

Unmasking and Unmoved

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[0 : 00] But we're going to turn now to our Bibles this morning, and we're reading together in the New Testament in Paul's second letter to Timothy that Josh Johnson has been preaching through. If you don't have a Bible, you may have some visitors' Bibles at the sides. Duncan's hovering around there with Bibles in his hands, so stick your hand up and he'll be glad to give you one.

And we're going to be reading together in 2 Timothy chapter 3, and I think that's page 996 on those visitors' Bibles. 2 Timothy and chapter 3.

But understand this, says the Apostle, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents. Ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit.

Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. Having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

[1 : 28] For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions. Always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.

Just as Janus and Jambres oppose Moses, so these men also oppose the truth. Men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith.

But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men. You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra.

Which persecutions I endured. Yet from them all, the Lord has rescued me. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

While evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed.

[2 : 57] Knowing from whom you learned it. And how from childhood you've been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

All scripture is breathed out by God. And profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

That the man of God may be competent and equipped for every good work. Amen. And may God bless to us this His Word.

Amen. Into 2 Timothy chapter 3. And as you do, so I wonder how many of us have heard of Guy Goma.

In 2006, he turned up at the BBC for a job interview. He sat in reception and then got called through for the interview. He said yes.

[4 : 01] He followed along. And only when he was seated under the studio lights did he realize what had happened. They brought in the wrong guy. He was introduced live on air as a technology expert.

And his eyes widen as he realizes he's in the wrong place. With the wrong surname. Answering the wrong questions. It's really rather funny to watch. I'd recommend it.

You can look it up. It's funny when it's a TV blunder. But it gets to the heart of our passage.

Mistaken identity can be disastrous.

And in the church, especially in ministry, it's possible for something to look the part, to sound the part, and even to carry the right title, and yet be something altogether different.

And the consequences are far, far worse than embarrassment. We've been seeing that the setting for this whole letter is normal gospel work. Ministry under pressure, and yet unashamed.

[5 : 07] Paul is preparing Timothy and the church for the post-apostolic age. The apostles will pass. Paul himself is soon to die. But the apostolic gospel must and will continue to rule Christ's church.

And so, Timothy, trusting in God's power and looking forward to God's promised life, must guard the good deposit. Which means entrusting it to faithful men from generation to generation.

Embracing the Christ-shaped pattern where suffering serves salvation. And committing himself to rightly handling God's word in ways that produces righteousness and not rivalry.

But now, Paul says there's a further challenge. Do you see he moves from chapter 2 straight into chapter 3, verse 1. He's been urging Timothy to correct opponents with gentleness in hope of repentance.

And then, verse 1, But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. And the difficulty comes from the reality that there will always be competing ministries.

[6 : 16] Ministries. Ministries that claim the name of Christ and yet oppose him. A significant chunk of the New Testament is taken up with recognizing and defending true ministry over and against false ministry.

Paul is totally straightforward here. Not everything that calls itself Christian is legitimate. Not everyone who calls himself a preacher is a true preacher.

And in fact, the most dangerous ones aren't the blatant charlatans. The truly dangerous ones hide in plain sight. And so Paul goes on to spell out, in the rest of verses 1 to 9, what sinister ministry looks like.

Verses 1 to 9, sinister ministry. God's church always faces threats from imposters. Often well-concealed imposters. And God's servants then need to be prepared for the fact that not everything is as it seems.

Real ministry must be able to unmask rug ministry. Just listen to some of the ways that the New Testament speaks about this common threat. Matthew says, Many false prophets and false Christs will arise and lead many astray.

[7 : 35] John in his letters says, Many antichrists have come. And that many false prophets and many deceivers have gone out into the world. Peter says, There will be false teachers among you.

And Acts says, In the context of this very church in Ephesus, Fierce wolves will come in among you. And what's more, Acts says, Such men will arise from among your own selves.

And that's the real significance of the problem. It's not only out there, It can be right here. And it can arise from within. Listen again to Matthew.

He says, They come to you in sheep's clothing, But inwardly are ravenous wolves. Matthew also warns, Many will come in my name, Saying, I am the Christ.

And they will lead many astray. Mark says, Such deception can even be marked by signs and wonders to lead astray. Colossians speaks of delusion that comes from plausible arguments.

[8 : 37] Romans tells us, By smooth talk and flattery, They deceive the hearts of the naive. And then 2 Corinthians. Speaks of false prophets, Deceitful workmen, Disguising themselves as apostles of Christ, Adding that even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

And so it's no surprise, His servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Do you see the consistent picture of the New Testament? False ministry will come, And it is dangerous.

Its desire is to deceive and to devour. And it's typically carried out by imposters. By people who wear a disguise. People who, by appearance, Look like any other Christian.

Sometimes even dressed for the part. And that's exactly what we see here in these verses. Notice the hue of Paul's language. Verse 6. It's a ministry that creeps.

And it's a ministry, Again, verse 6, That captures The praise and the vulnerable. Verse 13. Notice what he calls them. Imposters.

[9 : 48] Imposters. It's all very good for us to use stark words about a dangerous ministry. But Paul is wanting to help Timothy, and so us, Be crystal clear on how to unmask such a thing.

Because the whole point here is that it won't be obvious at first glance. And as Paul prepares Timothy and the church for ministry in the post-apostolic age, It is vital that any true church is able to spot, And when necessary, Separate from Predatory ministers and ministries.

Verses 1 to 9 Are a little bit like the end of every episode of Scooby-Doo. Scooby and his comrades are brought in to solve a mystery. They contend with some frightening villain.

And then there's that moment at the very end Where the villain is unmasked. And below the mask Is a plain old character They've already encountered Not nearly as terrifying as they thought.

Except that here, Paul's unmasking is the opposite. He's pulling off the mask of those Who look rather regular, Your average gospel worker, Your average Christian in many ways.

[11 : 03] But this unmasking reveals that Underneath the mask is something far more hazardous. And unsurprisingly, What is revealed underneath Is the ugliness of character That comes from resisting and refusing The power of God to transform To make one more and more Into the likeness of Jesus.

Paul vividly depicts the ugliness Of what is going on Underneath the veneer, Underneath the sheep's clothing. Do you see verse 5? Paul says, In this era, There will be those who Have the appearance Of godliness But deny its power.

And that perhaps doesn't quite shock us Until we realize That that's the final descriptor Paul uses In the list that begins in verse 2. Do you see? He says, There will come times of difficulty For people will be lovers of self, Lovers of money, Proud, arrogant, Abusive, Disobedient to their parents, Ungrateful, Unholy, Heartless, Unappeasable, Slandorous, Without self-control, Brutal, Not loving good, Treacherous, Reckless, Swollen with conceit, Lovers of pleasure Rather than lovers of God, Having the appearance of godliness?

You might think, Wait, what? How can this list possibly end With the appearance of godliness? But when we think about it, Isn't it common for those who Claim to belong to God To be interested in mere externals?

Isn't that the characteristic picture Of the Pharisees in the Gospels? Those who pay lip service to Jesus? Those who are whitewashed tombs? And actually it is very possible indeed To have a shining, smiling face, To be regularly at church, To be involved in ministry even, Having all the appearances Of loving and serving Jesus, And yet underneath, Or behind closed doors, There's deep-rooted selfishness, A desire for gain, A pride that kicks against anything That might undermine us, An arrogance that betrays The sense that we don't really need God, We've got it all, And that's a prayerlessness.

[13 : 22] Friends, this is why Paul said At the end of chapter 2 That Timothy And the faithful men Entrusted with the Gospel Are to flee youthful passions And pursue righteousness.

Not to be given to foolish controversies, But to focus on faithful Bible teaching That actually produces The fruit of godly character. There is nothing quite so dangerous As when people are engrossed in ministry, But bubbling away underneath the surface Is a heart, A character, That's skewed,!

And bent out of shape. Look again at what Paul spells out In verses 2 to 4. For a start, He brackets and permeates The whole list With misplaced love.

You see, It begins in verse 2, Lovers of self, Lovers of money. And in the middle, In verse 3, He says they are not Loving good.

And then it finishes in verse 4 With lovers of pleasure Rather than lovers of God. It's possible to play at ministry, To play at serving Jesus And belonging to Him, Whilst having our lives Shaped towards all manner of loves That simply cannot mesh with Jesus.

[14 : 41] Think of the illustrations In chapter 2, The soldier, The athlete, The farmer, The single-mindedness required A concern To please the one Who enlisted them.

To aim at a crown That lies in the future. The plodding graft That is required To reap the harvest. Well, All of that Cuts straight against Loving self.

And it cuts straight against Loving money, Doesn't it? The scriptures do not make Money an enemy. Money can be a great servant Of gospel work. But the scriptures do call The love of money A big problem indeed.

In fact, In 1 Timothy, We read the love of money Is the root of all kinds of evils. And so when we pursue wealth, When we fall in love with it, When we fall in love with ourselves, It leads only to one place.

Verse 4, Loving pleasure More than God. And that can never Please the one Who enlisted us. Indeed, The one who made us.

[15 : 52] But look at other aspects Of this list. Pride, Arrogance, Abusiveness. Well, They're all bound up, Aren't they? They are the very things That fuel foolish quarrels.

They're the things That can create Little theological cabals. Circles that sit around Congratulating themselves For how wonderfully sound They are. While firing shots At everyone else Who doesn't have Their credentials.

And you'd be surprised How common that can be. Of course, It will never be billed As that. It will have The appearance of godliness. It will be billed As real bible study.

Serious bible study. Not weak watery stuff. We'll spend hours Plumbing the depths. We'll get into The original languages. And yet, How often can such pride Descend into slander And treachery? How often can it Become a forum For griping And complaining? Often about why Such gifted men As us Don't have more Of a platform In church life. That is Utterly destructive.

[16:57] That is sinister Ministry. And so what is Paul's prescription? Well, verse 5 Avoid Such people.

Avoid such people. We don't normally like That sort of prescription, Do we? Sounds a bit hard, A bit harsh. And there ought to be A reluctance To do such a thing.

There's a healthiness To being slow To separate. It. After all, Chapter 2 Has just told Timothy to correct Opponents with gentleness In the hope That God May grant repentance. But when a ministry Becomes sinister When it's entrenched And predatory And spiritually poisonous Paul says, Paul says avoid it.

Separate from it. Remove it. Well, why such a strong response? Paul gives three reasons. The first, Sinister ministries Pray on the vulnerable.

Verse 6 Sinister ministries Pray on the vulnerable. They creep into households And capture. Now, in Ephesus It seems to be women In particular Being preyed upon.

[18:08] And in 1 Timothy We are pointed To issues With certain women So it could be linked to that. But don't miss the point here. The issue is not that Some of the women are weak Or women are weak.

The point is that Imposters Target The vulnerable. The burdened. The isolated. The impressionable. Those easiest to win And then to weaponize.

And that is very often How people gain platforms Who really shouldn't Have platforms. They gather around them The impressionable. They're kind to folks Who are vulnerable.

Pruned to being easily led Or misled. I have a friend Who, When he was preaching This very passage Was having to deal With a faction In his church Seeking to undermine And divide the church.

And one of the rogue elders Who was behind all this Was literally Going around Visiting older women In the church And bringing them chocolates. Well Paul labels That sort of behavior As creeping into households And capturing the weak.

[19:14] So be very wary Of those who come To show kindness Out of the blue kindness While having a very clear agenda To win you To their ministry And away from a ministry Marked clearly by the truth.

That's the first reason. The second Sinister ministry Promises much But keeps you needing more Verses 6 and 7 These women Have consciences That are burdened Full of guilt and shame And they're entangled With various desires And what does this Sinister ministry do For such people? Verse 7 It always has something To teach them But it leaves them Always learning But never able to arrive At a knowledge of the truth That's the hallmark Of cults Isn't it?

You always need more The answer to what you lack Is to progress further To unlock the next level Take the next step Usually by staying Close to them But it can also be seen In any ministry That subtly makes people Dependent upon a minister Or another Christian So that spiritual life Seems to require Close connection To that person Just keep coming back For more Well if a ministry Obscures the truth And keeps it just Out of your grasp If it readily tells you What you lack And the answer To that lack Is anything other Than the fullness That is freely available In Jesus Then it's sinister It would be like a doctor Prescribing every Possible medicine Prescription after prescription Of anything And everything But never giving The one medicine That actually heals And then thirdly Verse 8 Sinister ministries

Can look similar To genuine ministries But they're actually In total opposition Verse 8 Janus and Jambres These names refer To Pharaoh's court Magicians When Moses and Aaron Come before Pharaoh And perform the sign To show that Yahweh Has sent them When Aaron's staff Is turned into a serpent These magicians Are summoned And they're able To do something Very similar And so Paul's point Is that sinister ministry Can look just like The genuine one It can do similar things In

Egypt Staffs can be turned To serpents In Ephesus Preaching to people And it can look Spiritual And yet At the same time It is fundamentally Opposed To God's servants Opposed According to Paul To Moses then Opposed To Timothy now And opposed

[22 : 02] To God's appointed Servants today Paul says Avoid Sinister ministries Root them out Remove them But in the midst Of all of this In the midst Of all this difficulty He also gives A reassurance In verse 9 Do you see that?

In the end Sinister ministry Will not get Very far It will out In the end It will be revealed You see We've been seeing That God is faithful Even when there's Great unfaithfulness His word is not bound The gates of hell Will not prevail Against his church And even the Exodus picture Is reassuring Because Aaron's serpent Swallowed up All the other serpents And so we need To be realistic About this It's not going To be uncommon In the post-apostolic Age for there To be sinister Ministries close by Seeking to creep And capture And dupe And delude And I don't think Paul tells us This to make us Dubious about Everybody out there Or even dubious About people in here But rather To prepare us For reality So that we can Be sure-footed In our own church And our own ministry Whilst at the same time Knowing that the truth Will out in the end

Well what does that Look like for us? How can we Preserve our own ministry And be rightly discerning? Well here's the tonic For and the defense Against such a thing Real power And real fruit It comes back Again and again To character To fruit To power Look again at verse 5 Sinister ministries Have the appearance Of godliness But deny Its power Turn back to chapter 1 Chapter 1 verse 7 God has not Given us A spirit Of fear So that we Don't fall away Or become ashamed But he has given us His spirit His spirit Comes with Power Power that produces Love And self-control Power that enables us To put up With all kinds Of suffering Do you see The tonic

The defense The preparation Against sinister ministry Is the same thing That fuels and enables True ministry God's power At work in his people Through the gospel His spirit Strengthening us By the grace That is in Christ Jesus So that verse 2 Our love Is not misplaced So that verse 3 We have A self-control That reigns In the impulses That lead to Brutal and reckless Behavior And so that we Are prepared To endure Suffering To share in it As good soldiers Because our primary Love is not Pleasure But verse 4 Love for the Lord The one who enlists His people Into his service And that is So important For us We all have A stake In gospel work Serving God Was the very purpose We were created For and it's The very thing We're redeemed To do And the thing That will preserve Our service Our ministry The thing that will

Mean it is not Derailed or dangerous Is that we avail Ourselves of the Power of God And allow it To form us More and more Into the likeness Of Christ In a world Where we are Inundated With all that's New and shiny Where stimulation Hits us from Every angle That can cause Us to grow weary Of the things That are slow And steady And the reality Is that godliness Is not formed Overnight But By God's power It is formed And there's Nothing more Important for us For our church And for the church That will be around For our children And our grandchildren Than that our ministry Is marked by godliness And so friends The power of god At work in us And the evidence Of that power At work in those Who minister to us And among us That is the protection And the tonic For sinister ministry [26 : 20] But paul also Goes on then To spell out The contrast You see He not only marks He not only Unmasks sinister ministry He also lays Before us In great simplicity What genuine ministry Looks like And that's what we see In verses 10 to 17 We see saving ministry Saving ministry Real ministry Ministry that Bears real fruit Is committed To the scriptures At all costs Real ministry Remains unmoved From Paul's gospel From Paul's grief And from Paul's godliness Verses 1 to 9 Are the false pattern Of ministry Now verses 10 to 17 Are the true pattern And once again In the post-apostolic age It's imperative That the church Sticks with Paul And the other apostles Because sticking With the apostles Is how we stick With Jesus And look at how much Paul features In these verses Verse 10 You however

In contrast To the false pattern You have followed My teaching My conduct My aim in life My faith My patience My love My steadfastness My persecutions And sufferings That happened to me At Antioch At Acunium And Lystra Do you see that?

My, my, my, my, my, my, my, my, my, my Paul's way Is the only true way Because Paul Is an apostle Of Jesus Christ And because Paul's way Is patterned After Jesus himself And so notice What is characteristic Of Paul's way His manner His misery His message Paul's manner Then firstly Verse 10 He says You have followed My conduct My faith My patience My love We've just been Seeing sinister Ministers Devoid of godly Character But not so With Paul Paul isn't Asking Timothy

To commit to something that Paul himself isn't doing Timothy knows of Paul's patience so when Paul says in chapter 2 verse 24 that the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone able to teach patiently enduring evil Timothy knows what that looks like he's followed Paul's teaching and he's seen Paul's patience and when Paul in chapter 2 verse 4 spoke of the single mindedness of the soldier who longs to please the one who enlisted him Timothy knows that this is true of Paul because Timothy has followed Paul's aim in life and when Paul speaks of the power of God granted through God's spirit power that enables suffering power that produces love and self-control Timothy knows that too because he has followed Paul's love and as we'll see his sufferings Paul is consistent he's an open book he is not a hypocrite saving ministry does not play pretend it does not put before people something that is out of reach or fanciful it points people to the gospel that is already evidently at work first in the messenger and then in the hearers where verse 7 describes sinister ministry as endless learning with no arrival at the truth saving ministry is marked by living evidence that the truth is already at work in the gospel servant not perfectly in this age but really at work Paul says you followed my conduct then secondly Paul's misery verses verse 11 gives added weight you followed my persecutions and sufferings and in many ways this is the crowning aspect of Paul's manner his pattern he's prepared to endure all manner of suffering so that the elect might have tea and salvation and in verse 11 Paul points Timothy to particular episodes moments that Timothy would certainly have known about moments that had happened in Timothy's own region Timothy is

[30 : 40] From Lystra and so as he mentions these three places Antioch Iconium and Lystra they would all speak to Timothy in Acts chapter 13 at Antioch the Jews incited people leading people to stir up persecution Paul was driven out of the district in Acts 14 at Iconium opposition rises and there's an attempt to mistreat and to stone Paul and his band and again in Acts 14 at Lystra crowds from Antioch and Iconium turn up to turn the people against Paul Paul is stoned left for dead he can roll off our tongues suffering but picture it Paul was chased out of time stoned had rocks pelted at him left for dead and that

is one of the defining aspects of faithful ministry it cannot avoid suffering in fact to consciously avoid suffering by softening the edges of the truth by chasing applause and acclaim and acceptance that is the certain road towards abandoning real ministry that is part of what is so scandalous about the false teaching in chapter 2 verse 18 where it said that the resurrection has already happened it's pulling the future into the present and quietly removing the impetus to endure hard suffering now and such suffering is the antithesis of sinister ministry do you see?

verse 2 they were lovers of self verse 4 lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God so why would they suffer well they wouldn't that is a telltale sign to look for if everything about a ministry has the look of success and acclaim is that because there's an unwillingness to count the cost if a church or a minister has never had any mud thrown at them for their ministry if they've never had to make costly decisions never been dragged through the papers never had to take costly stands well that does beg a question doesn't it why is that the case Paul's pattern says ministry will be marked by grief and trials verse 12 he says indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted and to go in search of that do we a

faithful ministry that really does stick to the apostles gospel will bring with it hatred from a world that hates Christ Jesus makes that clear too doesn't he he said a servant is not greater than his master if they persecuted me they will also persecute you is it a costly thing in our nation our workplaces and our friendships to speak for Jesus is it costly to refuse to be ashamed of him to hold to the Bible's ethics even during pride month and all the other progressive pushes is it costly to exalt the exclusivity of Christ to insist on the pervasiveness of sin to speak plainly about judgment to contend for the vulnerable to refuse to lie when lies are demanded is it costly to spend time on Buchanan Street unmasking the reality of what abortion is these things can be very costly they may even become even more costly look again verse 12 all who desire to live a godly life will be persecuted all will be and persecution in Britain hasn't been on anything like the level our brothers and sisters around the world face but what way do you think things are going Paul is preparing us normal gospel work in the post apostolic age means pressure and often

Persecution He He Is Saying Be Ready For It But Do Not Refuse It And He Says To Us If We Have Faced It That's A Good Sign Because

[35 : 29] We're Walking Paul's Steps After Him As He Walked Jesus Steps After Him Suffering And Persecution! Is The Pattern That Is Bound Up With Saving Ministry Ministry That Will Never No Never Not Ever Be Ashamed Of The Gospel And That Is Vital To Keep In Mind Because It Isn't Aimless Or Pointless Suffering Paul Has Already Said I Endure Everything Why?

For The Sake Of The Elect That They May Also Obtain Salvation And So That Leads On To Paul's Message Verses 14 To 17 The Cost Is All About Holding On To And Holding Out The Biblical Gospel The Only Gospel That Can Grant That Salvation The Only Gospel That Opens Up The Promise Of Life The Life And Immortality That Has Been Brought To Light In The Gospel Through Jesus Who Has Abolished Death We Were Hearing At The Prayer Meeting On Wednesday Evening About Willie's Time With Some Of Our Ministry Partners And A Part Of The World Where Persecution Is Real And Severe At That Gathering Numerous Men Were Being Honored For Enduring Persecution Some Some!

Some! Some! Some! some! and that they will preach the word in season and out of season. Brothers and sisters, that is what Paul is telling us is required for ministry in these last days. Because that's what's in keeping with the apostles and with Jesus. Paul's pattern is a commitment to the scriptures at all costs.

Because do you know, the only thing in this world that can change the eternities of the people you love are the sacred writings, verse 15.

[37 : 47] Which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. The scriptures are, verse 16, breathed out by God and therefore profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and training in righteousness.

And the scriptures, verse 17, give any gospel worker, any gospel servant, the weapon, the tool which alone equips us for our warfare, for our service. Do you see, the scriptures are the God-given instrument for gospel work, breathed out by him, spirit-given, endued with his power.

And it is these scriptures alone that are able to equip us for our service. All of the teaching and reproving and training in righteousness, verse 16, is forming the gospel servants to verse 17, be complete and equipped.

The scriptures form us for gospel work and service and the scriptures are what God uses to yield fruit from gospel work and service. All kinds of other things are on offer in this world.

Education, medicine, community, money, alternative spiritualities that may promise to deal with the great needs that we have and that this world has. But they will never lead us to a knowledge of the truth.

[39 : 06] They are not able to make us wise for salvation through Jesus Christ. But there is something that can. And it isn't something that's newfangled. It's the old, old story.

The sacred writings. Chapter 1, verse 5. The gospel that Timothy learned from childhood through Lois and Eunice. The gospel that many of us have been blessed to have been taught by our parents.

What a precious ministry it is to raise children in the gospel. Whereas sinister ministry abandons such things. Verse 2 is disobedience to parents.

It's the old, old story. Chapter 1, verse 3. It's the same gospel that led Paul's ancestors to serve God. It's the same gospel that stretches further back still.

Chapter 2, verse 8. To David and his offspring. The same gospel that has existed from the very beginning that has promised life even from the garden and made a way for that life to be tasted.

[40 : 13] We sang earlier in the service. With the sword that makes the wounded whole, we will fight with faith and valor. That's the scriptures. The biblical gospel.

It really is the weapon of the ministry that saves. It's the sword that makes the wounded whole. And so Paul says to us, will we take these Bibles that we have and commit to never being ashamed of them?

Will we refuse to let the desertion and the duffing up and the detention and even the death that this world will throw at us, will we refuse to let these become cause, to let go of or to silence the words that are able to make people wise for salvation?

Saving ministry doesn't shirk that cost. Sinister ministry does. And it leaves people unable to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.

But saving ministry is committed to the scriptures at all costs. Because they are indeed the sword that makes the wounded whole.

[41 : 28] And so Paul says to us, as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, grant us your help. Strengthen us by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. That with the promise of life before us and the power of God within us, we might indeed press on, continue, in costly service of you.

And so help us as a church to have as our mantra and as our ministry the scriptures at all costs.

For we long to see those we love made wise for salvation. And how we need your help for this. And so we ask that you grant it in Jesus' name.

Amen.