

We cannot improve on the Holy Spirit's selection of words in these passages of stark warning. How clearly He stated that 'empty chatter' will not fill the soul's need! Instead, He showed that the message from the mind of God – not the pretty words of men – is exactly right for "*reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,*" completely furnishing every need of the Christian.

The message even warns of the ever-present danger: the people with itching ears who "*will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires...will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables*" (2 Timothy 4:1).

### Where Does the Story End?

No preacher's story – or teacher's story – ends here in this world, though much of the fruit will be apparent as churches with which he works become stronger and radiate life, or grow weaker and eventually die. But the last chapter will be revealed at the judgment seat of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 Paul described what will happen then. First, he declared that Jesus Christ is the one and only true foundation. Then he talked of how teachers build on that founda-

tion. We read his description of the 'building' as being "gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw," and we generally think this has reference to the spiritual qualities of the people being converted. But if we step back a little further, we may conclude that, often, the quality of the teaching – its spirituality and purity – determines the quality of the convert.

So, the question becomes, "What is the man teaching? The pure gold of God's word, or the hay and stubble of a 'social gospel'?" If he builds with the gold of truth, his work will endure the test of fire. If his teaching is the wood, hay, or straw of the doctrines of men – of 'empty chatter' – the souls won through his worldly teaching will not be able to stand.

If I presume to teach, I owe it to myself to ask, "What will the judgment reveal about my work? And about me?"

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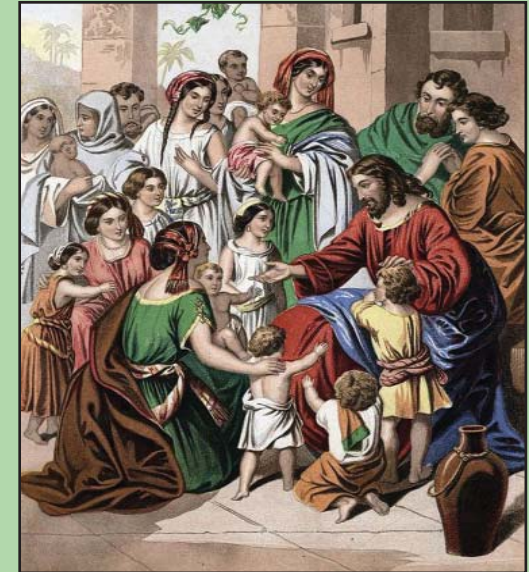
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# The Trust Committed to Us

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## Let God's Word speak with its own authority:

*“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment” (James 3:1).*

*“Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13).*

*“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2).*

*“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (2 Timothy 4:1-5).*

*“But as for you, continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of; knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:14-17).*

Preachers and classroom teachers would do well to listen closely to James' warning: *“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment”* (James 3:1). When Christians take on the responsibility of teaching the children and young people entrusted to their care, they must remember that one day they will answer to God for what they taught or failed to teach. No teacher can guarantee the continued faithfulness of all the children under his instruction, but every teacher owes it to himself to: (1) Study to know God's word well; (2) Be sure that the distinctive truths of God's word are the core of lessons taught, not 'pretty', 'fun' materials and denominational concepts.

Concerning the pulpit, every man who presumes to stand as a preacher before the Lord's church takes on himself an awesome responsibility. Each one should realize that assuredly God knows how much his preaching has strengthened or weakened the understanding of truth among his hearers. Men will answer in judgment for every congregation and every soul led into apostasy. Let no one think that the blood of the lost will not be required of him in the judgment, if his refusal to preach the whole truth was responsible.

None of us can do more and be more than what we *know*. If we know only a watered-down denominationally acceptable social religion, instead of the Gospel, we will be no more than the denominational people around us. And in the Judgment, the Lord will count us as apostate, fallen souls, leading others into error.

Paul spoke with concern and urgency on this very subject when he wrote to Timothy. His words apply to every preacher today. *“O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and vain babblings (empty chatter) and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge – by professing it, some have strayed concerning the faith”* (1 Timothy 6:20).