

*Turned Into Fables*

**Second Timothy 3:16 – 4:8**

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~ There is myriad “*Bible teaching*” in this world today; and it can be difficult to discern what is correct and what isn’t. I say that with a note of despondency and deep despair because, friends, you just happen to be reading the writings of a man who loves the Lord Jesus Christ, loves the Word of God, trusts and obeys the Lord – and truly desires for this lost, sick and dying world to come to an unerring understanding of the entirety of Scriptures through arrant instruction of sound doctrine established by the apostles. Nothing has changed in Holy Writ since the apostle Paul wrote this swan song epistle from a horrible Roman Mamertine prison so many centuries ago.

Frankly, we are reading Paul’s deathbed statement to his spiritual son, Timothy; and Paul must have been experiencing profound loneliness and depression as he hears the news from the Galatian country about so many people distorting, turning away from and, as a result, rejecting the faith altogether. See, apostasy began in Paul’s day; and it has grown to a fever-pitched crescendo in our day. It will culminate in total and complete apostasy someday as the true and living church is raptured out of this world. All that will remain of “*Christianity*” will be a false, putrefying empty shell. Those are the things that weighed heavily on Paul’s mind as he wrote this letter.

Because this epistle was so personal for Paul, these safari reports have also been personal in my presentation. At the time in which we are studying, Timothy has had the Scriptures taught to him properly, correctly and completely; so now it is time Timothy declare the Word of God to others. When we do that, it becomes personal. Today, the only thing that can adequately meet our needs is an educated, systematic, sincere, thorough and qualified exposition of God’s Word, taught from personal experience. Only then can it reach into other people’s hearts and lives and touch them in those vital places where we all need to be touched. If you have not read our last safari report, I suggest you go back and do so now....



***16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:***

~ God breathed His message of life into men He chose to write His Word. The Bible says what God wanted to say; and it says everything He has to say to mankind at this time. God wants you and me to be mature, full grown saints who become capable and responsible of teaching others the precious truth and wisdom He has provided for us. See, I know this Spiritual Safari is the right thing to do; and that this is the Word of God I am conferring to you. I do not guess at what I write. This is not some self-aggrandizing theory of one particular way to live according to what I think is right and wrong. I do not receive any substantial support for what I am doing. I have no interest in people agreeing with or “following” me. My responsibility ends when I present these reports. The Spiritual Safari is a take it or leave it proposition. Most prefer to leave it; because they aren’t genuinely interested in following Christ.

Even so, I consider this a full-time job without returns, pay or benefits; a job where I give away my intellectual property, time, money, effort, services and – that’s that. As a result, I have so many personal needs that are not met that *NONE* who participate here could fully understand my life. This is not some personal self-pity prose, though; that’s just how it is. Most of you, quite frankly – and I am just keeping this real, friends – would have committed suicide a *LONG* time ago trying to conduct a ministry this way. I’m not going to lie to you dear readers – because I never lie to you – I have contemplated it. This safari has cost me everything – and that is no exaggeration or overstatement. I know my treasures are in Heaven – not in this world – so, I would be much better off there with the Lord as opposed to suffering so intensely here in a world that just doesn’t really care about what I am doing. Take as long as you need with this personal disclosure for whatever it’s worth to you – maybe nothing; but, don’t worry, I’m going to continue writing these reports and just giving them away as the Lord commands me to do....

**17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.**

## **IV**

**1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;**

**2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.**

**3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;**

~ Paul is as serious as a heart attack now. These instructions are vital for Timothy. See, the appearing of Christ, and His kingdom being established on earth, aren't the same thing. Christ's appearing will be an epiphany at the rapture of the church. The return of Christ to the earth to establish His Kingdom will be His revelation. They are two wholly and distinctly different things. The Lord Jesus is going to do some judging – twice – three times, in fact. When Christ calls believers to meet Him in the air, He is going to judge us to determine our reward in Heaven. There will later be a judgment of those who go through the Great Tribulation period and have turned to Him during that time; and their judgment will be to determine whether or not they will enter the Kingdom. Then, there will a third judgment of those who rejected Him and they will be judged by their works. So, whoever you are, wherever you are, however you are, whenever you are – you already have an appointment to come before Christ Jesus in judgment – one way or another.

In the meantime, “*preaching the Word*” is the rallying cry for believers in these last days of the church. It is something that other people are to respond to. In World War Two, there was a motto that said, “*remember Pearl Harbor.*” In the Spanish-American war the motto was, “*remember the Maine!*” After the thirteen day siege by Mexican troops under President General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna at that mission in San Antonio, Texas,

where every single Texan defender was killed, the motto was “*remember the Alamo!*” The church is to give out and proclaim the Word of God that way, friends. That’s our job. That is the sole factor upon which your reward in Heaven will be based. Nothing else matters. It is very, very important. I cannot emphasize that enough. “*Be diligent*” means to be ready. If someone needs us at four o’clock in the morning, we should be ready and willing to help them.

“*Reprove*” is, rather, convict. We are to teach the Bible with conviction. This *NEVER* means that we are to teach *ABOUT* the Bible. Some people go to church today without even owning a Bible because all they are ever taught are sterile facts *ABOUT* the Bible. Most preachers only read a verse or two – and they usually read them incorrectly, by the way – but then they fly off on some irrelevant tangent of politics or world views and life philosophies that have *ABSOLUTELY NOTHING* to do with the verse they just read, incorrectly. Most Bible text is merely used as a pretext taken out of context. That is a very real and urgent problem, friends. There is almost zero Spirit-filled and Spirit-led study *OF* the Bible today.

“*Rebuke*” also means to reprove and correct; but it goes a step further, and carries the thought of disciplining. “*Exhort*” means to comfort. Well, an exhortation in love can sometimes seem altogether uncomfortable and unlovely; but you’ll never comfort anyone by coddling them or pacifying sin with a worldly philosophical lie disguised as Scripture. In fact, all that ever accomplishes is harming the faith of others. There are times we have to be Biblically blunt and flagrantly honest. Doing these things this way – correctly – is going to take a whole lot of patience. It also means we will have to actually know what we are talking about from the Word of God. “*Doctrine*” means teaching, of course. This Spiritual Safari is a teaching missionary ministry that takes the entire Word of God out to the entire world in sound doctrine. If the Lord has called you, and subsequently chosen you, then these are the things you are to do, my beloved.

Unfortunately, we have absolutely reached a time in contemporary society that most men cannot endure sound doctrine. That includes most church members, too. Frankly, they don’t want sound doctrine. In this age of “*tweets*” and five-second attention spans, it is all but impossible for most

people to learn the Word of God properly, correctly and completely. Modern society just doesn't have the mental aptitude to consider the things of the Lord Jesus Christ properly, correctly and completely. Today, if you cannot make your point in three sentences or less, the average person becomes utterly lost in their thinking. The information highway is overwhelming; although that's no excuse to God – but it's one example of a factual observation of how lost man justifies his rejection of Christ.

*“Shall they heap to themselves teachers...?”* Dr. Marvin Vincent wrote, in his book, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, *“...these people shall invite teachers en masse. In periods of unsettled faith, skepticism and mere curious speculation in matters of religion, teachers of all kinds swarm like the flies in Egypt. The demand creates the supply. The hearers invite and shape their own preachers. If the people desire a calf to worship, a ministerial calf-maker is readily found.”* That is so utterly true today. The modern pulpit is really nothing but a sounding board and an echo chamber that is regurgitating back to the people what they will pay to hear; but they will not support sound doctrine under any circumstances.

*“Having itching ears....”* Again, let me quote Dr. Vincent from his highly recommended book entitled *Word Studies in the New Testament*. He says, *“...Clement of Alexandria describes certain teachers as ‘scratching and tickling,’ in no human way, the ears of those who eagerly desire to be scratched.”* Seneca says, *“...some come to hear, not to learn, just as we go to the theatre, for pleasure, to delight our ears with the music and the speaking voices of celebrities.”* Most people don't remember three points from their Sunday sermon last Sunday. This has certainly been the picture for many years – but, in modern times, it gets *MUCH* worse. Paul David Hewson, who is sometimes heretically billed as a *“gospel singer,”* in his wildly popular song entitled *Staring at the Sun*, says:

~ There's an insect in your ear  
If you scratch it won't disappear  
~ It's gonna itch and burn and sting  
Do you want to see what the scratching brings?  
~ Waves that leave me out of reach  
Breaking on your back like a beach

~ Will we ever live in peace?  
Coz those that can't do often have to....  
~ Those that can't do often have to...preach  
To the ones staring at the sun...  
~ Afraid of what you'll find if you took a look inside  
Not just deaf and dumb... staring at the sun  
~ I'm not the only one who'd rather go blind

That's a doleful self-indictment Hewson unwittingly makes of himself. The church – and the world – today wants anything and everything except the Word of God, friends. Cults, isms and sensational showmanship draw a big crowd of people away from the truth and into an illusion. Even the lost man in modern society doesn't mind Bible stuff – as long as it isn't correct. People particularly love religious entertainment. What we have is a fascination for novelty in the modern church; emotional movies, pageants, worldly music and colored lights. Every manner of gimmickry is sought after to attract new members. Christian performers who temporarily placate the serious emotional problems of church-goers are perceived as perfect people; and they are well-paid, too. However, if you try opening the Bible in sound doctrine in the pulpit, you will flatly be rejected by a shallow and insipid, milquetoast congregation; and they won't support you – trust me on that. Candidly, itching ears have become deaf ears. They cannot hear and they cannot see, either. The frightening reality is that they would rather remain blind. Let's move on....

***4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.***

***5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.***

***6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.***

***7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:***

~ So, as we end this miserable leg of our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God we come to Paul's self-epitaph in verses six through eight. "*Ready to be offered*" means 'poured out' as a libation – or a drink offering. Death of the flesh ends nothing for the Christian – it begins eternal life. Christ was humiliated on the cross; but He was glorified when He was raised from the dead. "*Departure*" is the Greek word "*analuseos*," – which is a nautical term used of a ship ready to put out of the harbor for a sea voyage. "*A good fight*" is the good fight – of FAITH – not fighting the devil. A fight with the devil is a bad fight. Christ fights EVERY battle for us; and we are to hold our peace. "*Finished my course*" means as an athlete on the track. "*I have kept the faith*" means faithful as a good steward – of the Word of God. "*Crown of righteousness*" is the reward for a righteous life that Christ will have in His hand when He returns. To "*love his appearing*" is totally different from holding the doctrine of the second coming of Christ; so, verse eight unmistakably refers to the Rapture. Alright, after our next final report from this epistle, we'll return to the Old Testament prophecy of Ezekiel....

***8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing ~***

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