

2 Timothy 4:1-5 – January 31st, 2021

Ears to Hear

JD Farag

All right, well, good morning and welcome to our second service. First services are our Bible prophecy update that we livestream at 9:00 a.m. Hawaii time and second service is our verse-by-verse study through the Bible. We're going book-by-book, chapter-by-chapter, verse-by-verse. And today we are in 2 Timothy. We last week completed Chapter 3, and we'll pick it up in Chapter 4 and our text is gonna be verses 1-5.

We'll invite you at this time to turn there if you're not there already. And while you're doing that, I just want to, before we jump into today's sermon, update you on what we announced last week about simultaneously livestreaming on our new website at JDFarag.org. This is really for the benefit of our online Church and this is something you need to know as it relates to specifically the prophecy updates.

So as of last Sunday, we started the update livestream on YouTube, also on Facebook, as we did this morning as well. But we end the livestream on both YouTube and Facebook; we may also add Twitter to that, and then once the livestream is ended on those platforms, you can watch the conclusion of it at JDFarag.org. Actually, we really want to encourage you to just go there first to begin with and make JDFarag.org your main go-to resource for all the videos in place of, instead of YouTube and the other platforms.

Now, please know that we will continue to livestream all of our videos on YouTube every week at the regularly scheduled times; however, the 9:00 a.m. prophecy update will only be the introduction and then part of the explanation, but not the conclusion. We're doing it this way to serve as a reminder to our viewers, especially our new subscribers of which we have many, to watch the full, uncensored prophecy update at JDFarag.org. It's again our hope that instead of YouTube, you'll remember to just go directly to JDFarag.org; however, we're gonna continue doing this.

We know it's gonna take some time, and we very much appreciate your patience with us, but really more importantly your prayers for us. And specifically we need prayer for the following: First, working towards being able to download the videos. Second, having closed captioning on the videos, and third, watching on a TV of the videos. Now we had a number of people, actually, a lot of people -- I don't want to use the word "complaining" because that's not very sanctified, so we'll just say "notifying."

We've had a lot of you notify us that you can't download the videos from the website. Again, we appreciate your patience; we are working tirelessly. We have an amazing team; they're virtually working around the clock on all of these features, and we're hoping very soon to have them in place on the website.

But in the meantime, please do pray; it's very important that you pray for us in that regard. This is our intention anyway, Lord willing, to remain on YouTube and the other social media platforms for a long as we can to reach as many as we can. However, and we are fully anticipating this, we're ready for this in the event that our accounts are terminated, we are hoping, Lord willing, again to have the site at a place where that transition will be smooth and seamless.

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We're gonna try as quickly as we can to replicate, duplicate everything that you had available to you on YouTube so that it is available on the website and actually even better. So that's our goal, and again, we very much appreciate your prayers to that end.

All right, let's get into the Word. Really looking forward to what the Lord has for us today. I have been for quite some time now, and not in the way that you might think, as we'll talk about in a moment.

So 2 Timothy Chapter 4:1-5. I'll ask you to stand if you're able; you can follow along as I read. If not, where you're seated is fine. The Apostle Paul in verse 1 by the Holy Spirit writing to Timothy says, "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of His appearing and His kingdom, I give you this charge: "Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage-with great patience and careful instruction.

For the time will come, verse 3, when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what they're itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry."

Whew, let's pray; if you would, please, join with me. Lord, this is a passage of Scripture that certainly rises to the level of us giving You our undivided attention. But in order for us to do that, we need the Holy Spirit. We need the Holy Spirit to not only grab our attention but hold it too, especially with this text that we have before us today. Lord, would You minister to us? Will You speak into our lives, in and through this passage that we have here?

Lord, doubtless there are many who are very discouraged, battle weary, and in some ways, truth be made known, that discouragement is giving way to despair. Lord, I pray that the Holy Spirit, the Comforter would administer comfort and encouragement, in Jesus' name, we pray, Amen. You could be seated. Thank you.

So I want to talk with you about the difficulties that we, as Christians, face in the world today concerning those who just don't want to hear it. And they don't want to hear it because they don't have ears to hear. Please know, and God knows my heart when I say this that it's with a very heavy heart, even a very broken heart, that I teach and preach this prophetic passage of Scripture, again one that I was anticipating, looking forward to, spent a lot of time in prayer in anticipation of it because of what's here in it.

And the reason being is that what's in this passage is exactly what is happening today. I do not know if it's possible to have a more apt description of the condition of the Church than the condition of the Church in these last days. Now, again, I wanna I want to encourage you -- some of your looking at me like you might want to start by encouraging yourself. Okay, [Laughter] but we need not be discouraged or despair.

And this for a number of reasons, the first of which is this is why we have a passage like this in God's Word. This is why God deemed it necessary to inspire the Apostle Paul to write this

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to Timothy. It was to, again, ready him and steady him then as it is to ready us and steady us now.

Timothy, my son, whom I love so much as a son, my son in the faith, I love you so much. I need to tell you what's coming because you're not gonna have me around much longer. Here's what's coming. Here's what you're going to deal with. Here's what you're going to be faced with. I want you to know this: That the time is coming when people won't put up with sound teaching. They won't put up with sound preaching. But you, Timothy, you know it's coming. I'm warning you this is what's coming, and I don't want you to be discouraged by it. I don't want you to be derailed because of it. I want you to be ready for it.

That's what this is about and that's why we have it in our Bibles. We have that which we need in order to remain steadfast in the face of all that's taking place. And I don't think you have to be the sharpest knife in the kitchen drawer, as the saying goes, to realize what is taking place today. What we have here in our text today is an exhortation, and, interesting, a charge to strengthen our resolve, lest we falter and cower when confronted with those who don't want to hear it.

Even as I say that I know that people come to mind that don't want to hear it anymore. Oh, my goodness, you try to post something on social media; they unfriend you; they block you, oh, but not before responding with the post against you. Don't be surprised; we'll talk about it here in a moment. Jesus said, "The world's gonna hate you."

In fact, beware when all men speak well of you. You know you've got a problem; you should worry when the enemy leaves you alone. In fact, you should really worry when the enemy sends you a thank you card and your wife a bouquet of flowers, and a gift card's enclosed. You know, thank you, keep up the good work, you pose absolutely no threat to the kingdom of darkness. That's when you need a worry. But they don't want to hear it, and they're gonna let you know they don't want to hear it. And please know that I understand that and I know what that feels like, I know what that is like.

But what we have here before us and for us are these exhortations. I found three; you might find more, but three that can and will protect and direct us as we face this, and we're facing this, and spoiler alert, it's going to get worse. I hate to say it, but I have to say it. It's going to get worse, and it's yet another marker, like we need more, that were in the last days.

Here's the first one; this in verses 1 and 2. Don't stop because of it. I wanna first draw your attention to two specific words, the first of which is the word "charge," interesting word, and the second word, which is the word "season."

First, the word "charge." In the original language it carries with it the idea of testifying under oath, and this word "season" in the original language carries with it the idea of convenience.

So now, let's kind of put this together. You know what Paul is saying here? He's saying that this is an oath, as it were, to preach the word, whether it's convenient and popular or not. Oh, so you're met with some opposition, some antagonism, some resistance, even some hurtful words from those who don't want to hear it? What are you gonna do? You're gonna

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push back or pull back? Are you gonna hold back or you're gonna kind of “Well, I just don't wanna...I don't wanna rock the boat.”

“Yes, you do.”

“I don't wanna, you know, create any waves.”

“Yes, you do.”

“I don't wanna, you know, cause any problems.”

“Actually, yes, you do because here's the truth.”

It is better to offend them into heaven than it is to flatter them into hell. And this is what I mean by this strengthened resolve to not only not stop, but to press on even more. After Paul tells Timothy what to do, he then tells him how to do it, namely patiently and carefully.

In other words, and we saw this last week at the end of Chapter 3, the four legs on the table upon which we stand teaching, rebuking, correcting, and instructing are all to be done with a gentle spirit in love, very carefully, prayerfully and especially patiently. I pray; I asked the Lord, Lord, I -- well, like you, I'm probably no different. But I'll just use myself as the poster child and take one for the team here on this example. I always pray for patience because that's a struggle for me because I'm very impatient.

I know you know nothing of this; again, I'm speaking about my own struggles. But it does require patience. What are you saying, Pastor? I'm saying, listen, when you've got somebody in your life that doesn't want to hear it, you need to be very patient with them. Be very patient with them.

One of the things that should settle your heart concerning them is that God wants them right with Him more than even you want them right with Him. Think about that. You know, I think about John Mark, very interesting. Remember that “sharp dispute,” is actually what Acts refers to it between Paul and Barnabas? It was over Mark. Mark bailed on them on that missionary journey, and Paul was not too happy. In fact, it was because of that, that Paul and Barnabas split up. They basically split and went separate ways over Mark.

But you know what's interesting? We're going to see this here in Chapter 4 at the end of this last letter that the Apostle Paul writes where he brings up the name John Mark again. Only this time it is with affection and endearment. Here's the John Mark that God, by the Holy Spirit, inspired to write the Gospel of Mark.

“No, come on, it's gotta be a different Mark.”

“No, same guy.”

“You mean the guy that bailed on Paul and Barnabas?”

“Yeah, that guy.”

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“He...what... God... no...”

“Yeah.”

And here, Paul, at the end of his life, freezing in that dungeon of a prison, waiting his execution and he knew it, and who does he call for? Mark. Really? Sounds like over the years the Apostle Paul patiently, graciously prayed for and didn't give up on John Mark.

You know where I'm going with this, right? You've got a John Mark in your life. Never give up on them. Yeah, but they don't want to hear it; you should hear the things they say about me and even to me, and of course, behind my back, it's even worse behind the bag, right? Yeah, I know. Don't give up.

In fact, let me encourage you this way. I would actually prefer that somebody just, I mean, become incensed with me. That means something's happening. You ever heard that saying, “That when you throw a rock into a pack of dogs, the dog that barks the loudest is the dog that got hit the hardest.” Wow, right?

Listen, if you got a better one, let me know afterwards; that's all I got for now. I'm certainly not calling your John Mark dogs, but you know, you get the point. Patience, be gentle. So not only does Paul tell Timothy what to do and how to do it, he also tells him why. Notice in verse 1, he says that the reason why Paul is to preach the word unwavering, unflinching, strengthened in his resolve is because the Lord who will judge the living and the dead is coming.

Hang on to that; we're going to come back to that. That's “why” behind the “what” and the “how.” Paul, writing to Timothy says this is what I want you to do, this is how I want you to do it, and this is why I want you to do it. This is the first two verses. Okay, it gets worse. Second one is in verses 3 and 4. In addition to not stopping because of it, don't be surprised by it. It's one of those places in God's Word where I think we do well to ask the question of why is it that we have this in our Bibles?

I believe that one of the main reasons is that when it happens, not if, when this happens, and it's happening, that we're not derailed by it, not surprised by it. We're actually ready for it, in anticipation of it. I mean, if you think about it, if you didn't have this warning in advance, how hard is that going to be when, not if, it happens? I'll take it a step further and suggest that not only is this here so we won't be surprised, it's also here as a prophetic sign of the last days prior to the rapture, kind of a two-fold purpose. If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the most stunning contrasts in this regard, my answer would be that of the last days Church in Philadelphia and the Church of the Laodiceans. I'm saying it that way for a reason I'll explain here in just a moment.

So you have seven Churches. These are literal churches. And Jesus has John from the island of Patmos write seven letters that were mailed to these seven physical churches at the time known as Asia Minor, most believe in about the year 95 AD. We know it today as modern-day Turkey. You can actually visit the ruins of these cities there in Turkey. I wouldn't recommend traveling there at this time anyway.

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But seven churches, and there were only two of the seven churches for which there was no rebuke from Jesus. In fact, instead of a rebuke, there was an encouragement, an exhortation again, and just to hang on, not much longer, and those two churches were the Church of Smyrna -- we affectionately refer to as the Persecuted Church -- and the Church of Philadelphia -- we again affectionately refer to as the Remnant Church.

But after the Church of Philadelphia, there's the seventh Church and it's the last Church, seven being the number of completion. And it's this church in this city of Laodicea. And what's so interesting is that when John writes these letters, the first six letters he writes, "To the Angel of the Church in Ephesus," "in Smyrna," "in Sardis," "in Thyatira," "in Pergamon," "in Philadelphia."

But then when he gets to the Church in Laodicea, he doesn't say, "The Church in Laodicea." he says, "Write to the Church, of the Laodiceans."

Why? Because it's not My Church anymore. This is the Church that I'm standing on the outside of, knocking on the door to come back in. I'm not even in that Church anymore.

And by the way, the name is the nature. Stay with me; I'm going somewhere with this, very important. The name is the nature. See Laodicea is a combination of two words in the English where we get "laity and diocese" or "laity decide" or laity. The laity were calling the shots. The Lord was no longer in charge. The Lord was no longer even in the Church ruling over the Church.

They were in His place; that's why, he says, "Write to the Church of the Laodiceans." And the contrast between the Church of Philadelphia and the Church of Laodicea is stark, and that's an understatement, and here's why.

To the Church in Philadelphia, Jesus has John commend them, in Revelation 3:8-10, writing, "I know your works." "See, I have set before you an open door and no one can shut it for you have a little strength." I know you're just hanging on by a thread. "You have kept My word, preached My word and have not denied My name."

You know what the inference is here? This infers, this implies that there were those who had -- had what -- not kept His word, had denied His name, were no longer preaching the Word. And then he says, "Because you have kept My command to persevere, I will also keep you from the hour of trial," tribulation, the seven-year tribulation, "which shall come upon the whole world to test those who dwell in the earth." We refer to, rightfully so, this as a proof text for a pre-Tribulation rapture along with many others. The Church will not be here for the seven-year Tribulation, the true Church. We will be kept from the hour of Tribulation that is coming upon the whole world, and it is.

Okay, let's talk about the Church of the Laodiceans. Jesus has John write in Revelation 3:19-20, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone - keyword - hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him and dine with him and he with Me." Now I'm keenly aware that many, and it's okay, I get it, I've done it myself, we use this as an evangelical text.

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You know: That behold, the Lord is standing at the door of your heart knocking, wanting to come in. That's fine. But this was a Church, these were Christians, and the clarion call is to repent. This was the lukewarm Church. He just got done saying to them, "You know, I wish you were either hot or cold." I mean, that would be so much better, but because you're lukewarm, I want to vomit you out of My mouth, you make Me sick. That's what really the original language says, pretty, pretty, blunt, pretty graphic.

It needs to be! It needs to be.

It's kind of interesting because Laodicea, the city, was close in proximity to another city we have mentioned of it in the Book of Acts, the City of Hierapolis. And what's really interesting about Laodicea is this was a super-wealthy city. In fact, it was the banking center of the known world in that region. They have so much money, and they had so much money that they decided to build this elaborate system by which to get the natural hot springs from Hierapolis into Laodicea so they could have their resorts and spas.

And even again, you can search it online, beautiful; it's breathtaking! The natural hot springs there in Hierapolis, oh my goodness, so Laodicea is like, hey, we could afford it, let's do it! So they built this elaborate system.

But here's the thing: By the time the water, the hot springs from Hierapolis, got to Laodicea, they weren't hot anymore, they were lukewarm. I love it when God does that! They got the point: lukewarm. Oh, yeah, they know a thing or two about being lukewarm. How about trying to, when you're so thirsty, drink a glass of lukewarm water? How about when you're cold, don't you want to be hot? And when you're hot, don't you want it to be cold? Someone gives you something lukewarm, you're like (spitting).

Sorry about that. Free baptisms for everybody.

And that's what He's saying: I wish you were either hot or cold, but you're lukewarm and you need to repent. And He says, "Even be zealous and repent." And here's what's at stake, Laodicea. I'm standing at the door and I'm knocking. But there will come a time where I will not keep knocking on this door. Now is the time. If you hear, if you have ears to hear, open the door now.

And in verse 22, He ends the letter the same exact way that He ends all of the letters, "He who has an ear." Stop right there. Wait, that's rhetorical, right? Yeah. He who has an ear? Okay, show of hands. How many here have an ear, go ahead. Wow, some of you didn't raise your hand, whatever; that's between you and the Lord. Hey, you don't have an ear; you have two!

And here's what you don't have, and I hope this isn't weird, but it's true: You don't have earlids. Yeah, I'll give you a moment on that; I know it's deeply profound. Have you noticed that? You don't need earlids to not hear. You know how it is when someone's talking to you and you're not really hearing what they're saying?

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As a kid, I remember growing up my mom, she would with her thick accent, she would hit this octave. And it was like, “What are you doing?” And when she hit that note, that key, I knew; I don't know what it was, C sharp or whatever. That's it; I didn't hear anything else. I still have my ears, but I wasn't hearing. It was la-la-la-la and all I heard was la-la-la-la.

[Laughing]

I think we do that with the Lord. We don't hear; oh, we hear, but we don't really hear. You know how it is when you're in a conversation with somebody and your mind is totally someplace else, but you wanna be polite, courteous, and they keep going on and on and on, and so you try to insert the “Oh, hmm, is that right” at the proper spot. And then you mess up and they catch you.

And they, “You know, I asked you a question.” You were like, “Oh, is that right, oh, sorry, what were you saying again? “You weren't listening, were you?”

“No.”

He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches. You know what this means, right? The Holy Spirit has something to say to the Church. The question isn't: Is the Holy Spirit speaking? The question is: Am I hearing it? No, I have ears, but am I hearing it? I would suggest that Philadelphia had ears to hear what the Spirit said.

But Laodicea had itching years to hear only what they wanted said. Perhaps better said: One had ears to hear what the spirit says to the Church, whereas the other had itching ears to hear what people want to hear at the church. Dare I say that you don't have to look very hard or go very far to find one of these And again, this is what I mean by I take no pleasure in teaching and preaching this passage because it's heartbreaking.

It's also very convicting as a pastor. And I would be disingenuous at best and even dishonest at worst if I didn't confess that there have been times where I just said, “Lord, no.” You know, one of the things when you teach expositionally book-by-book and chapter-by-chapter and verse-by-verse, you don't get to pick what you want to preach on.

So when I know what the passage is on, I'm like “Hmm, I think I'll be sick that day. Nice try. So I'm gonna have Pastor Mac fill in for me, but then I got the next week. What am I going to do, skip it?

“Lord, if preach that, they're not coming back.”

To which the Lord responds, “Oh, really, is that what you're preaching for? Is that who you're preaching to? Are you saying that you need to preach in such a way that hey, you don't want to ruffle any feathers, to use that metaphor, because you want them to come back?”

I mean, what pastor doesn't wanna be liked? I don't want you to hate my guts. I want you to like me; you like me, right? I was sharing; I think it was, I don't remember now, it's all a blur, but, I'll be up here preaching, teaching, and then somebody will get up and walk out.

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Nobody's gonna do that now, after I said that, right? And here's the enemy going, "Oh, it's what you said."

And again, I would be just disingenuous at best, dishonest at worst if I didn't think to myself, "Ugh, they walked out, maybe I shouldn't have said it that way."

Here's the Lord going, "Oh, really? We're gonna say it in such a way so that they're okay?"

By the way, there are those who are doing that. And because of that, in huge numbers of people are flocking to their churches. And what pastor doesn't wanna have people in his church. Again, I'm just being very open with you. I hope that doesn't make you feel uncomfortable. But I'm just as any...it's not beneath me, certainly, and I'm not above it. I'm certainly capable of it. There are those times where I'm looking at the passage and I'm thinking to myself, and I'm saying to the Lord, "Lord, whew, I feel like Jeremiah."

You know who Jeremiah was? The weeping prophet. And He even told him, "I'm going to give you this message, you're gonna prophecy it, and nobody's gonna respond." "You're never gonna even have one person respond, so go."

Here was Jeremiah, "No, I don't want to."

"No, you will," and he did.

I always get a kick out of it; I was just talking to somebody after first service about that. I always get a kick out of the contrast between Jonah and Jeremiah. And the question is always asked, "Who would you have come and speak at a conference?" Oh, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. Here's Jeremiah: Not one person got saved in his ministry, not even one. And here's Jonah: The whole city God saved. Who you gonna have?

[Video technical difficulties]

He would have been no skin tone, no color, his hair, if he had any left...

[Video technical difficulties]

A fish/man God?

[Video technical difficulties]

He didn't have to say anything. This is a man/fish. We worship a God/fish.

[Video technical difficulties]

Don't be surprised by it, don't stop because of it.

[Video technical difficulties]

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But explaining how it is that we can keep our sanity and not be derailed by this when, not if, this happens. Here's what I'm thinking, and I'll bring it in for a close. Being busy about the things of God comes proportionately packaged with the needed...

[Video technical difficulties]

You know, I had my eyes on what other churches were doing and not doing, and it was very discouraging with comments, posts, emails into the office from people just, I mean, pleading with us to let them know if there's a church in their area that actually teaches Bible prophecy.

That's what's so heartbreaking about it because there isn't. And this at a time when it has never been more important than it is now, would you agree? I mean, right now, even as I'm up here, I'm keenly aware of the many online who are maybe watching, and they don't know where next month's rent is gonna come from, let alone food to put in the fridge because of everything that's going on.

And then you've got a pastor behind the pulpit talking about nothing, not preaching the Word; oh, they're preaching about it. There's a reference every here and there to it. Oh, you might even get some who hold it up at the very beginning, never to open it again.

And again, I'm just being very candid with you. I really had a struggle, and I had to go with Lord with it. It was kind of a Psalm 73 thing for me, where the Psalmist had, by his own admission, almost stumbled because he's watching the prosperity of the wicked. And here he's cleansed his hands, what, in vain?

And he's having such a crisis of faith that he won't even talk to anybody because he's afraid that he'll stumble them because they'll pick up on it, that he's having a struggle here. I mean, what am I doing this for? These guys are having a "sermonette" for the literally thousands of "Christianettes" that will go to their church.

Listen, I'm not talking about now necessarily, but there was a day I remember in the old building. You know, wood pews? It would echo, bounce off the...

[Video technical difficulties]

Okay, let's pray.

[Video technical difficulties]

John Mark: we mentioned, the aforementioned John Mark in your life. In light of this, patiently never give up on him, don't stop because of them, me right there alone. And don't be taken back by it. Let it be that which strengthens your resolve, refills the tank of your motivation to press on to the prize of the high calling, and here's why lastly. Because the Lord's coming, not much longer.

And when you have this to look forward to, it makes whatever you're going through easier to get through. Not much longer, you just hang on, you hang on. I know you have little

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strength. I know you're barely hanging on, but I'm coming. You haven't kept My word; I will keep you...

I mean, you kept My word; I will keep you from the hour of tribulation that is coming up on the whole earth. Please stand and we'll pray. Father in heaven, thank You for Your Word, and we wanna be, of course, numbered amongst those of whom it could be said that they have ears to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to us, Your church.

Lord, may it never be said, as it was said to the Church of the Laodiceans that if they would but hear instead of only hearing what one's ears are itching to hear, that we would hear, have ears to hear what You are saying, not what You want to say, You're already saying, we want to hear it and we want heed it, in Jesus' name, Amen.