

Faithful Minister In Perilous Times

1 Timothy 4:1-16

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God calls His people to remain faithful to sound doctrine, personal godliness, and spiritual growth in the midst of increasing deception and apostasy. The apostle Paul wrote to his young protege Timothy, who was serving the church in Ephesus. Ephesians 4 contains Paul's warning about false teacher's instruction concerning holiness and effective ministry. Today we live in a world filled with confusion and competing voices. Paul's message remains remarkably relevant: stay grounded in God's Word, pursue godliness, and faithfully serve Christ.

Last week Richard explained the difficulty Jesus had getting through to Nicodemus to understand the difference between the spiritual and physical uses of the term "born again" or "born from above." This sermon, discussing 1 Timothy 4:16 from an article "Argument over Words" By Richard T. Ritenbaugh, appeared in the *CGG Weekly*, August 16, 2024. He said, "Paul warns Timothy about teachers who are "proud, knowing nothing, but [are] obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wrangling of men of corrupt minds and destitute of truth . . ." ([1 Timothy 6:4-5](#)). "Arguments over words" can get a teacher into great trouble and actually lead him away from the doctrine of [Jesus Christ](#). So, Herbert Armstrong cautioned the church in days past not to hang a doctrine on the definition of a Greek or Hebrew word but rather let the preponderance of Scripture, particularly the clear verses, define the correct, godly meaning.

Richard continued, "I once received an admonitory email about the church's use of the word "Bible" of all things! Believe it or not!" And these days, people seem to believe just about anything. Some in the Christian world are teaching that "Bible" is a word of pagan origin and thus should not be uttered by God-fearing individuals. The argument runs that "Bible" originates in the name of a pagan [god](#) or goddess, and the evil "they," nudged along by [Satan](#) himself, have managed to convince the whole world to use this awful word

to name God's own Book. Would that these people had cared to crack open any respected etymological dictionary for the truth!

Continuing, Richard says,

The word "Bible" is not of pagan origin. "Bible" derives from *byblos*, the Greek name of the Phoenician city, Gebal. The Greeks called this city *Byblos* due to its importance in the *bublos* (Egyptian papyrus) trade. Because they were made of papyrus, books were called *biblia* by the Greeks, and from a Christian point of view, the greatest collection of Greek writings is what we call the Bible. We regularly receive similar emails on the words "Jesus" and "God." These common words for the Ones we know as the Son and the Father, respectively, are condemned as "pagan" (the critics' favorite word). The former is often said to be descended from the name of the supreme Greek god Zeus, while the latter has purportedly been discovered to come from the name of a Teutonic god, Got or Gott.

I like many things about the Hebrew Roots movement, but their attitude about the words derived from their understanding I do not approve of. I recall a Hebrew Roots movement down in Texas where one lady said we should not ever use the word "Jesus" because we were using a Latinized transliteration Greek *iesos* which can derive from Zeus. In his sermon, Richard said, "That Jesus can in any way derive from 'Zeus' is ludicrous on its face!" "Jesus" is, in fact, a Latinized spelling of the Greek *Iesous*, which is itself a transliteration of the Hebrew *Yahshua* or *Joshua*, "Yah saves" or "Savior."

I Timothy 4:14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.

Many believers know they have been called by God, yet over time spiritual gifts can become dormant through fear, distraction, discouragement, busyness, or lack of faithfulness. In this passage, the apostle Paul exhorts Timothy not to neglect the spiritual gift God had entrusted to him. The same warning and encouragement applies to Christians today.

God does not give gifts merely for personal enjoyment but for the edification of the church and the advancement of His Kingdom.

God has given every believer a gift. You recall my last message I gave to you back in April 2026, referring to Romans 12:6-8 and I Corinthians 12:8. I led many of you to find your gift. In I Peter 4, verse 10 we read:

I Peter 4:10 (KJV) As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

In Ephesians 4, verses 4-12 we learn that Christ give gifts to His church.

Ephesians 4:4-12 (KJV) There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

Every believer has indeed received grace, abilities, opportunities, and spiritual gifts from Almighty God. No Christian is giftless. A church member may feel insignificant because they do not preach, yet God may have gifted them with mercy, encouragement, hospitality, or service that profoundly impacts others. We need to ask ourselves, “What gift has God given to me? Am I using it for His glory?”

Gifts can be neglected. Do not neglect the gift.

I Timothy 4:14 . . . which was given you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.

The Greek word implies carelessness, disregard, or failing to cultivate something valuable.

The Hebrew word for "neglect" depends on whether you mean it as a noun or a verb.

- Neglect (noun): (*haznakhah*)—neglect, negligence, abandonment of care.
- To neglect (verb): (*lehaznia*)—to neglect, to fail to care for.

Examples:

- "The building suffered from neglect."
- "They neglected their responsibilities." .

And not the house of our God forsaken

One notable example in Matthew 25:14-30, the Parable of the Talents.

Matthew 25:14-30 (KJV) For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents,

saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

In Hebrews 2:3-4 we read, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by those who heard Him.”

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but I have against you, that the love of you first, you did leave.

In Revelation 2:4-5 (KJV), we learn that Ephesus had neglected its first love, “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” Signs of neglect include worldly distraction, spiritual complacency, lack of prayer, fear of failure,

discouragement from criticism, and busyness with lesser priorities. Jonah attempted to run from Almighty God's calling and neglected his prophetic responsibility until God corrected him. We need to identify areas where our God-given abilities have become dormant.

God often confirms His calling through others.

Acts 13:1-3 (AMP) Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets [who spoke a new message of God to the people] and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod [Antipas] the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were serving the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul (Paul) for the work to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them [in approval and dedication] and sent them away [on their first journey].

In Acts 6:6 we read, (AMP) "They brought these men before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them [to dedicate and commission them for this service]." Paul warned Timothy about the need to stir up the gift of the Holy Spirit. We read in II Timothy 1:6, (AMP) "That is why I remind you to fan into flame the gracious gift of God [that inner fire—the special endowment], which is in you through the laying on of my hands [with those of the elders at your ordination]."

II Timothy 1:6 says, "For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which dwells in you through the laying on of my hands."

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Numbers 27:18-23 (AMP) The Lord said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; and have him stand before Eleazar the priest and before the whole congregation, and give him a commission in their sight. You shall put some of your authority *and* honor on him, so that all the congregation of the Israelites will obey him. He shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire before the Lord for him by the judgment (decision) of the Urim. At Joshua’s command the people shall go out and at his command they shall come in, he and all the congregation of Israel with him.” Moses did as the Lord commanded him. He took Joshua and had him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation, and Moses laid his hands on Joshua and commissioned him, just as the Lord had commanded through Moses.

While gifts come from God, He often confirms and recognizes them through mature spiritual leaders. The laying on of hands represents recognition, commissioning, blessing, identification with God's work. Pastors and church leaders may recognize teaching, leadership, evangelistic, or pastoral gifts before the individual fully recognizes them. We should receive godly counsel from mature believers who can help discern and affirm God's calling.

Our gifts must be developed.

II Timothy 1:6 (AMP) That is why I remind you to fan into flame the gracious gift of God, [that inner fire—the special endowment] which is in you through the laying on of my hands [with those of the elders at your ordination].

Proverbs 22:29 (AMP) Do you see a man skillful *and* experienced in his work? He will stand [in honor] before kings; He will not stand before obscure men.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 (AMP) Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or

knowledge or wisdom in Sheol (the nether world, the place of the dead) where you are going.

Colossians 3:23 (AMP) Whatever you do [whatever your task may be], work from the soul [that is, put in your very best effort], as [something done for] the Lord and not for men.

Spiritual gifts require cultivation. A gift neglected weakens. A gift exercised grows. A musical instrument left untouched eventually becomes difficult to play. That is why I practice the piano and clarinet daily. Likewise, spiritual gifts become ineffective when unused. There are steps we could take to reduce neglecting our gifts:

1. Pray regularly.
2. Study Scripture diligently.
3. Serve faithfully.
4. Seek mentoring.
5. Exercise the gift consistently.
6. Remain teachable.

Gifts are given for the benefit of others.

I Corinthians 12:7 (AMP) But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit [the spiritual illumination and the enabling of the Holy Spirit] for the common good.

Ephesians 4:12-16 (AMP) [and He did this] to fully equip and perfect the saints (God's people) for works of service, to build up the body of Christ [the church]; until we all reach oneness in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God [growing spiritually] to become a mature believer, reaching to the fullness of Christ [manifesting His spiritual completeness and exercising our spiritual gifts in unity]. So that we are no longer children [spiritually immature], tossed back and forth [like ships on a stormy sea] and carried about by every wind of [shifting] doctrine, by cunning and trickery of [unscrupulous] men, by the deceitful scheming of people ready to do anything [for personal profit]. But speaking the

truth in love [in all things—both our speech and our lives expressing His truth]. let us grow up in all things into Him [following His example] who is the Head—Christ. From Him the whole body [the church, in all its various parts], joined and knitted firmly together by what every joint supplies, when each part is working properly, causes the body to grow and mature, building itself up in unselfish love.

Romans 12:4-5 (AMP) For just as in one [physical] body we have many parts, and these parts do not all have the same function *or* special use, so we, who are many, are [nevertheless just] one body in Christ, and individually [we are] parts one of another [mutually dependent on each other].

I Peter 4:10-11 (AMP) Just as each one of you has received a *special* gift [a spiritual talent, an ability graciously given by God], employ it in serving one another as [is appropriate for] good stewards of God's multi-faceted grace [faithfully using the diverse, varied gifts and abilities granted to Christians by God's unmerited favor]. Whoever speaks [to the congregation], *is to do so* as one who speaks the oracles (utterances, the very words) of God. Whoever serves [the congregation] *is to do so* as one who serves by the strength which God [abundantly] supplies, so that in all things God may be glorified [honored and magnified] through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

We should not consider spiritual gift trophies to admire but tools to use. God equips believers to build up the church, reach the lost, encourage the weak, and serve one another. A person with the gift of encouragement may prevent a struggling believer from abandoning the faith. Ask not, "How can this gift benefit me?" but "How can this gift benefit others?"

Neglecting our gift has consequences.

Luke 12:48 (AMP) but the one who did not know it and did things worthy of a beating, will receive only a few [lashes]. From

everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required;
and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.

James 4:17 (AMP) So any person who knows what is right to do but does not do it, to him it is sin.

Matthew 5:14-16 (AMP) “You are the light of [Christ to] the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good deeds *and* moral excellence, and [recognize and honor and] glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Ezekiel 33:7-9 (AMP) "Now as for you, son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so you shall hear a message from My mouth and give them a warning from Me. When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you will certainly die,' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man will die because of his sin; but I will require his blood from your hand. But if you on your part warn the wicked man to turn from his [evil] way and he does not turn from his [evil] way, he will die in his sin; but you have saved your life.

Consider the consequences: missed opportunities, reduced effectiveness, loss of spiritual influence, others deprived of needed ministry. We all remember Ted Bowling’s sermon on being a lighthouse given on January 11, 2026. A lighthouse that fails to shine places ships in danger. Likewise, believers who neglect their gifts may leave others without needed spiritual guidance.

God calls us to faithful stewardship:

I Corinthians 4:2 (AMP) In this case, moreover, it is required [as essential and demanded] of stewards that one be found faithful and trustworthy.

Matthew 25:21 (AMP) His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful *and* trustworthy over a little, I will put you in charge of many things; share in the joy of your master.’

Colossians 3:23-24 (AMP) Whatever you do [whatever your task may be], work from the soul [that is, put in your very best effort], as [something done] for the Lord and not for men, knowing [with all certainty] that it is from the Lord [not from men] that you will receive the inheritance which is your [greatest] reward. It is the Lord Christ whom you [actually] serve.

Romans 12:1 (AMP) Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies [dedicating all of yourselves, set apart] as a living sacrifice, holy and well-pleasing to God, which is your rational (logical, intelligent) act of worship.

God does not require equal gifts; He requires faithful stewardship. The goal is not comparison but faithfulness. Ask yourself:

- Am I serving where God has placed me?
- Am I developing my spiritual gifts?
- Am I allowing fear or distractions to hinder ministry?
- What step of obedience should I take today?

A farmer receives a bag of valuable seed. He can either store it away where it produces nothing, or plant, cultivate, and harvest an abundant crop. Spiritual gifts are like seed. God gives them with the expectation that they will be cultivated and multiplied.

Consider:

- Identify one spiritual gift God has given you.
- Evaluate whether you are actively using it.

Renew Your Commitment:

- Repent of neglecting God's calling.
- Commit to serving faithfully.

Prayer:

- Ask God to rekindle dormant gifts.
- Seek fresh empowerment from the Holy Spirit.

Ministry Involvement:

- Volunteer in an area where your gifts can be exercised.
- Seek accountability from church leaders.

In conclusion, Paul's exhortation to Timothy remains relevant: "Do not neglect the gift that is in you." God has entrusted every believer with abilities, opportunities, and spiritual gifts for His glory. The challenge is not merely to possess the gift but to develop it, exercise it, and faithfully steward it until we hear the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21). The church, the Kingdom, and future generations are strengthened when God's people faithfully use what He has placed within them.

In this sermon, built around Paul's exhortation in I Timothy 4:14, "Do not neglect the gift that is in you," we are reminded that God has entrusted every believer with spiritual gifts, abilities, and opportunities intended for His glory and the strengthening of His church. Drawing from the apostle Paul's counsel to Timothy, along with examples from Scripture such as the Parable of the Talents, the calling of Joshua, and the warnings given to Ephesus, this message explores how God-given gifts can be neglected through distraction, fear, complacency, or discouragement. It emphasizes that spiritual gifts are not trophies to admire but tools to develop, exercise, and faithfully steward for the benefit of others.

As believers, we are challenged to identify our gifts, rekindle them through prayer and faithful service, and commit ourselves to using them diligently so that, at Christ's return, we may hear the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

