

2 Timothy 3:14-4:4  
**The World Needs The Word**  
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In the 1930s Hitler's Germany began to rise. And by the mid 1930s Hitler had the church of Germany firmly in his grasp. The church of Luther had become the church of Hitler. This change did not happen overnight. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century German Scholars began to dismember the Bible. Theologians like Schleiermacher and Julius Wellhausen began chipping away. Schleiermacher emphasized the importance of feeling apart from doctrine. And Wellhausen and his followers declared the Bible's miracles were fables and insertions. So it's no surprise that by the time Hitler arrived the church did not take long to fall.

As Hitler rose his Aryan church and doctrine arose alongside him. His followers attacked the Old Testament, the heritage of Christ, sin, grace, and even the cross. But very few in the church seemed to recognize the insidious nature of what was happening. One pastor stood the tallest against this rising Nazi tide—Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Bonhoeffer was in his twenties when he began to fight for a true German church. He understood what a government and culture hostile to Christianity needed. If Germany was going to survive the madman Hitler, there was only one solution. The solution was to fully know and proclaim the true word of God. Bonhoeffer is most famous for his attempt to assassinate Hitler. But his work to preserve and further Christianity in Germany is much more important.

Despite state opposition he helped birth the Confessing Church.<sup>1</sup> And he went on to head the Confessing Church's illegal seminaries. Here he emphasized the Beatitudes, singing, prayer, confession, and meditating on Scripture. He taught his students to know the word. And he taught them how to preach the word to a lost world.

Bonhoeffer's world and Timothy's world in the New Testament are not so different. When Paul wrote his 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to Timothy the culture and church of Ephesus had fallen far. The city of Ephesus was so hostile to Christianity they once rioted against Paul (Acts 19). And false teachers had risen up within the church. Paul gave Timothy a solution for protecting the church and ministering to the culture. Paul's solution is the same one we need to minister to our culture today. Because our culture is just as hostile to the truth claims of Christianity. The solution is this—The word of Christ saves. Know it. Share it.

**The word of Christ saves. Know it. Share it.**

Paul gave this message to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:14-4:4. Let's read 2 Timothy 3:14-4:4.

Why in verses 14-15 does Paul call Timothy to know the word? What is so important about knowing the word?

**We know the word to know Christ (v. 14-15).**

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<sup>1</sup> Info taken from Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Prophet, Martyr, Spy by Eric Metaxas. See pages: 222, 241, 261. The conclusion story comes from pages 275-277.

We are to persist in our study of the word (v. 14). The Apostle Paul wrote this letter to a young pastor named Timothy. So everything Paul wrote here first applies to your young senior pastor. Paul wrote it to Christian leaders like your pastor, myself, and the elders. But Paul also wrote it to Timothy so he could share it with his church. So everything in this letter also applies to you all as well. Here Paul emphasizes the importance of learning the word—the Scriptures. Paul calls Timothy to “continue” and to “persist” in learning the Scriptures. The word “learn” is used twice to emphasize how Timothy learned. The type of teaching he received was passed down to him.

Three people taught Timothy the Scriptures: His grandmother Lois, his mother Eunice, and Paul (2 Tim 1:5). Timothy learned because his family and church took the time to teach him. Paul calls Timothy to keep growing in what he has been taught. We too are to keep growing in the word passed down to us. Sometimes it’s easy to ignore what wiser generations have to say about God. I know I often didn’t listen well when my dad taught me the word. But thankfully my dad taught me the word anyways. And I’m so glad he did because now I can own the word for myself. We too are to take in what we learn to both the head and heart and grow in it. We are to persist in our study of the word.

But where does all of this studying get us? Do we study the word for a reason?

### **The word points to salvation in Christ (v. 15).**

Timothy has been learning the Scriptures since childhood. According to the Mishnah he would have begun learning at about age five. The “sacred writings” here are talking about the Old Testament. Paul is saying that the Old Testament, the holy documents, reveal Jesus. That over and over again the law, prophets, and wisdom books foretell the Messiah. The Scriptures offer salvation through faith in the coming savior. And now that savior has come and his name is Jesus.

This is why we know the word. We know the word to know Christ. And to know Christ is to know salvation. Without the word we neither know Christ or salvation. Timothy learned of the Messiah through the Old Testament. We can also read about the Messiah in the New Testament. We know Jesus by reading the gospels and the epistles.

If you want to get to know someone, you study their life. Eric Metaxas wrote a biography on Bonhoeffer so we could know Bonhoeffer. I am reading Bonhoeffer’s biography in order to know him. And I have read his theology so I know what he believed. We read the Bible to know about Jesus and to know him from the heart. We know the word to know Christ.

So what does Paul call Timothy to do with the word in verses 16-17? Does Timothy learn it to keep it to himself? Not only do we know the word to know Christ. We know the word to share Christ (v. 16-17). When we share the word we share God (v. 16). This is not because the Bible is god. But because God has breathed his very character into its pages. The ESV is a good translation; it says, “All Scripture is *breathed out by God*.” But in the original language “*breathed out by God*” is actually one word. It literally says, “All Scripture is *God-breathed*.” The word is a compound of “God” and “breathe.” The word for “breathe” is the same word for “spirit.” So this passage is saying the very spirit of God lives in his word. So when we share the word we don’t just share a good book. We don’t just share a story or a few uplifting words. We offer the

very spirit of God to a broken world. This is what will change us and our culture. Not our words or our wisdom. But the Spirit of God. When we share the word we share God.

So how does the word prepare us to share Christ? How do the Scriptures help us proclaim the message of Jesus? The word lays the foundation for us to share Christ (v. 16). This foundation prepares us to share the good news about Jesus. Verse sixteen says, “Scripture [is] profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”

First, Scripture is profitable for teaching. By knowing the Bible we know what to believe. Another way of saying this is it is profitable for doctrine. Without doctrine there is no Christianity. Doctrine teaches us about God and our need for him.

Second, Scripture is profitable for reproof. This means Scripture helps make us aware of sin. I’ve noticed that the word of God has a way of convicting us of sin. People like to talk about Jesus apart from the Bible. Because when you start talking about Scripture, things get sticky . We need Scripture so that we are aware of our sin.

Third, Scripture is profitable for correction. Correction means restoration. God does not want to leave us in our sins. God wants to restore us to a right relationship with him. The Scriptures help us repent so we are restored.

Fourth, Scriptures is profitable for training in righteousness. To be righteous is to have right standing before God. To live righteously is to align your life with the righteousness of God. Scriptures help us receive righteousness and then live righteously. Once we’ve know righteousness we can share it.

The word lays the foundation for us to share Christ. But are we fully prepared by just knowing the word? Are we really ready to share Christ when we know Christ?

### **When we know the word we are ready to share (v. 17).**

Paul gets pretty serious with Timothy in chapter four verse one. But I think we see the hints of this in chapter three verse seventeen. V. 17 says “that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.” Another way of saying this is “in order that the man of God should be capable.” Paul is telling Timothy he is capable to serve God. What we sometimes forget is Timothy is a person just like the rest of us. Earlier in the letter Paul tells Timothy not to be afraid (2 Tim 1:7). He must have told him this because Timothy was afraid. I bet Timothy got nervous about preaching the gospel to a hostile culture. He too probably struggled with feelings of inadequacy, shame, and nervousness. I experience those same feelings of anxiety and worry. It makes me feel a little better to know that Timothy struggled too. And he was Paul’s associate and did many good works for the Lord. Like Timothy we are often more ready to share Christ than we think.

Maybe you think you’re not ready or capable. But God’s standards are usually much different than ours. If he gives you his word he will also make you capable to share it. We are incapable so that God can make us capable. When we know the word we are ready to share.

What was Paul's solution to a hostile world filled with false teachers? How does he call Timothy to respond to the false teachers in verses 1-2?

**The word of Christ saves. Know it. Share it (v. 1-2).**

The Scriptures exhort us to share God's word (v. 1). Paul says in verse 1, "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus." It's like Paul is saying, "I charge you, as if you were standing before God and Jesus." Take a moment to imagine what it will be like to stand before God. I have a feeling that we will finally know how insignificant our fears are. We will wonder why we were so afraid to talk about Jesus. And we will be eternally grateful for the moments we did share Jesus.

Although verse one is a challenging verse, it also offers hope. It reminds us that Jesus will come again in victory. And that anytime we obey him we take part in this victory. To share Christ is to join in the ushering in of his kingdom. It's good to know the outcome has already been decided. But sometimes we need a little extra exhortation. The Scriptures exhort us to share God's word.

But aren't there times that are appropriate to share and other times that aren't? Doesn't Scripture tell us to be as wise as serpents?

We are to share the word in season and out of season (v. 2). I find this section of the passage to be the most motivating. When God calls us to "preach the word" he calls us to share the gospel. The gospel in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy is incredibly simple. 1 Timothy 1:15 says "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." What a beautiful word, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." That's what I mean by, "The word of Christ saves." It's not complicated but it's not easy to find the right time to share.

Our verse says, "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season..." "In season" and "out of season" means "well-timely" and "untimely." God asks us to share when it's "convenient" and "in-convenient." I know I often feel the Holy Spirit tug on my heart to share Jesus. And when I feel that tug I usually tell the Holy Spirit "the timings not right." And that's when the Holy Spirit reminds me of this verse. Because even when the timing doesn't feel right God calls us to share him. This doesn't mean we shouldn't be quiet at times. But usually we are as quiet as serpents and not as wise as serpents.

There are so many ways to share Christ—reproving, rebuking, and exhorting. Things like apologetics or sharing your testimony are great ways to share. But in the end we should always encourage people with the gospel. And we should do so patiently and thoughtfully. We are to share the word in season and out of season.

A week ago Thursday I flew home from a trip to visit my wife's family in Croatia. I actually started working on this sermon on the trip. After three years of seminary it just didn't feel right to not be studying. The Thursday we flew back I was sitting at the Zagreb airport studying this passage. If you want my advice, never study Scripture passages about preaching the word to the lost when you're surrounded by a bunch of non-believers. Because I was exactly as this part in the text, "preach the word," at the airport. The whole passage was pointing to it and I was excited about what I was learning. And then about four seats to my left in the terminal I heard a man on his phone.

He said something like this, “It was a real spiritual time... I found many answers, but not all the ones I was looking for.” That’s nice Lord, now I’m going back to studying your word so I have a great sermon. But I couldn’t shake that this man was looking for “spiritual” answers. The answer just kept staring at me, “Preach the word... in season and out of season.”

So I got up and went to the restroom to do a prep talk. I looked at myself in the mirror and I may have washed my hands. Perhaps like Pilate I was trying to wash my hands of this man’s blood. I prayed, “Lord, I can’t do this without your Holy Spirit speaking through me.” So I went back out and sat down one seat closer, and then one more seat closer. Then I said, “Excuse me sir, I’m a pastor and I overheard you are looking for something spiritual.” This man who was probably in his early forties turned to me, smiled, and said: “No. I’m actually the President of the Mormons for Croatia.”

Well okay Lord. We talked for about thirty minutes and I got to share the gospel with this man. As much as I would have liked to have converted the President of the Mormons for all of Croatia, I didn’t. But God wasn’t calling me to that. He was calling me to share and leave the results to him. The word of Christ saves. Know it. Share it.

How will the world will respond to the word in verses 3-4? Do Scriptures tell us how the culture will answer? The world will reject the word. (v. 3-4).

Culture will deny the word of Christ (v. 3-4). Earlier Paul taught Timothy how the word points to Christ. But the world points just the opposite direction away from Christ. The world would rather believe lies than the truth claims of Christianity. Verse 3 says, “People will not *endure* sound teaching.” In other words, “People will not *tolerate* sound teaching.” It’s not hard to see the truth of this in today’s age of intolerance. Culture will tolerate everyone except for Christ and his followers. I doubt this surprised Timothy so it shouldn’t surprise us.

The world’s teachers will say all sorts of lies. They will emphasize the importance of feeling apart from doctrine. They will declare the Bible’s miracles are fables and insertions. They will attacked the Old and New Testament. They will oppose sin, grace, and even the cross. The world will reject the word. But Christ calls us to share the word regardless of the results. By the power of his Spirit people will come to know Jesus. There is so much hope in knowing we just have to obey. We share and God will take care of the rest. The word of Christ saves. Know it. Share it.

When Bonhoeffer began teaching at his seminary he got to know his community. One of his neighbors in the community was a sixty-eight year old widow named Ruth. Ruth and Bonhoeffer became friends and he began teaching her grandchildren. Soon Bonhoeffer started Sunday services at the chapel and she brought her grandchildren. One of the grandchildren she brought was a fifteen year old girl named Ruth-Alice.

I know being a teenager today is hard but it was even harder under the Nazis. Ruth-Alice remembered seeing the Nazis march around declaring they owned the future. So for Ruth-Alice to oppose the Nazis was to feel as if she had no future. But when Ruth-Alice saw Bonhoeffer preach the word of God that feeling changed. She said, “When you saw him preaching, you saw a young man who was entirely in God’s grasp.” And that’s when she knew, “Here. Here is our future.” Bonhoeffer never knew that future because he gave his life trying to defeat Hitler. But his legacy of knowing and sharing the word lives on.

So I have a question for you. Do you want people to look at your church and say the same thing? Do you want people to say, “Here. Here is our future.” Because you too passionately know and share the word of Christ. That long before people walk through your doors they know who you are. They know you are a people who know Jesus and the good news about him. And a people who shares that good news with the lost. That is a future worth striving for. The word of Christ saves. Know it. Share it.

\*Jonathan preached this sermon on his pastoral candidating weekend in July of 2013. Two days later Immanuel Church in Chelmsford MA voted to hire him as their new Associate Pastor.