

~2 Timothy~

Lesson 20 – Be Watchful and Guard the Truth

Let's begin by reading our text today- **2 Tim 3:10-4:5**.

These are wonderful words, and today we will be focusing on 4:3-4, namely what it means to Be Watchful and Guard the Truth. Last week we learned what it means to Preach the Word. That we must do this all the time, in season and out of season, when it is favorable and unfavorable, when it is convenient and inconvenient. And we learned of the sanctifying effects of the work of the Word; that it reproves and convicts sin; the Word rebukes ungodliness; and the Word exhorts and comforts by calling alongside admonishing as a father does his own child. And finally, we learned of the manner in which we are to preach the Word. That we proclaim the Word in longsuffering and teaching. Not being swayed away by our swelling emotions, but being steady and steadfast in teaching the Truth.

Now in our verses today, I want to point out the amount of opposition Paul is warning Timothy that he will face in preaching the Word, specifically to a culture with itching ears. The church of Ephesus was being infiltrated with false teachers trying to tear down the pillars of Truth. If you remember, at the end of his 3rd missionary journey, Paul gave the elders of the church of Ephesus a warning in Acts 20 that there would be wolves infiltrating the church to draw away disciples from the Truth, **Acts 20:29-31**. And as Paul predicted, during the years that Paul and Timothy were away, 58-63AD, these false teachers did just that and tore down the pillars of Truth in Ephesus.

After Paul is released from prison in Rome, Paul and Timothy travel to Ephesus and Paul ordains Timothy as bishop to rebuild the church in the Truth. Over the course of the next three years, Paul writes two letters to Timothy on how to do this. And the fundamental message in both epistles is to stand on the Truth without compromise. If you notice, as you read these epistles, mixed in throughout the letters are intense warnings of evil opposition still trying to tear down the Truth. If we look back specifically at the 2nd epistle with this idea you will see many times Paul warning Timothy of this resistance to the Truth.

In chapter one Paul tells Timothy, *“all those in Asia have turned away from me”*, 1:15. Paul reminds Timothy that he himself is suffering as an evil doer in chains because he is preaching the gospel, 2:9. He continues in chapter 2 saying, *“shun profane and idle babblings...because their message will spread like cancer... and they overthrow the faith of some, 2:16-18,... therefore he says “depart from iniquity” 2:19, “cleanse yourself from dishonorable vessels”, 2:21; “flee youthful lusts”, 2:22; “avoid ignorant and foolish disputes”, 2:23; but “correct them in the Truth so that they may know the Truth and come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil”, 2:24-26. And again, Paul warns of “perilous times in the church”, 3:1; “selfish people who are never able to come to the knowledge of Truth”, 3:7; and “men who resist the Truth”, 3:8; ... he says “from such people turn away”, 3:5.*

Now this leads us into the section we have been studying for the last seven weeks, in which he strengthens Timothy by reminding him of his faithfulness in following him, but again warns of evil persecutions *“all who desire to live Godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution”, 3:12... he warns of “evil men and impostors who progress upon the worse, deceiving and being deceived”, 3:13, and now in our text today he specifically refers to these evil men “turning away from the Truth, and being turned aside to evil fables”, 4:3-4.*

The call to holiness and the walk of sanctification is a major theme of the entire NT as well as much of Paul's writings. And as we have seen, this is a major thread in this 2nd epistle to Timothy. The fact that we must guard the Truth and proclaim the Truth as a response to false teaching and heresy. And in these two verses today, 4:3-4, we will discover an exhortation to guard against apostasy.

This is the context I want us to have as we study these next couple of verses because this is so relevant to what we are going through in America. We are living in a world today that is only concerned about their selfish agendas. The enemy is still using the same tactics today as he did 2,000 years ago, and that is to distort and pervert the Truth. We are living in a society where the world says truth is anything you want it to be. They say truth is a matter opinion eliminating the foundation of absolute Truth and making Truth subject to each one's personal desires and beliefs. This is how the enemy steals, kills and destroys. He tears down the pillars of Truth, eliminating any confidence in God's Word and then creates chaos by persuading people to act according to their selfish desires.

... Lets read verses 3 and 4 again...

2 Timothy 4:3-4 ³ †For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, †but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ †and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.
⁵ But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

† ³ *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine...*

- In verse 2 Paul says we must preach the Word and take a bold stance on the Truth in good times and not, in season and out of season, when it is convenient and inconvenient... eukairos, akairos, εὐκαίρως, ἀκαίρως,
- Now Paul says the time, kairos, καίρος, will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. This is no doubt an inconvenient time, a time that is out of season.
- And who are “they”, when he says, “*they will not endure sound doctrine*”. “They” are the evil men and impostors from 3:13, who are deceiving and being deceived. And I would conjecture that “they” also are those in the church who have been deceived by these false teachers.
 - This isn’t the first time Paul has warned of perilous times:
 - 1 Timothy 4:1, “*that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.*”
 - 2 Timothy 3:1, “*in the last days perilous times will come*” and if you remember, “will come” is the word, enhistemi, ἐνίστημι, to take a stance within. Meaning that the enemy is taking a stance within the church.
 - So I believe in our text today, 4:3, Paul is specifically speaking about the apostates in the church who will fall away from the Truth.
- Paul is telling Timothy about the apostacy that has come and will continue to come in these last days, 2 Tim 1:15; 3:1; 4:3-4.
 - But even among these perilous times, Paul encourages Timothy to stand strong in the Truth and be watchful in all things, 2 Tim 4:5
 - This is the message today, that through the sanctifying work of the Word, we can guard ourselves from the lies of the enemy, from doctrine of demons, and from falling away from the Truth.
- From verse 3:16 thru 4:2 Paul tells us of the redeeming and sanctifying work of the Word.
 - The Word first brings us to justification, this is eternal life in Jesus by grace through faith.
 - Then we see the sanctifying work of Word. Remember John 17:17, “*Sanctify them by Your Truth, Your Word is Truth*”
 - This sanctifying work of the Word through teaching is reproof, rebuke, correction, exhortation, and instruction in righteousness.
 - The work of the Word will sanctify the believer, keeping them holy, standing on the Truth, and unwavering. The believer walking in sanctification will not be turned away from the Truth. Because instead he is taking the stance alongside God, 2:15; turning himself away from unrighteousness, 2:21; departing from iniquity, 2:19; standing in avoidance of profane and idle babble, 2:16; fleeing youthful lusts, 2:22; withdrawing from ungodliness, 1 Tim 6:5, and turning away from ungodly people, 3:5.
 - This is why preaching and teaching the Word is the fundamental building blocks to a healthy strong church and why Paul is charging Timothy to do this in Ephesus.
 - The Word of God comes with a conviction of sin, a call to holiness, to stop living in sin and to walk in sanctification. But there are those who have once tasted the heavenly gift and have tasted the Word of God, but they refuse to stop living in their sin, Heb 6:4-6. And it is these

people who Paul is speaking of in 4:3.

- ³ For the time will come when... “they will not endure...sound doctrine”- οὐκ ἀνέχονται.
 - Endure- anechomai, ἀνέχομαι, - to have or possess in rising up and going through- to endure or to put up with, to bear up
 - Those who resist the Truth and those not walking in holiness are **NOT** enduring or bearing up sound doctrine
 - This word is also in the middle voice, meaning these people are choosing this for themselves. This is their choice to resist the Truth and not bear up sound doctrine.
- “they will not endure... sound doctrine”- ὑγιαίνουσας διδασκαλίας.
 - hugiaino, ὑγιαίνω, - we get the word “hygiene” from this word. Healthy, wholesome, sound teaching, didaskalia, διδασκαλία,
 - Remember its teaching, didaskalia, διδασκαλία, that drives the work of the Word, 2 Tim 3:16; 4:2.
 - The person who does not consent to sound, wholesome, healthy doctrine is described in **1 Tim 6:3-5**.
 - Why are these people unwilling to endure sound doctrine? Because they love their sin and sound teaching exposes sin and calls them to holiness. They don’t come to the light because they don’t want their evil deeds exposed and reprov’d, John 3:19.

† ³...but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;...
ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας τὰς ἰδίας ἑαυτοῖς ἐπισωρεύσουσι διδασκάλους,

- “but according to their own lustful desires”, epithumia, ἐπιθυμία, ... this is the lust of the flesh, Gal 5:16.
 - look at the selfishness being presented here. It is according to their flesh... they are being driven by their own selfish, lustful desires of the flesh
 - Paul uses this word, epithumia, ἐπιθυμία, three other times in his letters to Timothy, 1 Tim 6:9; 2 Tim 2:22; 2 Tim 3:6.

1 Timothy 6:9- *But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts, epithumia, ἐπιθυμία, which drown men in destruction and perdition.*

2 Timothy 2:22- *Flee also youthful lusts, epithumia, ἐπιθυμία; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*

2 Timothy 3:6- *For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, epithumia, ἐπιθυμία,*

James 1:14–15-¹⁴ *But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires, epithumia, ἐπιθυμία, and enticed.*
¹⁵ *Then, when desire, epithumia, ἐπιθυμία, has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*

1 John 2:16–17-¹⁶ *For all that is in the world—the lust, epithumia, ἐπιθυμία, of the flesh, the lust, epithumia, ἐπιθυμία, of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.* ¹⁷ *And the world is passing away, and the lust, epithumia, ἐπιθυμία, of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*

- Everything about lustful desires leads to destruction
- ...according to their own lustful desires... “because they have itching ears”-
 - “itching” knetho, κνήθω, to tickle, to procure pleasurable excitement for, to indulge an itch.
 - These are people being led completely by emotions, continually searching for someone to satisfy their itch.
 - These people love their sin and will not tolerate the Word. They just want their ears tickled. They want something that makes them feel good about the way they live.
 - These people aren’t looking for the Truth, they have rejected Truth, and they are just looking for

someone to tickle their senses. They want to be entertained. They want their emotions stirred... so because of this, they heap up for themselves teachers who will satisfy their itch, their lustful cravings and desires...

- They are not interested in the Word of God reproving them because they love their sin
- ...according to their own lustful desires...because they have itching ears...“*they will heap up for themselves teachers*”- episoreuo, ἐπισωρεύω, compound of ἐπι (upon) + , σωρεύω, (heap up) = to heap upon, accumulate
 - This word is only used once in the entire Bible, but we see Paul use the root soreuo, σωρεύω, in 2 Tim 3:6-

2 Timothy 3:6- *For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down, soreuo, σωρεύω, with sins, led away by various lusts, epithumia, ἐπιθυμία,*

- These are people within the church being led astray by their own enticing lusts, and these lusts are giving them itching ears so they are heaping up for themselves teachers trying to satisfy the insatiable desires of the flesh.
 - These people are accumulating teachers, trying to get their next fix from teachers who will feed their unquenchable lust. Once you start feeding the flesh, it is never satisfied. It just wants more and more. That’s why 3:13 says they will progress upon the worse or as the NKJV says, “evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse” because the flesh is never satisfied.
 - Now, because of the high demand for this ear tickling preaching, there are thousands of churches conforming to the world and preaching ear tickling, emotion filled sermons that have no eternal value.
 - But this shouldn’t be the case. Just because they want these kind of messages doesn’t mean we should be giving it to them. We are charged to preach the Word and nothing else. Once a church compromises the Word to please the desires of the flesh, this will lead to a falling away from the Truth.

† *4and they will turn their ears away from the truth...*

- καὶ ἀπὸ μὲν τῆς ἀληθείας τὴν ἀκοὴν ἀποστρέφουσιν.
- The literal translation is “And they will turn away from the hearing, indeed, away from the Truth”
- I want to point out two Greek words in this statement:
 - “*hearing*”- akoe, ἀκοή, is a noun. It’s the result of the action of hearing. The ability to hear. The best English word is understanding.
 - “they will turn away from understanding the Truth”
 - They deny the Truth by literally turning away from the hearing of the Truth.
 - “*turn away from*”- apostrepho, ἀποστρέφω, to change or turn one’s direction

2 Timothy 1:15- *This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from, apostrepho, ἀποστρέφω, me...*

Titus 1:13-14-¹³ *This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴ not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from, apostrepho, ἀποστρέφω, the truth.*

- This is being willingly ignorant of the Truth. “They suppress the Truth in unrighteousness”, Rom 1:18; “they exchange the Truth of God for the lie”, Rom 1:25
 - They have itching ears, they are seeking satisfaction, but purposely avoiding the Truth. They are actively turning away their understanding and ability to hear the Truth and in doing so, they heap on themselves teachers to please their lustful desires,

The Ear – Heart Connection

Why does Paul specifically mention the ears in this example? As I thought about this I was reminded of Jesus' words when He said many times in the Gospels and the book of Revelation:

He who has ears to hear let him hear, Matt 13:9

- Remember last week we discussed **Romans 10:14**. Paul stresses the importance of preaching and how hearing the Word of God is the link to believing, **Romans 10:17**.
 - The word “hearing” is the same word as in 2 Tim 4:4, akoe, ἀκοή- hearing and understanding
 - Faith comes out from, ἐκ, hearing and understanding, and hearing and understanding through, διὰ, the Word of God.
 - There is a link between the Word and Faith and the link is hearing and understanding. There has to be a connection point. I believe God designed this because He wants our will. He wants us committed to Him. This is the way we apprehend His Word. Through a desire to understand. Having ears to hear, **Acts 28:26-27**.
 - This is the process of ingesting the Word into your soul. Hearing is a vital step to humbling to the Word. Having ears to hear is the idea of taking the bold stance on the Truth. To be unwavering and uncompromising to what the Word says. It is making the Word final authority in your life and making the commitment to always follow and stand by this Word even unto death.
 - Hearing is coming to the light. Being enlightened through the Word and then faith comes out of the enlightened soul.
- Now lets apply that to our text.
- The apostates in verses 3-4 are constantly seeking to have their lustful desires satisfied by amassing teachers who would tickle and please their perceptions and understanding of only what they wanted to hear. Their minds had been warped through deceit from evil men and impostors
- They have rejected the ability to understand the Truth, so they have turned their ears away from the Truth.

† ⁴and they will turn their ears away from the truth, *and be turned aside to fables...*

- ἐπὶ δὲ τοὺς μύθους ἐκτραπήσονται.
- This is the result of them turning their ears away from the Truth...
 - “*be turned aside*”- ektrapesontai, ἐκτραπήσονται, is the conjugated from of ektrepo, ἐκτρέπω. This word is only used 5 times in the NT and it is used solely by Paul. Four of these instances are related to being turned aside passively away from God and toward the enemy. I want you to think about the seriousness of what Paul is saying here. When the soul rejects the Truth by its own free will, it now is in jeopardy of being overtaken by the lies of the enemy. All four instances of being turned aside toward evil are in the passive voice, 1 Tim 1:6; 5:15; 2 Tim 4:4; Heb 12:13.
 - Notice the progression, they choose to turn away their hearing away from the Truth and then they are encompassed and overtaken passively by being turned aside to the lies of the enemy.
 - We could take this and study the effects of being passively turned aside by the enemy, but I am not going to take us down that road, namely because that’s not what Paul is trying to tell Timothy.
 - This is simply an exhortation to Timothy saying, “don’t fall away from the Truth, but rather stand on the Word”

Or in other words:

“There are people around you and even within the church who will not endure sound doctrine, and they will turn their ears away from the Truth and in doing so they will be turned aside to the enemy... ⁵ But you Timothy, you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, so the work of an evangelist and fulfill your ministry.”

- We are going to study verse 5 next week, but I want you to see the correlation to what Paul is saying.
 - This is the exhortation to all of us. Don't be an apostate and fall away from the Truth. Guard the Truth, walk the straight path of Truth, and flee from deception and do not allow it in the church, 2 Tim 2:16, 19, 22, 23; 3:5; **Proverbs 4:1-7, 14-27**;
- This is why we Preach the Word and why we stand on the Truth and never waiver. The one who is standing on the Truth will never be deceived, 2 Tim 3:9. This is guarding your heart and mind through Christ Jesus, Phil 4:6-9. This is keeping your heart with all diligence, Prov 4:23.

Remember the words of Jesus, *“if you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the Truth and the Truth shall set you free...and if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed”*