

Pastoral Instructions

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[0 : 00] Walked into the mall and was greeted by a bunch of balloons the kids had and many people came over and we just trust the Lord to move on the hearts of those who had invitations to Christianity to really come.

So let's continue to pray concerning that. The name Tulian Chividion is probably not known to many of you, but Tulian Chividion is the grandson of famous world-known evangelist Billy Graham. And Mr. Chividion came to recognition and prominence some six years ago when he became the pastor of the well-known Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

It's a church that was founded by Dr. D. James Kennedy, a very well-known Presbyterian minister who had passed away. A little more than a month ago, the Christian community was shocked to learn that Chividion was asked to resign by the elders of his church because he had committed adultery.

And as you can imagine, not only was his own family devastated, but that church was devastated and countless others connected to him and to his church.

[1 : 28] Now this is a sad but frequent occurrence in the church, and I would even add that it is an increasing occurrence.

More and more pastors are being asked to resign from pastoral ministry because of moral failure. When I consider this increasing reality, I'm forced to ask the question, why?

Why is this? Now I know the broad answer is sin. The broad answer to that question is sin. But practically speaking, how is it and why is it that pastors, who many times firsthand see the devastation that comes to the lives of individuals and families through moral failure and other forms of falling short of what they should be, how is it that these same individuals who have a front row seat end up themselves shipwrecking their lives and harming so many in the process?

It is to some degree understandable that a person who doesn't get to see that kind of fallout in a regular kind of way would not appreciate the seriousness of it.

That when sin presents itself and seems so pleasurable that it really is not. It is understandable that people who don't see that on a regular basis can fall for that.

[3 : 11] But how is it and why is it that pastors who have a front row seat to that succumb to it?

Well, this morning I believe that the primary answer to that question is found in this portion of Scripture that we have come to this morning in our extended series in the letter of 1 Timothy.

And I want us to consider it. So if you have not yet done so, please turn to 1 Timothy chapter 4. And we begin at verse 11. We'll read through verse 16.

1 Timothy 4, 11 through 16. And I'll be reading from the English Standard Version. Paul writes to Timothy,!

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Let's pray together. Let's pray together. Lord, we thank you this morning for the privilege of having your word and now to be able to sit under the instruction of your word.

[5 : 17] We ask, Lord, that you would use your word to build your church. We ask that you would instruct us from your word. We ask that you would open our eyes that we may behold wonderful things in your word.

Lord, we ask that you would give us grace to hear and obey. Lord, we ask that you would enable me to be faithful to the truth of Scripture.

Father, we ask that you would help me to stay within the four corners of this text and to proclaim it as I ought. And Father, would you use it for the good of this church and for the glory of your name. Lord, we pray in Jesus' name. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. When we consider these six verses, it is clear that the Apostle Paul is continuing to instruct Timothy in a very personal way.

And now, in these six verses, he focuses on two particular issues. He focuses on Timothy's life and on Timothy's teaching. And verse 16 is a very good summary of what Paul says to Timothy in verses 11 through 15.

[6 : 32] He seems to summarize in verse 16 what he says in verses 11 through 15. In verse 16 he says, Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching.

Persist in this, for by so doing, you will save both yourself and your hearers. The New International Version says it this way.

1 Timothy 4, 16. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

So as a whole, here's what the Apostle Paul is saying in these verses, not just to Timothy, but really to pastors in general.

Here's what he's saying. He's saying, pastors are called first to watch their lives, then their teaching, and in so doing, they will save themselves and others who listen to them.

[7 : 41] So the Apostle Paul is holding out to Timothy, holding out to all those pastors who have the responsibility to stand as shepherds, as leaders of God's people in God's church.

Pastors are first called to watch their lives, then their teaching, and in so doing, they will save themselves and others who listen to them.

I want to point out this morning that I really believe that there is a divine priority in the two areas that Paul is calling Timothy and by extension, all pastors, to keep a close watch on.

It is first yourself, and second, your teaching. Now, I want to answer the question that I raised at the very outset of the message.

The reason that so many pastors are failing morally and otherwise being disqualified from ministry is that they have lost the priority of these dual commands.

[8 : 52] Somewhere along the way, they cease to watch their lives as closely as they should as a matter of first priority. And spiritual shipwreck is inevitable.

It is the inevitable result. So it is for good reason that the Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, writes to Timothy and he urges him, Timothy, keep a close watch on yourself and on your teaching.

So for the next few moments, I want to consider more closely what the Apostle Paul says to Timothy in these six verses. And for those of you who are taking notes, I've organized my thoughts under two headings and they are these.

Number one, the pastor's life. And number two, the pastor's teaching. So let's start with the first one, the pastor's life. In verse 11, Paul makes a statement that is similar to the one that he made in verse 6.

In verse 6, he told Timothy, if you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.

[10 : 09] And now here in verse 11, he is again referring to these things. And at this point in verse 11, these things would refer to what he had said up to that particular point, although by implication it includes the rest of what he would write to Timothy as well.

But in a very primary way, it was referring to what he had written up to that particular point. And then likewise, Paul writes very personal words to Timothy in verse 12, where he tells him, let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

And these instructions are connected to what he said to him earlier in verse 7 when he said to him, train yourself for godliness. Train yourself for godliness.

What we see in this letter is Paul has somehow now turned his attention to Timothy. He was addressing Timothy and the church broadly. He was telling Timothy how to care for the church and how to deal with false doctrine and how to deal with unsound teaching.

But now he begins to care for Timothy. He turns his eyes to Timothy and begins to say to Timothy, Timothy, watch yourself. He tells Timothy in verse 12, that he is to not let anyone despise him for his youth, but he is to set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

[12 : 00] Commentators tell us that Timothy would have been in his 30s. And in that culture in which Timothy found himself, in Greek culture, young men were considered to be 40 and younger.

So if you were 40 and younger, you were considered to be a young man. And perhaps there were people in the church who looked down on Timothy because he was so young. And Paul's point

seems to be saying to Timothy, I don't think Paul is really saying don't let anyone look down upon you just because you're young because Timothy can't control that.

There's no way that you can prevent a person from seeing you in a particular way just because they see you based on some circumstances. I think what Paul is saying to Timothy is that Timothy should not allow foolish, immature, and sinful conduct that is sometimes associated with youth to be the reason that people look down on him or despise him.

So he goes on and he says to him, but instead set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in faith, in purity. Timothy, you're young, but Timothy, you can set an example for the believers. And if you do, they will not look down upon you. They will not despise you. In essence, that's what Timothy is being told by Paul.

[13:31] this is nothing short of a call to watch his life. Paul is calling Timothy to watch his life.

And in these words, what we see is we see the wisdom and the care of Paul for Timothy. Timothy was left in Ephesus. His primary assignment is deal with the unsoundness of this church, the unsound doctrines, and deal with those who are practicing it.

Rebuke them sharply. Stand against them. Timothy was called to this corrective kind of ministry in Ephesus. But again, Paul tells him, he says, but Timothy, you must pay attention to your own life as well.

And I think Paul does this for good reason. He does it for good reason because one of the temptations that face those of us who are in authority is to believe the lie that what applies to those under our authority does not apply to us.

That's one of the temptations of being in authority. Sometimes we do this as parents. We tell our children to do what we do not do ourselves.

[14:53] And we say to them, don't do as I do, but you are to do as I say. We see this with politicians who make laws for countries that they themselves break. And they don't follow, and many of them end up shipwrecking their careers because of it.

We have police officers who are called to uphold the law, and sometimes some of them break the same laws they are called to uphold, and they wind up being exposed and finding themselves on the wrong side of the law.

And then certainly in the context that we are addressing this morning, we have pastors who preach and call members to do what they themselves do not do, and they end up shipwrecking their lives, their families, and their churches.

How deceived are we to believe that we need to watch others more than we watch ourselves? And that is the height of deception. The height of deception is for me to believe that I need to watch someone else more than I watch myself.

And this seems to be the import of what Paul is saying to Timothy. He's saying to Timothy, Timothy, you are to watch yourself. Timothy, you are in this role of putting this church right and putting things in order, but Timothy, watch your life.

[16:21] keep a close watch upon your life. Listen to the counsel that the apostle Paul would later give to the elders of this same church that Timothy was serving at.

You find these words in Acts chapter 20 verse 28. He says to the elders who he had gathered at Miletus, he said to them, pay careful attention to yourselves. Notice the priority again.

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to care for the church of God which he obtained with his own blood.

That's the priority. Yes, Timothy, get the church right. Yes, Timothy, deal with Alexander and Hymenaeus. Deal with those men. Deal with their false doctrines. But Timothy, watch your own life. Keep a close watch on your life. So in verse 12, Paul is calling Timothy and by extension he's calling all ministers to pay attention to their lives as a priority and he lists five particular aspects.

[17:37] And here we trust, we know this list is not exhaustive, we know this list doesn't include everything it can include, but we trust Paul writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that God is laying in this what we need to focus on as we consider areas in which to watch our lives.

The first area that he mentions is in speech. This is a call for Timothy to have regard for the words he speaks. It is a call to God against sinful speech.

It is a call to God against lying and gossip and malicious words and being rash with our words. It is a call to gracious speech, speech that is seasoned with salt so that we may know how to answer every person as Paul says in Colossians chapter 4 and verse 6.

Paul was saying to Timothy, be an example of godly speech that the believers can follow. next in conduct. He called him to be an example in conduct.

And this is the broad godly conduct that Paul has already outlined that is fitting for elders in verses 2 through 7 of chapter 3.

[18 : 57] And notice that the key words in verse 2 of chapter 3 are these words, above reproach. He is calling Timothy to conduct himself in a way that is above reproach.

He is calling him to exhibit godly conduct that is worthy of being followed by the believers under his care. Not just at church, but in all spheres of his life, at home, when he is socializing with friends, in traffic, dealing with companies and employees that offer poor service.

were my great temptations. Were my great temptations. And it was fresh in my mind this week because I had perhaps one of the worst that I experienced recently.

I was in a store and I went to use a credit card and the card was declined. And I said, the card is fine.

Can you try it again? And she tried it again. And like an idiot, I said, could you try it again? And she tried it again and it didn't work. So I went and I called and they proceeded to tell me that there was a compromise on the card and so they canceled it.

[20 : 16] But there's a note on the file that someone tried to call me. And I said, well, when did this happen?

It was about three days ago and nobody called. They said they called at church. The answering machine would have caught it if nobody was here. And so it was pretty dubious.

And I must say that I didn't want any of you to see me in that moment. I would have been embarrassed. I was not a happy camper in that moment.

And I lectured the lady on what they should have done. But the Lord convicted me in the end. And I said to her, Mom, I'm sorry. And she's from Barbados. I said, I'm sorry.

I said, I don't know the kind of day you're having. This is not your fault. You're just answering the phone. And forgive me. I'm very sorry. My conduct wasn't appropriate that day.

[21 : 23] I should have been far more humble, more understanding and trust God's providence and all of that.

But I only saw it when it was all over and the most I could do was yield to the conviction of the Spirit and ask for forgiveness. But Paul calls Timothy and essentially calls all pastors to be an example in conduct at all times.

In the varied situations of life in which we find ourselves. To conduct ourselves in a godly way that is worthy of being followed by those under our care.

And then he calls him to be an example in love. He says Timothy set an example for the believers in love. He was calling Timothy to visibly love God and to visibly love people in such a way that when it is seen it will be followed by those who see it.

No doubt Paul was calling Timothy to even love the disobedient and the rebellious and the stubborn individuals with whom he had to deal like Hymenaeus and Alexander who were mentioned in the first part of the letter.

[22 : 48] He calls Timothy to be an example of love. And I think you would all agree that love really only comes into play in a very significant way in difficult situations.

It's easy to love those who love us. It's easy to love our spouse when our spouse is doing all the things that we want him or her to do.

It's easy to love our children when they're doing all the things that we want them to do. But I believe that in particular Paul is calling Timothy to be an example of love when love is difficult.

And I think we all know that. We know that sometimes it is difficult to exhibit love in particular situations. And Paul calls Timothy and ministers in a primary way to set the example of love.

Timothy was also called to be an example of faith. To visibly live a life of trusting God in the midst of life's trials and difficulties.

[23 : 56] Some of these trials for Timothy were personal. We will learn a little later in this letter in verse 23 of chapter 5 that Timothy was frequently ill. That Timothy had weaknesses.

And he had to persevere in faith, trusting God through those weaknesses and through those illnesses and other trials that he had in his personal life.

And then also he had to trust God in the midst of pastoral ministry and all of its trials and all of its difficulties. Paul was calling Timothy to be on display as one who is living by faith in God, exhibiting

a quiet trust in God no matter what's going on.

Because that is what the Lord calls his people to do and he would have his leaders to set the example in that way. And then finally he calls them to demonstrate visible purity that can be followed by others.

According to Dr. Philip Ryken, the Greek word that Paul uses for purity is a word that describes general moral conduct, good moral conduct, generally.

[25 : 16] But he says that in Greek culture, in the setting that Timothy was in, the word was more often than not used to refer to sexual behavior. And so this exhortation to purity is really an exhortation to sexual purity.

immorality. And this was especially important for Timothy as a young man living in a city that was filled with sexual immorality. And I think we can make the contrast today when we consider the context in which we live today.

Where sexual immorality is no longer something where someone has to go and orchestrate to be involved with. but now it is a mouse click away.

Now it is right at our fingertips to be engaged in sexual immorality. And so Paul says to Timothy, he says, Timothy, you are to be circumspect and you are to be above reproach in your sexual conduct. A little later in this, actually the very next verse that we'll consider next week, he says to Timothy, do not rebuke an older man, but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, listen to this, younger women as sisters in all purity, in absolute purity.

[26 : 46] That's the example that he has called Timothy to put on display for others to observe and also to follow.

Paul is calling Timothy to watch his life. He's saying, Timothy, in these particular areas, these five areas I've laid out to you, Timothy, watch your life closely and live your life in such a way that your example may be followed.

Notice what he says to him in verse 15. He tells him, he says, Timothy, you are to practice these things and you are to immerse yourself in them. A further call to Timothy of being an example to the believers, he is to fully give himself to what is required.

Now, certainly, Paul is speaking to Timothy in a very personal way. He's caring for Timothy very, very specifically. he's calling him to live this life and be an example that is worthy of being followed. But, again, it applies to ministers of the gospel broadly. Puritan pastor Richard Baxter warned ministers in his day to watch how they live.

[28 : 11] Lest, in his words, they may unsee with their lives what they say with their tongues. He said, watch how you live lest you may unsee with your life what you say with your tongue.

In essence, he is saying that preachers must not just talk the talk, they must walk the walk, because at the end of the day, what they do is far more important than what they say.

Now, while it is true that Paul is addressing Timothy, and this is an application, for ministers, I want to suggest this morning that this all says application for believers as well.

It's applications for every single person who is a follower of Jesus Christ. Christ. And I think as we consider it, we should ask ourselves, what is my own example that I am living for others to follow? Maybe it's apparent this morning to ask that question, what is my example before my children like? Perhaps you hear this morning as an unbeliever.

[29 : 30] And that question becomes very relevant in your life. Because you're aware that you're not living the life that you ought to live, but somehow because you are parents, you want better for your children, yet you aren't able to live that example for them that you need to live for them.

And I would pray this morning that this recognition of that shortcoming would help you to see your need for Christ. It is only through a right relationship with Jesus Christ. Knowing him as Savior and Lord, that we are able to live lives worthy of being followed by others.

Not only do these six verses address the pastor's life, they also address the pastor's teaching. And this brings me to my second and final point, the pastor's teaching.

Again, verse 16 summarizes Paul's instructions to Timothy. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. What does Paul say in these verses about the pastor's teaching?

Well, first notice in verse 11, he calls Timothy to command, and teach these things. And in that statement, what we see is we see that the pastor's office is endowed with authority because he has to command the things of scripture and call his hearers to follow them.

[31 : 09] But he's not only to command, he's also to teach. Because sometimes when we command, people don't understand why they're being commanded. and Paul doesn't want people to just rotely obey, he wants them to understand why they are to obey.

So he says, you are to command and teach. And we need to do this on multiple levels of authority, whether we're parents this morning, or pastors, or supervisor, that we command and we teach. We are to patiently teach. He is saying to Timothy, patiently teach your hearers why they should obey. Help them to understand the reasons behind the commands that you give.

How easy it is to say, do it just because I say so, because I'm the one in charge. Paul says to Timothy, no, command, but also teach. Notice also in verse 13 that he calls Timothy to devote himself to the ministry of God's word.

reading it, exhorting the church with it, and teaching it. Now, in Paul's day, it's very different from what we have this morning.

[32 : 27] I would say every one of us, or almost every one of us, has a copy of God's word. We have a copy of the scriptures this morning. That was not the case in Paul's day, and in Timothy's day.

Paul is exhorting him to read scripture publicly because, for example, when Paul's first letter arrived to Timothy, that was the only one. There were no copies of it.

When that came into Timothy's hand, that's all that they had. And if anyone was going to get a copy of that, it had to be handwritten on expensive parchment that was not easy to come by. And so, public reading of scripture was most essential.

Paul called Timothy to give himself to the reading of scripture. And you can imagine how tiring that could possibly have been for him, having to do this in an ongoing way because most people didn't have access to a copy of the scriptures.

But he also tells them that he is to go beyond reading it and he is to exhort as well.

[33 : 39] and what exhortation is, it is this combination of encouragement and urging and warning God's people of the need to embrace God's word and to embrace God's way.

So he's not just giving it to them, he's urging it upon them. He's encouraging them to say this is God's word, this is best for us, this is God's wisdom to us, let's embrace it. And he tells him that he is to be devoted to it even in the face of getting weary of doing it.

And then third, he tells him that he is to, he is also to teach it, he is to take the time to patiently teach and carefully instruct God's people by feeding them a steady diet of the word of God.

It says you are to read God's word, you are to exhort God's word, you are to teach God's word. What we see in verse 13 is something that I think we should take the time to take in because what we see is one of the two pastoral priorities in God's word that leaders have.

[35 : 10] I believe that prayer is a given here, prayer is a given, but the one that he highlights is this handling of God's word, the ministry of the word of God. He says, Timothy, you are to be devoted to this.

This more than anything else is to mark what you are about. when your people think about you, Timothy, they want to think about someone or they ought to be thinking about someone who is devoted to the ministry of God's word, reading it, exhorting it, and teaching it.

Timothy, give yourself to that. And I think that's a wise instruction for us because, and for me, certainly because there are just so many things that can pull us in so many different directions. Paul says, Timothy, be devoted to this. Be devoted to this task. And notice what he says to him further in verse 15.

He says, you're to practice it, you're to immerse yourself in it, and here's what the result is going to be. All might see, all will see your progress. This is a promise that Paul is holding out to Timothy and to all ministers that when we devote ourselves to the ministry of God's word, paying attention to our lives, our progress will be visible to all.

[36 : 38] Now, in verse 14, Paul seems to share something very personal with Timothy concerning a gift that was identified in Timothy on some special occasion when the council of elders laid their hands on him.

I don't think that what Paul is really saying is that it was at that moment that Timothy just got this gift in a definitive way, because we know that God gives gifts and callings even before the foundation of the world, but certainly in terms of manifestation or activation, that gift somehow came into prominence.

Scripture doesn't tell us what it is. we don't know what the gift is, but somehow it had some bearing on Timothy's ministry. It wasn't for Timothy personally, it was for his ministry, and as Paul is exhorting him to devote himself to his ministry, he says, and don't neglect that gift that you have to enable you to do all of these things.

now again, this instruction to watch your teaching is primarily the pastors. Pastors have to take great care to watch what they teach because it not only affects their lives, it affects the lives of those who hear them.

But again, this instruction is application for all believers. It is a call to consider where do you place God's word in your life?

[38 : 17] What kind of priority do you place on God's word? How important is God's word to you? How important is it to open God's word and feed yourself during the week, reading it for the good of your own soul?

How important is it for you to place yourself, as we are doing this morning, under the instruction of God's word, or in a care group, or even in a prayer meeting where God's word is opened and read and spoken?

And see, here's the critical issue that we must not miss this morning. If you would say a high priority to all of those things, but your life is saying something else, there is a disconnect.

It's the same kind of disconnect that happens in the lives of pastors who would call people to do one thing and they themselves were neglected in their own lives. It's the same kind of disconnect.

And brothers and sisters, those disconnects never end well. They never end well. And so we should be mindful this morning if we are affirming the priority of all of these things, but these things are not a priority in our lives in a functional way.

[39 : 38] because that's the deception of the enemy. The enemy doesn't mind us having the right theology in our heads as long as that doesn't become a function in our lives.

We are no better off than the person who is illiterate concerning those things. Paul's words to Timothy were intended to care for him.

And if you take these words and you heed these words and apply these words to your life, likewise you will be cared for, likewise you will be spiritually protected.

Finally, Paul holds out a promise to Timothy and to all ministers and to all those who hear them when he says, when a minister keeps a close watch on his life and on his teaching, he will save himself and those who hear him.

He says this in verse 16. There's a promise that he holds that he says, when a minister watches his life and he watches his teaching, he will save himself and those who hear him.

[41 : 00] Now, I think it should be clear this morning that Paul is not talking about saving himself as in saving himself from sin. Only Jesus Christ can do that. He's not talking about saving himself and saving others in that salvific way.

He's speaking, I believe, and others would say, in the sense of preserving. Saving as in the sense of preserving or protecting.

Being preserved from spiritual shipwreck. we use the word save in many different ways to preserve, to put aside, to keep.

And that's the important of what Paul is addressing here. He's saying that if you watch your life and if you watch your teaching, you will preserve yourself from spiritual shipwreck.

He is talking about persevering in the faith and not shipwrecking in the process. This is the personal promise that Paul lays out to Timothy and by extension to all ministers and all those who hear them.

[42 : 14] I imagine that when you hear of pastors with whom all seems to be spiritually well, who end up failing in some manner and resulting in their resignation, I imagine that it is natural to think about me.

I was having this conversation recently with Kurt Weaver who was here, one of the pastors from Crossway in Lancaster. We were just talking about this reality that as pastors fail, as pastors do things to cause doubt in the minds members, that becomes a very personal matter for us as well. And I imagine that you would especially think about me in cases where the individual, the pastor who was fallen, was leading a deceitful life over an extended period of time.

We're all seen to be well, but in the end, it was seen that this person was duplicitous, this person was a hypocrite, this person was living two lives for an extended period of time.

There are many iconic examples that we can think about and I believe many of you would know about. I thought of Jimmy Swaggart, I thought of Tad Haggard, locally I thought of Randy Frazier. You know, the Apostle Paul said something in Romans 7, 18, he says this, he says, for I know that nothing good dwells in me that is in my flesh.

[44 : 02] And that reality sober me, that reality should sober all of us. It should cause ministers like me and followers of Jesus Christ like you to pay attention to our lives.

For me to pay attention to what I teach to you, pay attention to what you believe, how you're holding your beliefs. But I recognize that I'm human, I recognize that I'm faced with the same temptations that others are faced with, the same deceitfulness of sin that besets them, besets me.

And so, I think it is appropriate when those situations come up that you would wonder, that you would think, what about, what about my pastor? As I thought about this this morning, I thought, I want to make a commitment to you this morning, that when those things happen, and you naturally think about me, remember this commitment that I made to you this morning.

By God's grace, I will watch my life. By God's grace, I will watch what I teach. I've sought to do that by God's grace. I will continue to do that by God's grace.

And if I do that, I'm not going to shipwreck. Jesus said, you cannot serve two masters. If you serve Jesus, if you hold on to Jesus, you will not be holding on to something else or someone else that you should not be holding on to.

[45 : 42] I, by God's grace, commit this morning to love the Lord with my whole heart. I commit to love my wife and my children. I commit to love this church.

And I commit to honor the name of the Lord that I will finish well. And here's my encouragement this morning. My encouragement, my personal encouragement, not for you so much, but my encouragement this morning is that many have finished well.

We hear about those who shipwreck, we hear about those who led duplicitous lives, but many have finished well. Many on this island have finished well.

I talked to Pastor Alan Lee from time to time and I say to him, when I think about you, I think about your life, I think about your faithfulness in ministry, I'm encouraged.

I said that to Rex Major, I'm encouraged by these men. They have finished well. And I want to finish well. But I know it is through, first of all, watching my life.

[46 : 57] Being aware of what the Apostle Paul says, in me dwells nothing good. And when I know that, I want to stay close to Jesus because I know what I am capable of. I've shared with you before and I'll share it again this morning as I close.

A number of years ago we were doing prison ministry, David and I, and I'd been in this part of the prison many, many times, but this particular day, somehow I felt the Lord spoke to my heart and said to me, you are capable of every single sin these men have committed.

And they committed some of the worst sins that you could think about. And I was so sober. I was so sober. And it is not so much that you will go and do those things, but you are capable of those things.

And when we recognize that, it causes us to want to stay close to Jesus, stay close to his word, and stay close in fellowship with him. And so Paul cares for Timothy in this section of the letter in a very personal way, being aware of all of the realities that Timothy faced.

And this morning, God is caring for me, God is caring for us as a church, and I want us to receive his care. Let us persevere.

[48 : 24] See, because notice what Paul says. Paul is not just addressing Timothy in verse 16. Look there with me for a moment. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching.

Persist in this, for by so doing, you will save both yourself and your heroes. He's addressing the heroes as well. He's holding something out to the heroes as well.

In essence, really saying to them, if you hear this one who is keeping a close watch on his life and on his teaching, it would result in spiritual safety for you as well.

And so Kingdom Life, let us let us this morning resolve by God's grace that we will do this. Let's watch our lives. Let's watch what we believe.

And in so doing, we'll avoid spiritual shipwreck. Amen? Amen. Let's pray.