

XVIII. Timeless Truth for Timely Topics in Biblical Perspective

What Does the Bible Say?

“The Bible in This Present Age”

II Timothy 3

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This is kind of ministry manifesto as it were in light of our present age. I will be referring to a number of texts to substantiate what I will present to you in this study. So let's start by looking at II Timothy 3:1–4:7 says [1] *But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. [2] For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, [3] heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, [4] treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, [5] having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. [6] For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, [7] always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. [8] Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. [9] But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.*

[10] You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, [11] my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. [12] Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, [13] while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. [14] But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it [15] and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. [16] All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

[4:1] I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: [2] preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. [3] For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, [4] and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. [5] As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

[6] For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. [7] I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. [8] Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

The grass withers, the flower fades, this is God's Word, it abides forever and may God bless it to your heart and the preaching of it.

We have been in a series of Thy Word is Truth throughout the year and to complete our ministry theme for the year I will use the last two verses of II Timothy 3:16–17 foundationally to preach seven sermons about the Word of God and how we profit from it. I propose to take God's Word to deal with some of the pressing issues that are upon us today. How do we understand and deal with this present age? I will lay out a manifesto in this study for that. Then I will deal with some of those pressing topics in the present age that I think must be addressed regarding the issues of world and life view.

Remember these three things – lifestyle, life love and life view. Our lifestyle is determined by our life love. What we have loved with our life will be reflected in the choices we make about life. Our life love is determined by our world and life view. How do you see the world? In the next study I want to deal with the essentials of a Christian world and life view because that will determine how we live. Then what does that mean and what are the things we need to deal with, such as the sanctity of sexuality, our identity (who we are) and it's absolutely amazing the chaos, confusion and outright rebellion against God who has made us as we in the sovereign self are determining our own identity in life. We will go to great lengths surgically, chemically and irrationally to declare we will be who we want to be and not who God made us to be. I'll deal with the sanctity of marriage and the family as well as the judgment of what is heaven and what is hell.

In this study I'd like to draw out for you what it means to do ministry in this present age that is so aptly described in II Timothy 3, in terms of the world with its man-centered life view and the church with its falsely contrived life views that are happening within the church where you have apostate teachers. The illustration from the Old Testament are Jannes and Jambres who were apostate teachers who opposed the truth and worked their way into God's covenant community doing all kinds of havoc. So what does that look like today? How should we live with an apostatizing church in an apostate culture that is embracing paganism and the church is embracing the paganism of the culture and bringing it into their doctrines of marriage, sexuality, worship and everything in terms of the diminution of the church of Jesus Christ in holding to truth with love. How do we do that and so much so that anyone who speaks truth is not accused of being unloving.

I'm well aware that you can speak the truth and not love but you can't love without speaking the truth. So how do you speak the truth love and if you speak the truth does that automatically mean you don't love people or is that actually the necessary factor of loving people, is that we hold to the truth? Who am I? Where am I going? How can I be right with God? How can I being right with God be right with others around me? Again I just want to layout a broad manifesto in terms of ministry in this present age for we are in an age that on the one hand grieves me deeply because I know where we were, where we are and what has been lost but on the other hand I also know there is a reason it has been lost and why we find ourselves where we are today and it excites me.

As an amateur historian, you and I have enjoyed the extraordinary privilege to live in a nation that has experienced providential blessings that in terms of depth, length, breadth and height from its inception to this point and I don't think there is any comparison to any other nation that has ever existed that has experienced this kind of God's providential blessings. I'm not saying we've been a perfect nation by any means. Humanly speaking there are a number of reasons why God has blessed this nation.

One this nation has enjoyed, not a perfect, but a vibrant Gospel witness through His church all the way from its inception up until the 20th century and that was seen through two Gospel Awakenings – one from 1735 to 1765 and from 1785 to 1880. Those awakenings were extraordinary blessings in this nation. A second reason why is this nation by declaration does something that God says He will honor and that is those who bless My people, I will bless them. This nation with the first amendment has welcomed the free exercise of the religions of mankind but specifically the church of Jesus Christ has more or less freedom to function throughout the breadth and length of this nation's life. I believe that has been a blessing to this nation and I believe the Lord has blessed this nation because of it.

I sense that we are on the precipice of God's judgment as a nation like all the other nations and I sense because of the things that are now codified and culturated are actually things that not only position us for judgment but they are actually things that reflect the presence of God's judgment upon us. Sexual anarchy not only brings God's judgment but the Bible tells us it is God's judgment upon a nation. So when we find ourselves in this situation on the one hand I lament for all the things that we have enjoyed has been lost because the vibrancy of God's people has left where their salt is not salty, the light has been shrouded and therefore that which God would use in a nation in terms of the witness of the King through His church has not been present with the vitality that's been known in the past.

We have become much more interested in our numbers, nickels and noise than we have been in being faithful to the Lord. I'm not opposed to many people coming to Christ or opposed to pastoring many people. I'm not opposed to the resources that God's people give and using them wisely but we have not measured ourselves in terms of faithfulness to Christ but in terms of church growth pragmatism. Therefore once you've made those your metrics it's just a matter of time until you will sacrifice message, mission and ministry in order to get those numbers and to be applauded by a culture, then visited by the culture and approved by that culture.

On the other hand, I get rather excited because now in an increasing way I am ministering in a culture that increasingly is looking like the culture that my people, the people of God, have ministered in, in nation after nation. So we don't have that cultural bubble any longer. So now we're going to find out who has Jesus and who doesn't. We're also going to find out what it means to have Jesus when persecution begins to come. I hesitate to say that because what we have as persecution here is nothing in comparison to what is known around the world but it seems as if it is the harbinger of what is to come. So there have been few nations that have known this providential blessing and the times are changing. You can feel it, see it and know that it's there.

So how do we respond in a culture that has apostatized from God's blessing and embraced this paganism? That's what the first century Christians did. When Jesus ascended and they went to Jerusalem they went into a culture that had been blessed by God and apostatized. They didn't stop in Jerusalem for they went to Judea, Samaria and the utter most parts of the world. So there was not only Jerusalem but Athens and Rome. What did they do when they got to the centers of pagan barbarity? How did they minister in the culture of apostasy and paganism?

I will give you this outline I have been working on that will give you the framework for what will be looking at here in the near future, God willing, in this present age whereby we minister. First, ministering in this culture is going to require the power

of God. In other words, you and I will increasingly realize that when we do the Lord's Prayer that's not an add-on for us for we need power for ministry. So what I've tried to do is outline for you what we need to spend time on which are five divinely fashioned created power plants for Gospel ministry in an apostate and pagan culture. Here are the five power plants.

One is we need prayer power. I encourage you to stay with your small groups of prayer. There are some that need to get with it and join a prayer group. Let's get with power for prayer. The key text is James 5:16 which says *[16] Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. **The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*** They have not because they ask not. When they do ask they ask wrongly. We pray in righteousness, meaning resting in the perfect righteousness of Jesus. Secondly, we take the Word of God with the Spirit of God and frame our prayers to Jesus. What can I pray about? You can pray about anything and everything. How can I pray? There is only one way. You have to pray Biblically according to God's Will. His revealed will frames our prayers and His secret will we surrender to. Our God does all things well. So we need the power plant of prayer – the prayer power of God's people. I'm not sure who said this to give them credit but it is stated that you don't pray for the work of the church, prayer is the work of the church.

The second power plant is the Holy Spirit power. I want you to go to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the utter most parts of the world. Acts 1:8 says *[8] But you will receive **power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.* This year our theme is Thy Word is Truth and our elders are working on and guiding us to next year's theme and it is going to be around the ministry of the Spirit of God, living in the Spirit. God's Word and God's Spirit are inseparable. John 6:63 says *[63] It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.* The Word does not profit without the Spirit and the Spirit always works with the Word. We need the Christ-exalting power of the Holy Spirit, not a Holy Spirit exalting power yet I say that reverently. I believe in worshipping Holy Spirit but Holy Spirit came for us to lift up Jesus. When He comes in power what is the result? It is that you'll be My witnesses. The power is shown by bearing witness of the exaltation of Christ.

The third power plant is Word power. Hebrews 4:12 says *[12] For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* This man that was a part of me coming to Christ talked about how he used to do street evangelism and to get a crowd he would put his hat on the ground, running around his hat yelling "It's alive! It's alive, come here and see it!" He would get a crowd and then he'd pick up his hat and there would be a Bible underneath it. Then he would say "This is living and active. This is living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword." That Roman sword was sharper for it cut going in and it cut coming back out. It has two edges for it exposes sin and it exalts Jesus who is the answer to our sin. So His Word is powerful. For the next eight sermons we'll be talking about what that Word is, how we profit from it and how we rightly use it according to God's Word. What is His Word there for?

The fourth power plant is Gospel power. Romans 1:16–17 says *[16] For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes,*

to the Jew first and also to the Greek. [17] For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." I want to share with you two situations I've had. One situation in life and ministry in which I was ministering to an individual and I got about four or five people around me that knew that individual. I was trying to encourage them to stay the course and not give up. Two of those people said to me that they thought he was beyond hope. I told them that I agreed that there are people on this side of eternity that are beyond hope where God shuts the door of grace but I have no idea who they are and I never begin with that or end with that. If I believed what they believed then I need to turn in my badge.

The same goes for someone telling me that a marriage is beyond hope, repair or not worth saving. In God's providence that may end up true but I believe the Gospel is the power of God. It's the dynamite that will blow sin and it will put together people's lives. So we have to believe in the power of the Gospel. It is the Gospel who sets men and women free who are caught in the addictions of sexual aberration and anarchy. It is the Gospel that redeems marriages. It is the Gospel that gives motivation for life. It is the Gospel that gives a life love in order to have a life style. The love of Christ constrains us because He first loved us. It is the Gospel that is the power of God unto salvation.

The fifth power plant is church power. I believe this one because I believe Jesus. Matthew 16:13–19 says [13] *Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" [14] And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." [15] He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" [16] Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." [17] And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. [18] And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. [19] I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."* Christ's church is powerful. He indwells her. I love her covenants, oaths and vows. I love her sacred ways and this is the one institution that will not fail.

Local churches and denominations may fail but His church is triumphant and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. So I believe the other power plant is the one institution in this world, His people, who are people of prayer. They are a people indwelt by the Holy Spirit. They are people of the Word. They are a people for the Gospel. The church power encompasses and houses those four other powers listed before you. We need power in ministry and the profile in ministry.

What is the profile of ministry? I want to give you five things in terms of the profile in ministry. Some of you are old enough to know of this great coach. His name was Vince Lombardi. He took this struggling offshoot of a professional football team and turned it into a title making team. When they were starting out he had to build into them what it meant to win and overcome the adversary. In one game with the New York Giants the Green Bay Packers got wiped up and out on the field. Lombardi said to his team, "Gentlemen, there will be no day off tomorrow. I'll see you at the practice field." They showed up that Monday morning to the practice field and he said "Men you embarrassed yourself and that will never happen again for I'm going to see to it that it never happens again. Now what are going to do about it?" Then he bent over, picked up a football and said "this is a football." Do you understand what he was saying and did?

He wanted them to know why they got beat and it wasn't because they had a lack of ingenuity or an exotic playbook. They got whipped because they didn't block, tackle, run, pass or catch.

Let me use another sport, golf. My hero growing up was Jack Nicklaus. I read his book Golf, My Way and then I remember when his autobiography came out titled My Story which I bought and read through. I read one thing in there that I think is why he is arguably one of the greatest golfers that has ever lived. Every year he'd take two months off to go back to Columbus, Ohio back to his longtime coach, Jack Grout. They had this ritual where he would come up onto the practice field and say "Coach Grout, teach me how to play golf." He knew what everybody else knows.

Today in the church given our situation in this culture, we think we need to get this exotic personality as a pastor, programs and exotic this and that and yet we just need the basics. This is Gospel ministry and these are the basics. God has called us to do the basics. What are they? Here is what the church must do to impact the lives of people, young or old.

Number one, we have to embrace the primacy of worship and the honorable use of the sacraments of Christ. Life is worship. The thermostat for life worship is set every single Sunday. It is the way you and I view life as worship. I Corinthians 10:31 says *[31] So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* This is directly related to the priority, focus and what you think gathered worship is all about. When God called Moses for the people to leave bondage, what were they supposed to do? They were to go out three days to His designated place to gather as God's covenant people and worship Him. Why did He deliver them? It was to worship Him. Why did He make you? It was to worship Him. Why did He save you? It is to worship Him. Why does He sustain you? It is to worship Him and gathered worship sets the thermostat for life worship. It is God-centered, Christ-exalting, Spirit-filled worship that is at the root of an effective church and the spread of the Kingdom.

Number two is personal evangelism. Event evangelism is great. Take friends to these Christian movies that are out like War Room and Woodlawn. Event evangelism is only helpful if you and I are doing personal evangelism. We are constantly learning how to plant, water and cultivate the Gospel conversationally and in relationships with people. We are to be sharing the Gospel, doing personal evangelism.

Number three, we need to embrace small group disciple making, life on life disciple making, so that people develop that life view with that life love and that life style. You can go to another level with preaching. Worship contains the preaching of that Word. Personal evangelism is proclaiming that Word to everyone else. In small group disciple making we're able to take the Word deeper and relationally in interdependent relationships in that small group.

Number four is fellowship and the communion of the saints. We learn how to have fellowship so we weep with those who weep, we rejoice with those who rejoice. We are proactive in people's lives and reactive in people's lives. We are engaged in one another's lives. We are a people who once were not a people but now we have become the people of God and my how they love one another.

Number five is apologetics – defending the faith unashamedly. I would encourage you particularly as you are approaching this present age, to go back and read those sermons I did on contending and defending the faith. We have to contend without being contentious and defend without being defensive. There is a two-fold emphasis

here. One is we defend the faith to win the person. Two we defend the faith to win the issue. So that flowing from the church are two streams of Gospel apologetics. One is common grace into the culture and two is redeeming grace into the hearts of men and women. The redeeming grace has an overflow of common grace and common grace is setting you up to talk to people about redeeming grace but both of those things are flowing from the people of God into the culture.

I love people too much to be silent about the sanctity of marriage or the sanctity of life or the sanctity of sexuality. I believe what God's creation laws ought to be reflected in that culture is for human flourishing. If we love a people we cannot be silent. We cannot withdraw and we want to reach people with that Gospel. I have tried to share with a perspective on ministry through the power plants of ministry, the profile of ministry and I'd like to conclude by sharing with you the key points of ministry. What are some things we need to know, understand and embrace?

Number one is that we need to know the doctrine of Scripture. We are people of the book. If the Bible is not trustworthy, inerrant, or command and commend our confidence then there is no Christianity. We have to understand the doctrine of Scripture and there are three things we have to understand about it. We have to understand its inerrancy, its thematic focus of the Triune God in the preeminence of Christ as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer and thirdly, the sufficiency of God's Word that the man of God may be adequate and equipped for every good work.

When that is settled now you can develop a doctrine of God. I believe throughout the evangelical church in the United States of America is not simply an inadequate view of God but it is a blasphemous view of God. Who is God? When you have the doctrine of God's Word now you can know the God of the Word, who has revealed Himself, is light and wants you to know Him. You will never know Him exhaustively but you can know Him intimately and accurately.

Once that is established now we can speak of the doctrine of creation. One of our problems today is that we have allowed atheistic Darwinian evolution to so flourish that people have no idea who they are. They think at best they are a cosmic accident with no purpose in their creation or design or for their existence so they go kill someone and put it on social media thinking that will make them somebody. People are looking for identity in sexual aberration, in "gender dysphoria" and everywhere. That's the payback in our silence of the education of our children – you are made in the image of God. You are not a cosmic accident. You are a divinely designed person made in the image of God. We have been intimidated. We are doing backflips and somersaults to explain away Genesis 1 through 3 and the result is that the last two generations have come through our educational system and have no idea who they are other than 'I think I'm different than a tree but I don't really have to be.' It's hard to hear all this poppycock being said these days.

I just read in this blog a person saying "We're not going to take this social construct." Gender is a social construct, not a created reality in today's world and if you don't want to be socially constructed that way just determine who you want to be. People go to all kind of lengths from surgery to chemical poison to try and undo what God made but you can't undo what God made for that's actually who you are. God made them male or female and it took both to properly image Him. The person in this blog when way beyond and said "We're just raising our child in an identity neutral zone." He was very careful not to use personal pronouns. He went on to say "Our child will have the freedom

to choose whatever species they want to be.” I guess they mean a giraffe or whatever they want to be. People pay \$75,000 a year for their children to sit in this man’s class. This man is an Ivy League academician.

This ridiculousness and chaos is there because we’ve been silent about the doctrine of creation. There is a God who spoke us into existence. What I’m about to say is not a presidential endorsement but this reporter is grilling Ben Carson and says “So you believe there is an Adam and Eve that was created from the dust of the ground and that they were actually created?” Ben said “Yes I believe that.” The man then said “Evolutionists say one monkey went this way and one went that way and you came from one of those monkeys, don’t you know that?” Ben said “I say I am made from God with purpose and on purpose and you say you’re coming from a monkey and having talked with you, you’re just about to convince me.”

Actually we have left that vacuum in the educational system. So we need to learn the doctrine of creation. Knowing the doctrine of man you’re ready to talk about man human, made in the image of God, male and female, the old sinful man, the new man in Jesus Christ and now we can develop this doctrine of man which comes from the doctrine of creation which comes from the doctrine of God which begins with the doctrine of Scripture. Then we have a doctrine of how man can be right with God and that’s the doctrine of redemption or the Gospel. We have to understand the two-fold power of the Gospel. You can be forgiven of sins and emancipated from its power. The Gospel sets you free from the guilt and power of sin.

For many of us today because of our own self-identity needs, our own insecurities and our own self-centeredness we’re preaching a one dimensional gospel all about our guilt and shame and not talking about being free from its power. In fact, if you begin to talk about being free from its power, going out and intentionally killing sin and pursuing holiness because you love Jesus that’s automatically called legalism today in many of our churches. We not only have the multi-faceted doctrine of redemption of the Gospel but the doctrine of providence.

I’m walking through it this week with a number of our families. There is a God in a broken world and I’m not going to tell you all things are good but I am going to tell you that I love you and all things are going to work together for good. You can trust Me even when the times are the greatest and you’ll be able to count it all joy because I am at work in your life. You are not the victim of circumstances. You are more than a conqueror because of Me in the midst of life.

Lastly, it is that we will give ourselves to understand the doctrine of consummation. There is not only a Creator, Redeemer, and a Provider but were headed to the restoration of all things. I want you to be in a new heavens and a new earth and I want to be there with you. I don’t want you in the destruction of eternity in a place called hell. It is that message that we need to take to this world. I believe this outlines for us our ministry in the present age. You might be thinking that this is something we should have been doing all along. Praise the Lord, you’re exactly right. The latter days began when Jesus ascended. These days have been with us. I believe they are intensifying but these days have been with us. This is how they went to Jerusalem, Athens and Rome. This is how we’ll go to Birmingham, Montgomery and Washington, from sea to shining sea and then across the seas that the praise of God would cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank you for the time we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for the kind attention of these Your people who love You and who desire to be faithful to You in this present age. So Father we do it looking for the age to come but we're not looking to the age to come to avoid what we are to do in the present age. So help us as You did the Apostle Paul to pour ourselves out as a drink offering and to hear your charge. I charge you in the presence of God in the soon appearing of Christ and of the judgment day coming, proclaim the Word of the Lord and we will pour ourselves out to do it by Your grace and for Your glory, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

PERSPECTIVE IN MINISTRY

POWER IN MINISTRY

For Thine is the Power...

Divine Designed Power plants for ministry

1. Prayer Power
2. Holy Spirit Power
3. Word Power
4. Gospel Power
5. Church Power

PROFILE OF MINISTRY

1. Worship/Sacraments
2. Personal Evangelism
3. Small Group Disciple-making
4. Fellowship/Communion of the Saints
5. Apologetics – twofold emphasis

PRINCIPLES OF MINISTRY

1. Doctrine of Scripture
2. Doctrine of God
3. Doctrine of Creation
4. Doctrine of Man (Human-Old Man-New Man)
5. Doctrine of Redemption-Gospel
6. Doctrine of Providence
7. Doctrine of Consummation–Heaven and Hell