Guard The Gate — Delivery Transcript

2 Timothy 2:14–26 (ESV) · Wes Terry · Sunday, May 8, 2016 · *Entrusted*

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Band's exiting the stage and I need to make a few disclaimers real quick about the message. I know it is Mother's Day and typically a pastor on Mother's Day preaches a sermon on Mother's Day, but we're not. We don't have that privilege this morning because the series we've been in isn't going to facilitate that kind of flexibility. And so I kind of felt bad about it at first, that, you know, all these moms are in here on Mother's Day needing a sermon on Mother's Day and the text doesn't really lend itself towards Mother's Day, but the more I got to thinking about it, all the applications on this sermon, even though they technically apply to the pastor in a church, translate easily over to momming kids.

Is that a verb? Momming. And I think everything we're going to see today in today's text easily translates to that. That's disclaimer number one. Disclaimer number two, the other oddity about today's message is that most of the times when I'm preaching in the text, the text usually lends itself to an application to most of the folks in the church. But today's text, all of the applications are specifically targeted to the preacher of a sermon, or more appropriately, the pastor of a church. And so studying the text this week, it was kind of like, I don't know, the Lord exposing all of the areas in which I as a pastor am inadequate.

So it was wonderful fun preparing the message. And you know, to be fair, every sermon, if it's going to be a good sermon, needs to apply to the preacher before it applies to anybody else. I try to let the text affect me before I go out and preach it. Otherwise I'm just a self-righteous hypocrite telling you what the Bible says. But today's message is unique in that it's Paul writing to a pastor to tell him how to pastor. So here's how I want you to listen to what we're about to hear from the scripture.

Number one, if you're a member of this church, I want you to think of these applications as ways in which you can pray, not only for me as your lead pastor, but every one of our staff, especially the young staff. Roger and Brian and Ora and the rest of us. We'll count you

young, Ora. Thank you. So for younger people on the staff, especially. Number two, there's some implications of this sermon. So even though the applications are maybe targeted to a pastor, that does not mean there are not implications for average folks in the congregation.

There are things you can do with your life that'll make some of the things that Paul is telling Timothy to do a little bit easier for us and it'll certainly help the church. And then thirdly, like I said, the church is a home. It's a big home. Except, you know, we aren't biologically related, but we are unified in that we together have the conviction that God is who he said he is. He did what he said he would do. Jesus did rise from the dead and we're united in that faith.

And so in that way we are one family. The church is a family. And anything that would be true of how a pastor would lead his church family would also be true in how a parent leads their family. And so I think it's most fitting for Mother's Day if we'll listen to it in that way. So if you'll take your Bible, turn to 2 Timothy, 2 Timothy chapter 2, we're going to start in verse 14. And in your notes, I broke down the text four different ways. And we'll kind of go through them step by step as we work our way through the text.

If you're just now joining us, and some of you are, we've got a lot of visitors today. We've been in the book of 2 Timothy for about four weeks now. And it was a letter written from an older pastor to a younger pastor. And this older pastor was the Apostle Paul. He was what you would call a super pastor. He was amazing. He planted churches basically all over the known world. He spread Christianity basically all over the place while everyone else hung out in Jerusalem. He was a hardworking, highly effective leader, and he's writing to a young guy who's pretty timid, and he's an introvert.

He's been given the responsibility to lead this tremendously influential church, a very large church in the city of Ephesus, and he's having trouble in his church. It wasn't one of those dream churches like Broadview is. It was one of those nightmare churches like I'm not going to name any names, but there's some other churches out there that are not real great. And so they had these people, this demographic in the church at Ephesus who were making things difficult for Timothy. So Paul's writing to Timothy, here's how you address it, here's how you get your church healthy again.

And then he tells Timothy, since I'm about to die, Nero's about to end my days, I want you to come to me, take my place in what I'm doing for the church. And so it's Paul's last letter. You can feel the emotion as you read it. And today we're honing in on how does a pastor successfully play his part in entrusting the faith, the biblical Christian faith, to the next generation. So 2 Timothy chapter 2 we'll start in verse 14. He says, remind them, meaning the congregation, remind the people in your church of these things.

And the these things that he's to remind them of, what we've been covering the past couple of weeks, since some of you are new, let me just kind of summarize it. Basically he's been reminding Timothy of everything he needs to know to stay strong in the midst of suffering. He reminds Timothy to entrust what he's been given to the next generation, to the third and fourth generation. In fact, he reminds Timothy to be strong in the grace that is his in Christ Jesus, not just to, you know, step out hunky-dory at the first of your day without first being strengthened by the grace that is yours in Christ through reading the Scripture, through prayer, through just spending time with the Lord.

Do your disciplines. Use the spiritual disciplines in your life to rejuvenate yourself spiritually so that you're not running on empty all the time as a pastor. So do those things. Be strong in suffering. Share in suffering like a good soldier, he tells him. Soldiers don't get distracted by everything. They're not always in their screen, you know, all the time. Not like they had iPhones back then, but same thing today. Be like a soldier who has a desire to please his commanding officer, be like the disciplined athlete who does whatever is necessary to condition his body to win, that he competes according to the rules.

He's not taking human growth hormones or things like that to amplify his effectiveness as a pastor or bodybuilder, whatever the thing may be. He's the disciplined athlete, he's the undistracted soldier. Timothy, be like the hardworking farmer, is the third illustration he uses. Some of your work is going to be unseen, underappreciated, but that doesn't matter. You still need to work hard because at the end of the day, you're going to receive a reward. So remember, remember, remember. And then last week he reminded him God keeps his promises, Timothy, and you got to remember God keeps his promises when you find yourself in a bad way.

Remember the person of the gospel, the power of the gospel, the promises of the gospel, that if we die with Christ, we live with him. If we endure suffering, then we'll reign with him. If we deny him, he'll deny us. If we're faithless, he remains faithful to himself. Timothy, what you do matters. Your faith matters. You enduring matters. Don't give up. Don't quit. He reminds Timothy over and over and over again of these things. And then he tells him in this text, chapter 2, verse 14, Timothy, I'm not just reminding you, I'm asking you to remind them.

So take the people in your church, your congregation, and tell them what I've been telling you. Which means everything we've been learning in 2 Timothy, even though it was specifically targeted to a pastor, it's not just truth for a pastor to hear, it's truth for every single Christian to hear and to internalize into their life, to be strong in grace, to endure suffering, to remember Jesus risen from the dead, to remember that God keeps his promises. Remind, remind, remind. The best preachers are reminding preachers. Remind them of

these things and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers.

So the best preachers are reminding preachers. I'd say the best preachers are plagiarists, not in that they steal sermons, but in the sense that they simply represent what God has already said in the Word. Timothy wasn't supposed to get super creative. He wasn't supposed to push his own opinion. Timothy was just supposed to preach the gospel. The essence of it, what he's saying is, Timothy, preach the gospel and pick your battles. Not everything matters as much as everything else. Some things matter more than other things. Pick your battles, know what hills you got to die on, and use your pastoral authority, Timothy, to confront people in your church when they're making secondary issues primary issues.

When they're majoring on the minor things, Timothy, you've got to come to them and stop that business, because it does nothing to help the church; it only harms the church. So preach the gospel repetitively, find new and creative ways to do it. Simply represent the text. The biblical gospel, not the prosperity gospel, not the gospel that these false teachers are pushing, a biblical gospel and major on the majors, minor on the minors. We probably have all met that guy who stayed up way too late on YouTube watching the deeper meaning of the word bara in the book of Second Opinions, which is not a book in the Bible, by the way, and only this guy has the secret special knowledge.

You guys tracking with me? Hopefully this isn't your crazy Uncle Ted, but only he has the special secret knowledge of what the Bible really means because he's the only one who is counted worthy enough to be given this unique special knowledge. And that guy, when you talk to that guy, you walk away just feeling sort of confused and somewhat angry and really tired after hearing all of his conspiracy theories and everything like that. That's an extreme example. That's how cults get started, by the way. But that's also how a lot of churches get off track.

Because there will be people in the church who will major on the minors, secondary issues, like when is Jesus coming back? Okay, everyone agrees Jesus is coming back, but some people major on the minors and trying to, you know, get the charts out, and, you know, now this guy's getting elected and he's the antichrist, which means he's coming, it's September 13th, 2017. And those people who just push that over and over and over and they emphasize it more than anything else. Paul's telling Timothy, get that guy out of there. He will damage your church, making secondary issues primary issues.

Timothy, your job is to keep your church focused on the gospel, the main things. So do it. Preach the gospel, pick your battles. Number two, get it right and shoot it straight. Get the text right and shoot it straight, give it straight, preach it clearly. Chapter 2, verse 15, he says, do your best, be zealous for this, eager for this, to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. And word of

truth back then just would have meant the biblical gospel, but today I think it would apply to all of Scripture.

So if this was an application to me as your preacher, what he would be telling me is, Wes, when you preach the word, preach the word in a way that you get it right. What the text says is what you say it says, and preach it clearly. So don't let anyone come into your sanctuary and hear your preaching and walk away going, huh? What did I just hear? Make it clear. One of the things that helps people grow in their faith more than anything else is when they finally sit under Bible teaching that makes sense to them.

It's like, oh, that's what the Bible says! I never understood that before. How many of you remember the day when you finally sat under some teaching that it made sense to you? And you know, growing up, you never really got it, and then boom, all of a sudden this guy made the Bible make sense. That's what Paul's telling Timothy to work towards. And it's hard work. One of the reasons you don't see a lot of good preaching is because good preaching takes a lot of hard work. So preach the gospel, pick your battles, and get the text right and shoot it straight.

Make it clear. That's my goal as your pastor, is to make the text clearer. Moms, dads, here's another responsibility for you as you're leading your family spiritually. You take a text like the Bible, I don't care what anybody says, some of the Bible is hard to understand. And so find a way to make it clear. Or just skip the hard to understand parts and go to the easy to understand parts and major on the majors. The truth is the main things are the plain things, and so find the plain things and show those things to your children.

That's my responsibility as your pastor. It's your responsibility as parents to your kids. Help people avoid those word fights and preach the Bible in such a way that it's clear. There's a lot of bad preaching out there today. And by bad I don't just mean boring. I just mean they don't rightly handle the word of truth. When Paul tells Timothy to rightly handle the word of truth, that's one of the reasons I believe in expository preaching. I know that term sounds boring, but all it means is you take what's in the text and you expose it.

You just bring it out. This is what God says. You simply represent what God says. There's a lot of other preaching out there. You might call it unbiblical preaching where they take a text and communicate from that text something that the Bible doesn't teach. Health and wealth gospel preachers on TV do this all the time. They'll say things like if you'll just sow a seed into my ministry and write me a check, then the Lord's going to give you whatever home you want, you know, and so you write a check and you send it and you're still living in your old shack and it didn't work.

Why? Because the Bible doesn't teach that. They took an Old Testament text, twisted it, made it say something it didn't originally communicate so that they could get your money.

That's unbiblical preaching. There's a ton of it on TV. You've got to watch out for that. And Paul would tell Timothy, don't you dare do that. There's decontext preaching where people will take a text and rip it from its context. So maybe they'll preach on something like Philippians 4:13, which says, I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength. And they'll give application like you can bench press 315 pounds because the Bible says I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.

So you get down there, you bring the 315 pounds down and it craters your chest and it snaps it in half and then you have to go to the hospital. Why? Because it wasn't a biblical sermon. He took a text which was talking about contentment and being able to have lots of money and not lots of money, and he ripped it from its context and made it apply to lifting weights. And it didn't apply to lifting weights. That was bad preaching. There's a ton of it out there. It's not rightly handling the word of truth.

So there's decontext preaching, there's unbiblical preaching, there's moralized preaching, which takes the Bible and just preaches little moral lessons, be kind, be courageous, be fearless. These kinds of Sunday school lessons, when the Bible is really meant to say, repent and believe in Jesus. It's the gospel to sinners every single week. That's what the Bible is about. Some people preach on doctrine from a Bible text instead of preaching the text. Some people will lens their preaching, so you can see this in real political preachers, of which I hope not to be one.

They'll take the text and they'll read the text through whatever political lens that they have, whether that's conservative or liberal. Okay, both of them are out there. And instead of letting the text say what the text really says, they'll make the text say whatever the latest talking point is politically or whatever the latest theological controversy is. Maybe it's a theological lens. Or maybe it's a therapeutic lens, and so they'll make it say whatever the latest pop psychology is saying, and all of those are violating what scripture is actually saying. It's not rightly handling the word of truth.

And again, why is there so much of that preaching out there? Because good, solid, biblical preaching is hard work. It's one of the reasons it takes up half my week. Sermon prep takes up over half my week. That's one of the reasons that God gave the church deacons to help the pastor devote himself to prayer and the word because it's hard work to rightly handle the word of truth. So Paul says, Timothy, get it right, shoot it straight. And then lastly, or thirdly, sometimes you've got to take what you know about the word and you've got to confront people with it.

So he says in verses 16 and 17, "Avoid irreverent babble." That just means pointless, godless small talk sometimes in your small group, it gets to this kind of, what did you just say? Avoid that kind of stuff. It'll lead people into more and more ungodliness. And their talk will spread like gangrene. Anybody know what gangrene is? Any nurses in the house? Some of you. It's

bad stuff. Basically gangrene is when blood flow stops to a part of your body, whether foot or fingernail, and when the blood flow stops, of course the decay starts and death starts to spread all throughout your limbs.

And some people when they get gangrene it spreads, maybe it started in their big toe and then it can spread all the way up their leg and you got to chop your whole leg off. Paul's saying, sometimes false teaching in your church will spread in that way. It'll take the decay and the death, the spiritual death, and it will begin to spread. So you've got to address it. You've got to take the word of God and use it to confront error. "Among them are Hymenaeus"—he's someone who was already kicked out of the church in 1 Timothy 1, verse 20.

Evidently he's still hanging around causing trouble—"Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some." So here's a perfect example of someone who had shifted from the biblical gospel. They were saying that the resurrection had already happened, and what they meant by that wasn't that Jesus had already been raised from the dead, but what they meant by that is there is no bodily resurrection from the dead, that Jesus raised spiritually and that you and I, if we really have faith, that we'll be raised spiritually, but all this bodily resurrection stuff is nonsense.

But if you're spiritually raised from the dead, then that means you're not going to have any suffering in your life. It's going to be lollipops and roses all the time. So just believe what I tell you and have faith the way I tell you to have faith. And those kinds of teachers were pointing to the Apostle Paul who was in prison and they were saying to Paul, you're not full of the Holy Spirit. You obviously don't believe the real gospel because if you believe the real gospel, you wouldn't be suffering.

And Paul's telling Timothy, those guys teaching that stuff in your church are going to kill your church. Their teaching is going to spread like gangrene. It's already upsetting the faith of some. When he says it's upsetting their faith, he doesn't mean he's annoying people. He means that he is keeping people from coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. That there will be people who die and spend eternity separated from God because they were deluded to think that somehow that health and wealth gospel was somehow a biblical gospel. So Timothy, if you do anything, you must confront with the Word of God this false teaching in your church.

And he'd say the same thing to pastors today. So sometimes it's my responsibility as your pastor to confront people. Not because I like confronting people. I don't like confronting people. It makes me nauseous, very nauseous. But sometimes you have to do that as a pastor. You have to take the word of God and bring it to bear on people in the church and outside the church who are leading people astray. Otherwise, it'll spread like gangrene. Since

some of you have never seen gangrene, and maybe I make a disclaimer for all you young folks to cover your eyes.

This is what it looks like. You throw that up on the screen. This is a tame picture. Yes, this makes me nauseous too. Go ahead and take it away. That's gangrene. I made them sick. That's what happens in the church. Just as gangrene will cause spiritual decay and begin to spread, so also does false teaching cause spiritual decay. That will begin to spread. So as a pastor, your job is to confront it. Mom and Dad, sometimes it's your job to confront error in the life of your kids. Not dogmatically, not arrogantly, not mean-spirited, but if you see your kids being led astray from the truth, it is your responsibility to bring the word of God to bear on those things.

If you don't confront it, it'll destroy your family and it will destroy the church. So Timothy, confront error, but also keep yourself pure. False teaching, not only does it destroy the church, it also promotes an ungodly lifestyle. It says it's upsetting the faith of some, meaning that they weren't coming to a saving knowledge of the faith, and those who were Christians were beginning to dwindle. They're beginning to kind of drift from a real conviction about who Jesus was and their lifestyles showed that as well. They were beginning to live immoral lifestyles.

So confront error. For all of us, avoid it, don't play with it, and you've got to confront it. To which Timothy was probably beginning to think, well, if I've got to confront error in the church and my church is this messed up, then what's the use? He probably felt pretty helpless, and so Paul tells him in verse 19, don't get too discouraged. "God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are his,' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.'" In other words, the church belongs to God.

God's not going to let the church be destroyed, so be encouraged. At the end of the day, Timothy, it's not all about you, and it's certainly not all up to you. So you do what you can do in preaching the gospel, picking your battles, confronting error, keeping yourself pure, get it right, give it straight. But at the end of the day, when it comes to who's in and who's out, when it comes to who becomes a Christian and who does not become a Christian, that is all up to the Lord.

He knows those who are his, and he's going to bring them to himself, whether you fail or don't fail. So trust in the Lord. And then to illustrate that point, he gives this little story about a house and vessels in the house. So verse 20 says, "In a great house"— that's talking about the church. The church is the house. "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable." Back in the day, your wood and clay stuff was for jars and buckets that you would use to get rid of garbage, excrement, stuff like that.

But the gold and silver stuff was used for fine dining and eating. And the point is, in the church, because the church is the great house, every church has wheat and tares. It has people who are all the way in, and it has people who are thinking that they're in, but they're not really in. And it's got people who are not in at all and they're just trying to destroy the church. Timothy, in the church, there's two kinds of teachers. There are teachers who preach the truth, who give life, and then there are teachers who preach falsehood and bring spiritual death.

Timothy, what kind of teacher do you want to be? You want to be someone who brings life? You want to be someone who brings death? If you want to be someone who brings life, here's what you got to do. You got to cleanse yourself from what is dishonorable. Look at verse 21: "Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work." He's basically telling Timothy to cleanse himself from these things.

That's what the word dishonorable literally means. And if you think about the context, the these things is talking about a wrong doctrine, believing about the Bible things that aren't true, and then a wrong lifestyle. Arrogance, sexual immorality, pride, those kinds of things that undercut good ministry. So Timothy, it's your responsibility. If you want to be a good teacher, you want to be used by the Lord, ready for every good work, get your life right. Keep yourself pure. Confront error and keep yourself pure. And just in case Timothy missed it, he tells him in the next verse, verse 22, "flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."

So pay attention to your life and pay attention to your doctrine. As one of my mentors used to tell me, who's now gone on to be with the Lord, it is not great talent that God blesses so much as it is likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hands of God. And by awful he means awesome. I think that's what he meant. He's dead now, I can't ask him. But you think about church people, you think about ministers. How many times is it true of us that we focus on our competencies, our skill sets, our speaking abilities, our leadership abilities, those kinds of things, when in God's economy, in his kingdom, usefulness is not determined by your competency.

Usefulness is determined by your character. It is the cleansed vessel that is the used vessel in God's kingdom. Mom and Dad, you think about your children. You want them to be used mightily by the Lord. You yourself want to be used mightily by the Lord. Really at the end of the day, God doesn't care about your skill set. He doesn't care if you're equipped, you know, well I don't know the Bible well enough or I'm not skilled in this way or that way. What matters is not skillfulness. Usefulness in the kingdom of God isn't determined by skillfulness, it's determined by holiness, it's determined by your character.

So pursue righteousness, pursue love and peace and gentleness and these kinds of things. Flee youthful passions. And you notice the youthful passions that he lists, they aren't sexual. Later on in verse 24, he tells Timothy, don't be a jerk, Timothy. Young people are usually pretty much jerks. Don't be arrogant, Timothy. Young people normally think they know everything and everyone else knows nothing. Isn't that true? Old people? Come on, get an amen. Young people, they think they know everything. They think they're God's gift to green earth and if they'll just do it the way that I say, then it will be successful, then the church will grow.

I remember having that kind of spirit. When I first stepped into the pastorate, I thought, well, if they'll just turn the keys over to me, I'll make it work, you know. I learned real fast that was not smart. And it was arrogant and prideful and so many young people, especially young ministers, have that youthful passion. And Paul's telling Timothy, flee, flee that arrogance and that debating spirit that you have and that contentiousness that you carry with you because you're the pastor, you have the authority, you're going to confront error. He's going to tell him later on, confront error, but do it with gentleness.

Do it with a Christ-like attitude. So you want to know how you want to pray for your church? You want to pray for your pastor? Don't pray for my skill sets or my speaking abilities. God can take care of that. Pray for holiness. Pray for your young staff for a spirit of humility and a spirit of submission, mutual submission to one another, because those ultimately are the things that matter. In the kingdom of God, those are the things that matter. In the life of your kids, Those are the things that determine your usefulness.

If you will flee those things, flee youthful passions, and pursue righteousness and love and peace, that will guarantee that you are a vessel used in God's kingdom, an honorable vessel. So confront error, keep yourself pure. Then lastly serve the Lord and skip the silliness. Verse 23, "Have nothing to do with foolish"—and the word there is the Greek word mōras. You can imagine where we get our word from for that: moron—"foolish, ignorant controversies." So avoid the moronic, ignorant controversies. Why? "You know that they breed quarrels." The same thing that he said earlier.

Avoid the word fights. Avoid people sucking you in to debate Calvinism and Arminianism, just to give an example. Maybe you hate me now, but he's saying skip the silliness. It's an important thing, but don't spend all of your time on those things. Don't focus on the conspiracy theories. And that's it. Your job is to keep people focused on the gospel, not the latest political headline or theological controversy, the Lord's servant does that. He keeps people focused on what's most important. Skip the silliness and serve the Lord. Verse 24: "And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone"—and everyone includes his enemies, these false teachers.

Be kind to the people who are trying to destroy your church. They've got to be "able to teach," which means you know your stuff well enough that you can use it to teach people the truth and use it to correct error when you see it. But when you do it, you do it with patience. You do it with gentleness. You're enduring evil patiently, which means you're not resentful. I hear so many preachers when they get people who oppose them in their church, it's like the world's over. Poor pitiful me. They have this crybaby pity party on the phone with me, and you wonder, are you enduring evil patiently here?

Or is it an us versus them? Are they the problem? Are the people the problem? Because what Paul would seem to suggest here is people aren't the problem. The real problem is the spirit behind the people. It's the enemy, the devil. It's the forces of evil in this age. He says that explicitly a little bit later. So you enduring evil, "correcting his opponents with gentleness," verse 25. "God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of"—who?—"the devil, after being captured by him to do his will."

This is so instructive. So many times in the church, what happens is you kind of get sucked into this us versus them mentality. And it's true of staff in congregation, it's true of people in the congregation. He's my enemy and I'm the victim. And what Paul is saying here is, no, people aren't the problem. They just fell into the snare of the devil. They're captured by him to do his will. The will of the devil is to kill, steal, and destroy. What the devil wants is to destroy your church. He wants to destroy your ministry.

So, Timothy, here's how you skip out on the schemes of the devil. Here's how you are victorious in what God wants you to do. Correct your opponents gently. Pursue repentance. You know the only way to cure gangrene is to either cut off the limb or do a little angioplasty, which means you connect the veins that were previously severed, restore blood flow. Lead this guy to repentance. God's not willing that any should perish, but that all would come to repentance. So, Timothy, as you're addressing people in the church, address them with a Christ-like spirit.

In every church, there's positives, there's negatives, and there's neutrals. So be thankful for the positives. When it comes to the negatives, address them with gentleness and patience, seeking repentance and restoration, because what you do with the negatives matters to the neutrals. A lot of people in church are just neutral watching what's happening, sometimes being led astray from false teaching, but it's the way that you address false teaching that matters to the neutrals. So be Christ-like in your attitude. Preach the gospel. Pick your battles. Confront error. Keep yourself pure. Get it right.

Give it straight. Serve the Lord. Skip the silliness. To which, if you're a mom and you apply that to your mothering, you probably feel crushed. And as a pastor applying that to pastoral ministry, it feels crushing, to be honest. How can anyone do all those things? And Timothy

probably felt that way, and Paul would have told him, Timothy, you're not alone. No one can do those things, but someone has already done all of those things for you perfectly and will strengthen you by his grace. He has given you his Spirit in your life to equip you to do everything you need to do.

You think about the Lord Jesus Christ. Here he is, the perfect unashamed workman, perfectly preached the truth clearly, powerfully, with authority. He preached the gospel. He picked his battles. He didn't get sucked into every little trap that the Pharisees and the religious leaders of the day gave him. He confronted error, but he did it with gentleness. He did it in a way that sought repentance. He didn't get sucked into petty debates. He's the perfect unashamed workman. He is the most honorable vessel. He is the most obedient servant of the Lord.

He fulfills all of those things in every way and more. And he's done all of those things for you, for me, a pastor, so that in my weakness when I feel unable, I am reminded that it's really not about me. It's not up to me. This is God's church. He's the one taking care of it. And I'll just step in and be strengthened by his grace. Then he'll give me what I need to do what he's called me to do. And moms, the same is true for you. You feel yourself crushed, maybe not by the sermon, but maybe by the responsibilities of motherhood on you weighing you down.

Be reminded Jesus may not have been a female, but he perfectly fulfilled in who he was everything it takes for moms to do what they need to do, and stands ready and able to strengthen you by his grace if you will receive it. And if you're here this morning, you're not a Christian, and maybe you're a mom struggling with guilt and anxiety, then as we close and the band's going to come back up, I want to invite you to come and give your life to Christ and find the grace that is yours in Christ Jesus if you'll repent and put your faith in him.

And then for all of us as a congregation, let me encourage you as you think about how to apply this message. Here are some ways you can pray for your staff, you can pray for your pastor, and here are some things you can do individually to make sure that our church is successful in the days ahead moving forward in the mission and the vision that God has given us. It is so crazy. On Monday morning when we had our staff meeting, we did a little bit of training on our skill sets and competencies, but we spent the rest of our time praying for humility and a spirit of mutual submission.

And I didn't know that I was going to preach on this. I didn't see the connection then, but I think the reason the Lord would call us to that and the reason I would ask you all as a congregation to pray for those kinds of things is because at the end of the day that's what matters most for us to achieve our mission and our vision. Usefulness in God's kingdom isn't determined by skillfulness, but by cleanliness. And so would you pray for your church in that way? Pray for yourself in that way.