

KEEP YOUR HEAD TO KEEP YOUR CROWN

Many will lose their heads and their crowns;
But you keep your heads and crown with sound doctrine.

2 Timothy 4:1-8

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

Text: 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 when men 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 their 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. For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day-and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

Paul was in the last days and weeks of his life. Any moment, a Roman guard would escort him out to an open field in the country to honor him with a Roman citizen's death. He would be beheaded with the sword. Paul enjoyed the rare status of a Jew who also was a Roman citizen. Death by crucifixion was illegal for Roman citizens, so Paul would be beheaded.

And Paul was ready: *I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day-and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.* Paul would lose his head, literally, but he would keep his crown, *the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day-and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

Paul's time had come. But his concern was not his death. His concern was for the deaths of so many who would "lose their heads" in a spiritual sense and not keep the faith that saves us for eternity. His concern also was for Timothy, a young pastor who was charged to "keep his head and crown" with sound Law and Gospel preaching and teaching.

With Paul's departure imminent, he used what time he had left to write words of encouragement to the young pastor named Timothy. But Paul's words were not spent on the time of his departure but were urgent warnings to Timothy of another time what was coming soon: *... the time will come when men 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 their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.* That time was soon coming for the early Christian Church. It did indeed come. And that time is now here for our generation as well!

There was a time, not long ago in my generation when what was called vice and sinful behavior is now considered and taught to be virtuous and enlightened behavior.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul writes about the times when people will not tolerate sound doctrine: *... although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, ... since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death,*

they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

Romans 1

We can talk all day about the cesspool of sin in which this world swims in these last times but let us speak about the concern Paul has that leads to this. Let us talk about **the false teachers** who teach what sinful people want to hear. For it is the nature of our sinful hearts to find our comfort in gathering around those whose morality is of the sinful world and from God's Commandments.

Listen again to what Paul warns in his letter to the young pastor Timothy" ... **the time ... when men 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 their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.**

False teaching, is the ancient tool Satan used in the Garden of Eden when Satan said to our mother Eve:

"Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" Ge 3 When Mother Eve changed God's Word from "**Do not eat...**" to **We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it...** When she ADDED HER OWN WORDS TO GOD'S COMMAND: THE WORD "DON'T TOUCH IT" Satan knew he had her!

God's Word was not enough for Eve and at that moment Satan taught her something new: **"You will not surely die,...For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."** Satan's template of questioning God's Word worked well back then, and Satan's army still uses it today.

An alarming example of Satan's latest tactic among believers today was recently brought to my attention. It is a cultish ideology that Satan has strategically inserted into the minds and hearts of many young and middle-aged adults. Look it up! It's called: No Contact.

In a tiny nutshell, "No Contact" teaches that anyone who makes you feel the guilt and shame that fills the heart when living contrary to God's Law, they should be considered TOXIC, and that for your own emotional peace and well-being, you should have ABSOLUTELY NO CONTACT with them. Anyone who makes you feel guilty with their teachings and beliefs must be out of your life. For your own emotional health employ NO contact, no phone calls, no visits, no texting, no phone, nada, nothing.

Their expert teachers are humanistic teachers, irreligious counselors, and psychologists. What cannot be tolerated is what Jesus teaches about addressing sinful behavior as he does in Matthew 18: **"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you...** For example: If your parents tell you that living with someone outside of God's institution of marriage is a sin, for your own self-interest and wellbeing you should consider them as TOXIC and have NO CONTACT with them. No Contact teachers teach you to listen to Satan's words: **Did God really say???** And then teach you that you have the moral right to pursue your own personal feelings and emotional wellbeing.

This is the most recent deceit of Satan upon this generation. NO CONTACT... Look it up! Google it! You will find prayers on Facebook posted by of middle-aged Christian children who have fallen to this and are thanking Jesus for helping them cut off any contact with their parents, grandparents, or even pastors who have made them feel guilty about their sins.

So Paul urgently tells Timothy: **But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.** Keep your head and the Holy Spirit will keep on your head your crown of salvation, both for you and for all who hear and believe what you teach and preach.

And pastors, this is how it's done: Timothy, **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.** Paul doesn't say: "Learn and employ the latest wisdom and teachings of man's greatest teachers, psychologists, and philosophers.... NO! **Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction.**

Preach God's Law with power and accuracy. Preach the Law so that God's Holy Spirit cuts to the hearts of all who hear it and with contrite hearts cry out: ***what must I do to be saved?*** Ac 16.

Preach the Law, so that your listeners are like the man in Jesus' parable who ***would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'*** Lu 18

Then, immediately preach the Gospel with all its unconditional promises of God. Preach and teach God's Law so that when your contrite sinner stands before you, you immediately declare what God has done with his sins. He has taken them away!

I am always impressed by how quickly King David's pastor Nathan assured David that his sins were forgiven. David's sins were grievous sins. Nathan pulled no punches when he brought up to David the sins of his adultery and murder. When God's Law struck the conscience of David the Bible says: ***Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."*** And immediately Nathan declared, ***"The LORD has taken away your sin."*** 2 Sam 12

And to this day, we stand together in this congregation and confess: **Holy God... I am sinful by nature and have sinned against you in my thoughts, words, and actions... I deserve your punishment both now and forever... God, have mercy on me, a sinner.** And immediately the pastor turns to us and declares: **Our gracious Father in heaven has been merciful to us. He sent his only Son, Jesus Christ who gave his life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. ... And as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins...** For the sake of our salvation, let us keep our heads and let us always listen, hear and believe this saving Word of God!

And so, Paul's last words to Timothy and to the pastors who stand in our pulpits to this day: ***Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction.*** Keep your head, Timothy ***in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*** And you, members of Grace congregation, KEEP YOUR HEADS! That is, come and hear God's Word that is preached and proclaimed by your pastors and teachers! Don't look for anything else, for it is the Gospel and Word and Sacrament that is the ONLY means by which the Holy Spirit comes to the minds and hearts of those who are being saved!

Bring your children to Jesus through the power of Holy Baptism. Enroll them in schools where the work of the Holy Spirit is not hindered by false teachers who invent new ideas that please the world's educators and psychologists but run contrary to the Bible's History and Doctrine.

Do not fall to Satan's newest ideas like NO CONTACT psychology. Instead gather together regularly with those who are members of the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints, to receive the power of God's grace through the eating and drinking of his body and blood in Jesus' Holy Communion, and the Holy Spirit will keep you in the one true saving faith in Jesus our Lord and Savior until that great moment when you will close your eyes in death, only to open them to the glorious sight of Jesus bestowing upon your head YOUR CROWN, ***the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to you on that day- and not only to you, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*** Amen

Pastor Dan Garbow