

Toward Obedience to His Word

Summary and Goal

In some key excerpts from Paul's Pastoral Epistles, his letters to Timothy and Titus, we find significant themes regarding pastors. God gives pastors to His church to lead His people in obedience to His Word, and He calls on Christians to pray for and support the pastors He has given to lead us in our mission of making disciples.

Main Passages

1 Timothy 4:11-16
2 Timothy 4:1-8
Titus 2:11-14

Session Outline

1. Shepherds serve God's people by embodying the truth they proclaim (1 Tim. 4:11-16).
2. Shepherds serve God's people by preaching truth, even when it is costly (2 Tim. 4:1-8).
3. God's people follow the shepherd by submitting to God's Word (Titus 2:11-14).

Theological Theme

God gives pastors to His church to lead His people in obedience to His Word.

Christ Connection

Near the end of his life, Paul wrote letters to Timothy and Titus, two of his most trusted children in the faith. Paul instructed them to follow the model of the Good Shepherd—Jesus—who guides His people into the knowledge of truth. Because Jesus died to serve the church, pastors and leaders are called to live to serve the church.

Missional Application

God calls us to pray for and support the pastors given to us by God to lead us in our mission of making disciples.

Date of My Bible Study: _____

Session Plan

Toward Obedience to His Word

? For Further Discussion

What is the biggest challenge you have ever faced as a leader?

? For Further Discussion

What are the potential pitfalls of living to set an example for others to follow?

How can we work to overcome those pitfalls so our example points others to Jesus instead of ourselves?

Pack Item 2: New Testament Letters Map

Paul's Pastoral Epistles were written to **Ephesus** (Timothy) and **Crete** (Titus).

Introduction

Speak to the necessity of good leaders (leader p. 82; PSG p. 64). Share the humorous compilation of contradictory expectations of the “perfect pastor” (leader p. 82).

? What do you think makes a good pastor?

Summarize this session on significant themes in Paul's Pastoral Epistles (leader p. 82; PSG p. 64).

1. Shepherds serve God's people by embodying the truth they proclaim (1 Tim. 4:11-16).

Briefly offer some background on Paul and Timothy's relationship (leader p. 83). Then read 1 Timothy 4:11-16. Clarify what Paul's instruction for Timothy to command others meant (leader p. 83; PSG p. 65).

? What are some reasons people might be timid to declare the truth and commands of Scripture to others?

Set forth the ways Timothy was to be an example to his church (leader pp. 83-85; PSG pp. 65-67):

- **First, Timothy was to be an example outwardly and inwardly (v. 12).**
- **Second, Paul emphasized proclaiming the Word (v. 13).**
- **Third, Paul called Timothy not to neglect his spiritual gift (v. 14).**
- **Fourth, Paul appealed to Timothy to continue to grow as a believer (vv. 15-16).**

Ask groups of 3-4 to discuss and respond to the questions in the chart in the PSG (questions are below). After a couple of minutes, call for some responses (PSG p. 67).

? How can we relate Paul's instructions to Timothy to our own lives, even if we are not pastors?

? What are some ways we can encourage pastors and leaders as they live out and proclaim God's Word?

2. Shepherds serve God's people by preaching truth, even when it is costly (2 Tim. 4:1-8).

Read 2 Timothy 4:1-8. Mention that Paul knew his end was near. Go over the five exhortations that Paul offered in verse 2 and why they matter (leader pp. 85-86; PSG pp. 67-68).

- How have you been rebuked, corrected, or encouraged by a pastor or leader that proved helpful?

Explain Paul's use of athletic and military metaphors for finishing the ministry well. Compare the calling of the pastor to the motivation for becoming an Olympic athlete (leader p. 87; PSG p. 69).

- What are some theological convictions that are becoming harder for us to hold faithfully in our culture?
- How can we hold on to sound doctrine while maintaining love and compassion for unbelievers?

3. God's people follow the shepherd by submitting to God's Word (Titus 2:11-14).

Ask a volunteer to read Titus 2:11-14. Explain what "For all people" does and does not mean. Then focus on the practical and daily changes that God's saving grace brings into a person's life (leader p. 88; PSG p. 70).

- How will submitting to God's Word in Titus 2:11-14 change the way we live each day in our homes, church, work places, neighborhoods, and beyond?

Emphasize the negative and positive aspects the gospel carries with it. Add that Christianity is true, but it also *works* (leader pp. 88-89; PSG pp. 70-71).

- What would it look like to be a pure person zealous for good works in the name of Jesus Christ?
- Why should Christ's return and future redemption of all things frame how we live in the present age?

Conclusion

Challenge the group to take some time to consider ways to encourage their pastor(s) and leaders in the church (leader p. 89; PSG p. 71). *Apply the truths of this session with "His Mission, Your Mission" (PSG p. 72).*

Pass out cards from Pack Item 8: Honor God to help group members remember the importance of declaring the truth about God in what we say and what we do.

Point 2 Option

Play the video "John Piper—What Is Preaching": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cd0KZvyZoxo>

Then ask the group to discuss the following questions:

- In light of the video and this session's content, what is a pastor's primary responsibility?
- How should you respond to the preaching of God's Word?

Christ Connection: Near the end of his life, Paul wrote letters to Timothy and Titus, two of his most trusted children in the faith. Paul instructed them to follow the model of the Good Shepherd—Jesus—who guides His people into the knowledge of truth. Because Jesus died to serve the church, pastors and leaders are called to live to serve the church.

Missional Application: God calls us to pray for and support the pastors given to us by God to lead us in our mission of making disciples.

Expanded Session Content

Toward Obedience to His Word



Voices from Church History

“The true shepherd spirit is an amalgam of many precious graces. He is hot with zeal, but he is not fiery with passion. He is gentle, and yet he rules his class. He is loving, but he does not wink at sin. He has power over the lambs, but he is not domineering or sharp; he has cheerfulness, but not levity; freedom, but not license; solemnity, but not gloom.”²

—Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

Introduction

Good leaders are essential in pretty much every organization. Schools need principals. Governments need presidents or prime ministers. Teams need coaches. Businesses need CEOs. Marching bands need directors. Armies need generals. And churches need pastors.

If someone asked you to describe the work of a pastor, what would you say? Hopefully it wouldn't sound like this compilation of humorous and contradictory descriptions of “a perfect pastor”:

- They preach exactly twenty minutes and then sit down. They condemn sin but never hurt anyone's feelings. They work from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. in every type of work from preaching to custodial service.
- They make \$60 per week, wear good clothes, buy good books regularly, have a nice family, drive a good car, and give \$30 per week to the church. They also stand ready to contribute to every good work that comes along.
- They are 26-years-old and have been preaching for thirty years. They are tall and short, thin and heavy-set. One brown eye and one blue with hair parted in the middle, left side dark and straight and the right, brown and wavy.
- They have a burning desire to work with teenagers and spend all their time with older folks. They are straight-faced with a sense of humor and seriously dedicated to their work. They visit fifteen church members a day, spend all their time evangelizing the unchurched, and are never out of the office.¹

Having served as a pastor, I'm not sure whether to laugh or cry when I read these! But the humor just goes to show the diverse needs, and wants, people have of pastors.



What do you think makes a good pastor?

Session Summary

In this session, we will look at significant themes regarding pastors found in key excerpts from Paul's Pastoral Epistles, his letters to Timothy and Titus. We will see how God gives pastors to His church to lead His people in obedience to His Word. Allow this study to help you obey God's call to pray for and support the pastors He has given to lead us in our mission of making disciples.


1. Shepherds serve God's people by embodying the truth they proclaim (1 Tim. 4:11-16).

Timothy was a younger pastor in the early stages of carrying on a vibrant ministry. Soon he would take the leadership baton from the great apostle Paul, who sought to encourage his son in the faith for the pastoral calling God had for him. Paul's instructions to Timothy—and to all pastors who follow him—remind us of both the awesome responsibility and the great privilege a pastor has of shepherding a flock in the local church.

¹¹ Command and teach these things. ¹² Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. ¹³ Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. ¹⁴ Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. ¹⁵ Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. ¹⁶ 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.

In this passage, Paul instructed Timothy to command others (v. 11). This didn't mean Timothy, or any pastor, was to be a general barking orders to troops. It refers to the confidence Timothy should have in his role as pastor, and in saying this, no doubt Paul recognized his protégé's nervousness at the task ahead of him.

Timothy was not to beat the sheep with the Word, nor was he to be timid in declaring God's truth. The God who called Timothy gives commands, not suggestions, and Paul urged his mentee to challenge those he taught to obey the Lord. "These things" refers specifically to the items Paul cited in the previous verses but also extends to the faithful teaching of the Word as a whole.

 What are some reasons people might be timid to declare the truth and commands of Scripture to others?

In verses 12-16, Paul listed what should mark Timothy's ministry. First, Timothy was to "set...an example." A vital way pastors lead a church to grow is by the example they set. Timothy may have been considered a younger leader, but his age was not to be an excuse for failing to make himself an example for his church, even to those who were much older. Timothy's call superseded his age.

Further Commentary

"The traits listed by Paul... divide into two groups. The terms 'speech' and 'life' are outwardly observable or public traits. 'Speech' refers to all types of verbal expression, and 'life' describes general behavior. Paul wanted Timothy to be known for wise words rather than for rash, impetuous drivel. The second group, consisting of 'love,' 'faith,' and 'purity,' refers to inner traits. Paul desired a love that demonstrates itself for both God and others. The term 'faith'... likely represents an attitude of faithfulness or trustworthiness rather than right belief. The call for 'purity' demands both sexual purity and integrity of heart."³

—Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin Jr.

Further Commentary

"Timothy's perseverance in sound doctrine and practice will 'save' him, i.e., it will lead him to persevere in the faith, confirming his salvation. This type of ministry will be effective in preserving his 'hearers' as well."⁴

—Ray Van Neste

Voices from Church History

“The greatest friend of truth is time. Error is always in a hurry, but God’s man can afford to await the vindication of time. And if he is not vindicated in his own lifetime, eternity will settle the score.”³

—Vance Havner (1901-1986)

99 Essential Christian Doctrines

3. Inspiration of Scripture

The inspiration of Scripture refers to God’s direction of the human authors of the Bible so that they composed and recorded His message to humankind in their original writings (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19-21). Occasionally this inspiration was achieved through dictation, where God spoke directly to the original authors. Most of the time, however, this inspiration was achieved through the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit through the personalities of the authors so that their writings can be considered the very words of God.

When we think of “youth,” we tend to think of a teenager, but the term Paul used of Timothy can mean a young man up to age 40, so Timothy’s youth was in comparison to older men in the congregation.⁵ Paul exhorted Timothy not to be concerned about his age or how others might treat him due to his relative youth but to focus on living an exemplary life, even as Paul had said, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).

“Example” refers to a pattern. My dad worked in a steel mill for over thirty years. In the mill they created patterns, pouring molten steel into them. When the steel cooled, it conformed exactly to the pattern. Timothy was to be a pattern of a life given to Christ. So how was he to be an example?

First, Timothy was to be an example outwardly and inwardly (v. 12). Speech, of course, would include communicating clearly the Word of God but also speaking with wisdom instead of speaking in the heat of the moment. Today, this could include refusing to post outrage on social media, choosing instead to speak words of grace and compassion. The same can be said of behavior, acting with wisdom and grace. Paul also exhorted Timothy to set an example inwardly: The traits of love, faithfulness, and purity (both sexual and general integrity) should mark his life.

Second, Paul emphasized proclaiming the Word (v. 13). *Public reading* of Scripture has become less common in many churches today, but in the early church, reading the Word had priority. We would do well to consider what we communicate about the weightiness we place on Scripture in our services, our small groups, and in our homes by how much of it we actually read.

Exhortation, or preaching, calls the hearer to respond to the truth of the Word with an emphasis on appealing to the will. *Teaching* focuses on delivering the content of Scripture with a focus on application and on the intellect.⁶ In the early church, the Scripture was read aloud and preached for the purposes of encouraging obedience and teaching doctrine.

From the outset of the church in Acts 2:42, where they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, proclaiming the Word to the people of God has laid the foundation for their growth. We are mistaken today, however, if we think simply imparting information, even biblical information, will transform by itself. Information doesn’t lead to transformation; reflecting on and personally applying scriptural truth in everyday life through the power of the Holy Spirit does.

As Derek Sivers observed: “If [more] information was the answer, then we’d all be billionaires with perfect abs.”⁷ Most of us know more Scripture than we live out, which is one of the reasons God gives us pastors to teach and exhort us in the Word. That said, we cannot apply and reflect on the Word until we have heard it. Thus, we can and must do more than simply teach the Word, but we cannot do less.

Third, Paul called Timothy not to neglect his spiritual gift (v. 14). Each spiritual gift is from God by Jesus through the Holy Spirit, affirmed by the church, and used for a purpose beyond ourselves. Paul's exhortation shows the importance both of the divine gifting by God and the affirmation of the leaders of the church.

Fourth, Paul appealed to Timothy to continue to grow as a believer (vv. 15-16). "Practice these things" has the idea of a consistent routine. Paul exhorted Timothy to develop healthy routines and follow them to foster growth. And the church would be able to see his continual growth.

I recently spoke to a group of young, earnest, hungry church planters. They asked what advice I might give them. I told them to learn to appreciate the grind of ministry. Yes, ministry brings much joy as we see people come to Christ, lives changed, and growth. But there is also the fact that a good bit of ministry is a grind. Learning to follow consistent routines, as Paul noted here, is a key to ministry longevity.

- ❓ How can we relate Paul's instructions to Timothy to our own lives, even if we are not pastors?
- ❓ What are some ways we can encourage pastors and leaders as they live out and proclaim God's Word?

2. Shepherds serve God's people by preaching truth, even when it is costly (2 Tim. 4:1-8).

It's one thing to proclaim God's Word faithfully even when you are young; it's another thing to do so when it is costly. In 2 Timothy, Paul knew that time was coming, both for himself and eventually for Timothy.

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.*

Voices from the Church

"What right, though, do we have to make God out to be Someone other than He really is in order to make people like Him more? Honor God by declaring the truth about Him."⁹

—Jim Elliff

Further Commentary

Epitimao (to rebuke) appears almost exclusively in the Gospels (27x) and typically refers to a 'threatening command' or 'rebuke' with negative implications for the one 'rebuked.' Jesus 'rebuked' the wind and sea (Matt. 8:26), a fever (Luke 4:39), and demons (Matt. 17:18=Mark 9:25; Luke 4:35,41). He 'rebuked' James, John (Luke 9:55), and Peter (Mark 8:33). However, *epitimao* may have positive implication for the one 'rebuked' when that 'rebuke' is intended to prevent improper behavior. In such cases, it may be translated to 'rebuke,' 'warn,' or 'correct.' Jesus commanded his disciples 'to rebuke' a sinning brother (Luke 17:3), and 'warned' them to keep his identity secret (Matt. 12:16; Luke 9:21). Peter inappropriately 'rebuked' Jesus (Matt. 16:22=Mark 8:32). The disciples 'rebuked' those bringing their children to obtain Jesus's blessing (Matt. 19:13=Mark 10:13=Luke 18:15). Outside the Gospels, 'rebuking' and correcting is part of the pastoral role (2 Tim. 4:2)."¹⁰

—Ray Van Neste

Further Commentary

“In all, 2 Timothy 4:1-8 is one of the most powerful passages in all of Scripture for all who wish to involve themselves in the advancement of the saving will of God. Here is the animating vision of Paul and a celebration of success! It is true that here it is the *apostle* Paul who speaks and that he speaks to one whom we today might call a ‘full-time missionary or pastor.’ But as any attentive reader will see, and as the closing words have made explicit, this is a vision for all of Jesus’ disciples. The body of Christ is a complex organism (1 Cor. 12) in which the individual parts do many different things. But that organism as a whole has one purpose, which is to be God’s special people for his praise and glory (Eph. 1). And within the present age this is most centrally a matter of building God’s holy temple, which is his church (Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:4-6). This is not the task of specialists and professionals. This is the task of the entire church until Christ’s second appearing. Whatever the station this or that believer has in this world, whether in business, government, the home, health care, education, entertainment, finance, the arts, the sciences, media, law, agriculture, or elsewhere, the center of that person’s life is the life and purpose of the body of Christ, whose work is the building of God’s temple.”¹¹

—Jon C. Laansma

Paul was not playing here. He knew his end was near, and the urgency of his exhortation weighed heavily in his words. “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus” was about as serious a way to get Timothy’s attention as possible.

Paul offered five exhortations in verse 2 that apply to every pastor:

- “Preach the word.” Pastors are to preach and teach the Word of God faithfully, consistently, and passionately.
- Persist in the preaching of the Word “in season and out of season,” whether convenient or not. Pastors are to proclaim the Word consistently whether they feel like it or they don’t.
- They are to “reprove” the negligent or belligerent.
- They are to “rebuke” those who speak or live out of line with Scripture.
- And they are to “exhort” the flock to live holy lives for the glory of God.

One of the ways to know you have a healthy community in the church is when both encouraging and rebuking occur. A shepherd guides the sheep, rebuking when necessary, correcting them when they stray, but always encouraging. Great leaders see the potential in those they lead, so pastors consistently teach the Word to lead people to greater devotion, sacrifice, and obedience to Christ.

Paul concluded these exhortations by adding that pastors are to reprove, rebuke, and exhort “with complete patience and teaching.” As a teacher of preachers, I like to remind my students that Jesus walked with the twelve disciples 24/7 for three years, and they still missed a lot of what He taught them. How much more, then, should pastors be patient with those they lead and teach?

Why did this matter? Why focus on this stuff in what was probably Paul’s last letter? Because Paul knew we don’t drift into health. If you don’t pay attention to what you eat, in a world of processed and fast food, you will drift into larger clothes and need bigger belts. If you don’t focus on disciplining your children, they will drift toward rebellion rather than obedience. Paul knew that people drift toward self-centeredness rather than gospel-centeredness.

So, Timothy was to be serious about all these important things. He was to “endure suffering” with perseverance, understanding that shepherding deals with the reality of stubborn and wandering sheep.

Paul also reminded him to “do the work of an evangelist”—pastors are to set the example for soul-winning in their congregations. I remind my students that one of the most practical ways to develop an evangelistic culture in a church is for pastors simply to mention the people with whom they are sharing Christ.

Paul ended this section by exhorting Timothy to “fulfill [his] ministry,” the very thing Paul did without losing focus (see Acts 20:24).

 How have you been rebuked, corrected, or encouraged by a pastor or leader that proved helpful?


Employing athletic and military metaphors, Paul reminded Timothy that it's not how you start in ministry but how you finish that matters most. Paul "fought the good fight," he "finished the race," and he "kept the faith." Don't get confused by Paul's use of metaphors here. He was not calling for needless arguing with people in the church or getting into fistfights! Pastors are not to be theological snobs who believe rightly but are jerks about it when preaching, teaching, and talking with others. Instead, Paul was calling on Timothy to have an unambiguous conviction regarding faithful doctrine. Teaching the Word faithfully means we don't have a choice to waver in our convictions when they contrast with those of the culture.

At one point each semester as I teach present and future pastors, I have one student in ten stand in class. That's about how many who start in ministry in their twenties will still be there in their sixties. It's a sobering object lesson for young seminarians, and should be for us as well. Pastors need encouragement to finish well.

Paul did not end this passage with his own example, but he turned his focus to the blessings of God. If pastors serve for the praise of people, they will not stand for long. If they serve for money or fame or any reason other than the glory and honor of God, the pressures of ministry will be too great for them to finish.

An Olympic athlete trains, competes, and sacrifices for years to be able to represent his or her country. Some do so to compete in a race that literally lasts seconds. Why? There is a level of honor and satisfaction knowing that the sacrifice of years brings with it the title of Olympian. But pastors serve Jesus and the church their entire life and do so sacrificially and with joy because they know a "crown of righteousness" far greater than Olympic gold awaits. They know that rather than standing on a podium to receive their reward, they will have the honor of kneeling and offering it right back to the King of kings.

 What are some theological convictions that are becoming harder for us to hold faithfully in our culture?

 How can we hold on to sound doctrine while maintaining love and compassion for unbelievers?

Voices from Church History

"It belongs to your calling of God as a minister, that you should have a taste of the various spiritual trials which are incident to the Lord's people, that thereby you may...know how to speak a word in season to them that are weary; and it is likewise needful to keep you perpetually attentive to that important admonition, 'Without me ye can do nothing.'" ¹²

—John Newton (1725-1807)

Voices from the Church

"A crucified Savior can be preached in divine power only by crucified preachers." ¹³

—Raymond C. Ortlund Jr.

Further Commentary

“Paul gave directions for how to live in the present world. He said the world of his time was evil. Our world today is also evil. Sometimes right is regarded as wrong and wrong is said to be right. Inequality is common today. A few people have plenty, but most have less than they need. The strong and mighty are not punished for doing wrong while the poor frequently suffer injustice. Water is very scarce in the desert. To find a body of water in such a place is life-saving and hope-renewing. God plants the believer in society to act as an oasis in the desert. Our oasis should give truth, generosity, justice, honesty, care, and love. One life yielded to the Holy Spirit can be a powerful testimony that can transform a whole community. There is so much thirst in our land that one such Christian example will bring God’s hope in a way that the world cannot help but notice.”¹⁴

—Africa Study Bible

3. God’s people follow the shepherd by submitting to God’s Word (Titus 2:11-14).


Paul exhorted Titus concerning the work of a pastor in the same way he had encouraged Timothy. In the first ten verses of chapter 2, Paul gave Titus practical instructions for how to teach others to live consistently with sound teaching. Beginning with verse 11, he brought his protégé back to the doctrinal basis for why we are to live the way he just shared.

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Paul first reminded Titus of a fundamental conviction of Scripture: Salvation is available for all people by the grace of God. “For all people” doesn’t mean universalism, the belief that all people are accepted by God despite their unbelief. Scripture clearly indicates the requirement of faith for salvation and the danger of unbelief. What this means is that salvation is available to anyone who believes—no matter his or her ethnicity, socio-economic status, language, or any other factor.

It’s vital we remember that apart from Christ, we are all guilty before a holy God. None of us deserve salvation, and indeed, if God were to give us what we deserve, we would all be in hell.

What does this grace of God that brings salvation do? We know it secures forgiveness of sin and a new, living relationship with God, but Paul focused here on the practical, daily impact of this grace-filled salvation. The gospel of Jesus Christ changes the way we experience daily life—physical, emotional, relational, financial, and vocational. Paul wanted Titus to understand that instruction about salvation through the Word of God leads to practical and daily changes in how we live.

 How will submitting to God’s Word in Titus 2:11-14 change the way we live each day in our homes, church, work places, neighborhoods, and beyond?

The gospel carries with it both negative and positive aspects, and we do well to emphasize both. Negatively, the gospel compels us to “renounce ungodliness and worldly passions.” The grace of God reminds us that God’s way is better than giving in to any of our worldly, fleshly, sinful desires, no matter how appealing they may seem to be.

But positively, because of Christ, we *can* deny godlessness and worldly lusts, but we can go even further and *live* in a way that is sensible. Christianity is true, and that is enough, but Christianity also *works*. Christianity is truly the best way to live, and because of Christ's work to save us, the Spirit within us empowers us to make sensible choices each day. In Christ, not only have we been given His perfect righteousness, but we also have the power to live righteously as He changes us and empowers us through the Holy Spirit.

When Paul mentioned "the present age," he was reminding Titus that we live in a world system currently marked by enmity with God (Gal. 1:4; Eph. 6:10-12). The present age also anticipates a future age to come when Jesus will restore all things. We can live godly lives, even in this present evil age, knowing that this life is not the end. There is a "blessed hope" in the restoration of all things, and this hope is grounded in Jesus, who is both our God and Savior (v. 13) as well as our Redeemer (v. 14).

Jesus redeems us from all lawlessness, so we can deny godlessness and lusts *and* live doing good works that bring God glory. To be clear, we don't do good works to earn anything from God; we can't earn anything from Him. We do good works because the transforming work of the Spirit changes our nature (2 Cor. 5:16-17).

- ❓ What would it look like to be a pure person zealous for good works in the name of Jesus Christ?
- ❓ Why should Christ's return and future redemption of all things frame how we live in the present age?

Conclusion

God has given the church pastors to model God's Word, to proclaim God's Word, and to call on us to submit to God's Word under the authority and leadership of Christ. While pastors are a blessing from God to the church, the church should also strive to be a blessing to their pastors as we seek to love, encourage, pray for, and support them. Take some time to consider how you can encourage your pastor(s) and leaders in the church, and then pour into them as they pour into you.

CHRIST CONNECTION: Near the end of his life, Paul wrote letters to Timothy and Titus, two of his most trusted children in the faith. Paul instructed them to follow the model of the Good Shepherd—Jesus—who guides His people into the knowledge of truth. Because Jesus died to serve the church, pastors and leaders are called to live to serve the church.



Voices from Church History

"Concerning the Hearer: that those hearers who are instructed in the Scriptures should examine what is said by the teachers, receiving what is in conformity with Scripture and rejecting what is opposed to them."¹⁵

—Basil of Caesarea (circa 329-379)



Voices from the Church

"When Ezra preached to the people in Nehemiah 8, the attitude with which the listeners came to hear him was crucial. We need to follow their example by committing ourselves to attend expectantly, listen carefully, and apply the Scriptures properly. Then we can leave the service with joyful hearts."¹⁶

—Alistair Begg