've not checked it out. I believe they started with the Bible.

I believe they started in some group with just the Bible, but did not hold to the view that it's sufficient, that it's authoritative, that it is clear, and that it is necessary.

And so, they diverted into irreverent Bible. Just cracking open the door, perhaps just holding the Bible and looking at the other book at the same time. I'll never forget a number of years ago, this lady came by, and she had a guy who I'd known from doing prison ministry, you know, and deep problems, and he said he was a part of her church, and they saw my car and stopped by, and she was telling me that she was preparing for Sunday morning's message and how excited she was about this book that she was reading.

[37 : 37] I said, what are you reading? She was reading Deepak Chopra. Not a Bible, but an Indian self-help guru who espouses almost anything that he thinks is enlightening.

And so, brothers and sisters, this stuff is nearer to us than we sometimes realize. And we would be wise to take the counsel of the Apostle Paul and avoid it.

He says, it's a reverent Bible, and therefore, we need to avoid it. I couldn't help but really reflect on God's mercy to me and to our church as I considered this tax and I considered this charge to God the deposit that was entrusted to you.

Some of you would know this, and most of you probably do, but in my early years in ministry, I was drawn to a man by the name of Earl Paul.

He formerly was in the denomination that I grew up in, and he had left, and he led a quite large and diverse church in Atlanta, and in 1988, I became reacquainted with his ministry through someone bringing me some tapes and began to be interested in that, and when we started the church, began to go to conferences that he was putting on in Atlanta.

[39 : 19] The long and short of it is that he turned out to be a very immoral man. He turned out to be a man who was so immoral.

I have not heard of categories of immorality that were later disclosed in his life. God was merciful to us, and God sovereignly just weaned us off of that relationship, and some seven years later, I was at the pastor's college, and I could remember the moment we were on a break, and I was looking at checking email, and I had gotten this email update from Charisma magazine, and there was this article that had revealed that a young man who was considered to be his nephew, they found out, was his son.

He had fathered a child with his brother's wife. And I could remember I almost literally got sick at my desk as I read that.

But I was grateful to God that he spared us all of that. And fast forwarding to today now, Earl Polk is dead, he died several years ago, but this son, Donnie Earl Polk, who was thought to be his nephew, but proved to be his son, inherited the church and ministry that he had.

And it's quite interesting to see, for the most part, although Earl Polk had some erroneous views about scripture, in particular eschatology and how the world will end and so forth, for the most part, he would have been considered a mainline Christian minister.

[41 : 12] But Donnie Earl Polk has morphed into something that is just unrecognizable in terms of Christian doctrine.

If you were to go to his website, he now leads a church, well it's still called the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, but he leads a church called the Sanctuary of Truth, the Spirit and Truth Sanctuary is what it's called, Spirit and Truth Sanctuary.

When you go to the website, he has the icons of 12 different religions, and you'll recognize some of them, you'd recognize Islam, and you'll see the cross, and you'll see Taoism, and you'll see some other religions, some of them I didn't know, you'll see Judaism, but 12 of them, and he believes that there's truth in all of them, and so they embrace all of them, and he mixes it up, so on a particular day he may preach out of the Bible, and another day out of the Koran, another day out of some other book, but here's what he has on his website, about what they believe, this is the question,

what do we believe?

We are a group of truth seekers who perceive Christ cannot be and will not be restricted to Christianity. We affirm Christ in all of his creation, we celebrate truth as a journey, not as a destination, we assert that the creator cannot be defined or confined by the creation, we believe the word of God, the Christ, is perfect infallible inerrant.

We understand the infallible cannot accurately scribe the fallible, and that's a slight undermining of scripture saying that fallible men cannot scribe or write something that is infallible, meaning that scripture is not infallible.

[43 : 27] we believe the work of the Holy Spirit is to lead us into capital AL, all truth, not exclusively biblical or Christian truths.

We embrace truth as a knowing, not as a known. We profess faith is a hearing, not a heard.

We accept God has reconciled the world to himself through Christ. That's universalism. If you go to his site, you'll see one of the prominent persons on his website is Carlton Pearson, who espouses universalism.

Carlton Pearson would teach that God is so loving, he will send no one to hell, even the devil. God is too loving to send him to hell. And then finally, we endeavor to convince the world of God's love, not convert the world to Christianity.

This is one generation away from someone who would have said, I believe this whole Bible. This is what happened to that particular church.

[44 : 47] And I share that this morning really out of a sense of awareness of God's kindness to me and God's kindness to this church because I was on a road that could have led to shipwreck.

You see, a lot of times we get into certain contexts and we give air to certain ideas that we should not. And these are doctrines of demons.

These are doctrines of devils. So, people can sincerely believe these things even though they are wrong. They are deceived. Deception comes over them. They are not saying, oh, I know this is error and I love error.

No, they are deceived in believing that error is truth. And God has been merciful to me and to our church. And so today, we have the mercy and grace of God expressed to us in belonging to a family of churches that would take very seriously these words from Paul to Timothy to guard the deposit entrusted to you.

To avoid irreverent babble and the contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge. By the grace of God, that is our portion today.

[46 : 09] that we are able to stand with brothers and sisters all around the world in a family of churches that takes the word of God seriously, that believes these characteristics about the word of God that positions us to be able to guard the truth.

And so when Paul said these words to Timothy, we can sense his burden because he knew what was at stake. that the very life of people for whom Christ died was at stake.

Paul concludes his words to Timothy with these four words, grace be with you. And those four words communicate so much.

They communicate to us, really, that this task of guarding the deposit requires grace. it requires the enabling grace of God to help us to be able to carry out this duty, this responsibility of guarding the truth.

But it is also a reminder of the saving grace of God. The grace of God that saved the individuals who are entrusted to leaders like Timothy in the church.

[47 : 34] church. And so it is a reminder that this is a trust and it is a reminder of the high stakes involved if we were to shipwreck.

And so brothers and sisters, as we conclude this letter of 1 Timothy, let us hear the burden and the weight of Paul in these closing verses that remind us of the things we have considered in this letter, that in this letter we learn how to conduct ourselves in the house of God, we learn what to believe, and we learn how we are to be able to live.

And I would say to us this morning, if you're here and you're maybe a little on the edge, a little anxious, a little worried, a little concerned, thinking that maybe scripture is not enough, and maybe you're giving air to alternative ideas.

Maybe you are thinking that you need to look outside of scripture for whatever deficiency or inadequacy you may feel or sense in your life. I want to say to you this morning that what you

sense, any void or deficiency, that is a desire for God himself.

It's not a desire to look outside and to find something else. That is a desire for God himself. And I urge you to press into God, open his word, trust him to reveal its contents, its truths to you, and that he would feed you from his word.

[49 : 17] And accept that it is sufficient. It is all that you need. You don't need to be looking outside. You don't need to turn Oprah on. You don't need to listen to Dr. Phil. You simply need to allow the word of God to have its rightful place in your life and to do the work that only it can do.

So Paul concludes this letter and he says to Timothy, O Timothy, God, the deposit entrusted to you, avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge, for by professing it, some have swerved from the faith.

Grace be to you. may those words ring in our hearts this morning and in the days ahead and may they keep us, may they keep us on the path, guarding this deposit, this precious deposit that has been given to us.

Let's pray together. advance