



Sermon – April 24, 2022
Phillip Bethancourt

Verses Covered This Week

1 Timothy 4:6 - 8

2 Timothy 3:14 – 15

2 Timothy 4:3 - 4

And as you grab your seats, let me invite you to open your Bibles with me. We're going to be in 1 Timothy chapter 4. 1 Timothy 4 this morning. If you're a guest with us for the first time, whether in the room or catching us by video, welcome home. We come to God's word each week trusting that by His Spirit, He's going to change us and make us more like Jesus and that's our heart this morning as we come to this text. And I want to remind you if you've been here at Central for a while and you're thinking about taking a step towards membership, today will be a great day to start that process during the response time since we have our New Member Workshop next week. Now, as you know, this past Sunday, we celebrated Easter and as part of that, we had the culmination of our 21 days of prayer focus. And we saw the Lord do some incredible things over these last several weeks. But one of the things that we did during this 21 days together is we took Psalm 54 and verse 2 as our theme verse for this time. It says, O God, hear my prayer; give ear to the words of my mouth. And one of the reasons we had that as a focus for our 21 days of prayer is because the numbers 54 and 2 are significant for the two church-wide prayers that we've been lifting up as a congregation. For one, we've been praying that God would raise up two ministers to come and fill the openings that we had in our missions and our worship area. And by God's grace, those positions have been filled and we're finalizing plans for both of those men to come and join us here in a little over a month as June begins. But we also prayed during this season that God would raise up 54 of us, at least, who would be willing to take a step into our first year of our training program that's about to launch this Fall. And I can't wait to see what the Lord does during this time. In fact, the reason we're coming to this text this morning is to give our attention to God's heart for training us in godliness. And as we do that, we're going to do it with the view towards what we're going to be launching in the Fall with this training program and to make sure that every one of you has a clear sense of what that program will look like kicking off this fall. I want you to turn your attention to the screens for just a moment and watch this video that Daniel Patterson uses to give us a description of the training program. Let's take a look at that right now.

Here at Central Church, we talk a lot about being a church where every generation is reaching the next generation. And the training program is a key way we work to equip our church to do just that. Because for too many, the Bible and theology feel inaccessible. But it doesn't have to be that way. And in the training program, it won't be. So, what is the training program? It's a one-year program that immerses participants in the three things that every Christian needs, the Bible, theology, and spiritual formation. So, what does that look like over the course of the year? Practically, we're asking people to commit to roughly four hours a week. That's two hours of reading, or homework, each week and two hours of class per week along with one Saturday per semester. We'll meet on Wednesday evenings, with childcare, and we welcome anyone college-aged or above to apply. On that note, if you're interested in the training program, that's the first step. Apply. We open an application portal each year starting in April that lasts around three weeks. You can find the specific information about that and much more on our website, www.centralbcs.org/trainingprogram. At the end of the day, the training program exists not because we want to produce super scholars. It's because we want to train Christians. That means this isn't for some elite. It's for you. It's custom designed for you and we hope you'll come be a part of it. So, Central can be a church where every person is equipped and every generation is reaching the next generation.

That's the heart behind the text we're coming to this morning in 1 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 6. Paul is going to challenge us to train ourselves for godliness. And this church has amazing tools and outlet and resources to do exactly that already with our Sunday morning expositional preaching, with our life groups, and with Awana and all our age graded offerings that we have throughout the week. And we're excited to add this training program to that arsenal. And I'm already encourage that by God's grace, even though the application window just opened this past week, we've already had over 20 of you that have begun the application process to consider this possibility. And I'm praying today that as we walk our way through this text that the Lord will stir in the hearts of many more of you to take this step as well.

So, let's turn our attention now. 1 Timothy chapter 4 in verse 6. Here's what it has to say.

⁶If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. ⁷Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; ⁸for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

Let's pray together.

Father in heaven, we come to You because we want to know You. We want to know You because we want to trust you. We want to trust You so that we might become more like You and I'm asking You now in this time, Lord, that You would stir in each of our hearts a hunger for You. Not for the things of this world, not for the things that are passing away, but the things that are eternal, and the things that will last, the things that will shape us to be more like Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

The first seminary class I ever took, wasn't in the classrooms in Louisville, Kentucky where I went on to earn my masters and my PHD at the Southern Baptist Seminary. The first seminary

class I took was actually right out these doors in the A wing from our former pastor Chris Osborne. There was a short season about 15 or 17 years ago where for a season of time we had a partnership with Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth. And Chris had the opportunity to teach us elementary Greek, that introductory Greek that started me on a journey to learn the biblical languages and to give me tools that I used even for this sermon in preparation of our time together this morning. And through that moment, through that first step right here at our church, the Lord awakened in me a hunger to for the people of God to know the truths of God through the training of God. And that's precisely what we see Paul speaking about here when he talks about this idea of training ourselves for Godliness. Rooted in this concept is the need to combine biblical and theological and practical foundations that will shape every aspect of our lives. You know, as I was getting ready for the message this week, it dawned on me that in just two days, I'll hit the two-year anniversary of being called as your pastor. And let me tell you right now, there has been no greater joy in ministry in my life than these last two years getting to serve you. Thank you. And I'm more excited about what the Lord is doing in the life of our church than at any point in that season. And if you remember when I was going through that process, one of the things I talked about repeatedly is the desire over time for God to raise up a training program right here in our church that could equip not just the super scholars in our midst but every believer in our church. And the heart behind this text, text that we're coming to today is a heart to train ourselves for godliness. And one of the ways we want to build on the opportunities we already have for that existing in our church now is through a training program. But in order to launch that, we needed the right leader to spearhead it. That's why I'm so glad that our executive pastor, Daniel Patterson, is taking this on because he is perfectly positioned to lead this with excellence. And the reason we're doing this, the reason we're building on the offerings we already have is because it comes to the heart of what Paul is driving at here for us as he writes to Timothy. I mean, think about this. He's writing towards the end of his ministry to one of his pastoral protégés. Here is Timothy, this one who has been raised up by Paul and he is now called to pastor the church there at Ephesus and he is writing to him about how to lead faithfully. And at the heart of what he is saying to him this morning is a call not just for Timothy but for all of us. And you'll see it back in the middle of verse 6. Notice what it says there. It says,

[you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus,](#)

If you just had to say from Paul, what is he challenging Timothy to do? It's to be a good servant of Christ Jesus. And that, that word servant comes from the same word that we get our word today, deacon. It means to minister or to serve. And that called to Timothy is not limited to him. That's true of every person who follows Jesus. We're called be good servants of Christ Jesus. In other words, we are saved in order to serve. And if we want to be faithful in our service, then we need to be faithful to prepare for our service. In other words, Paul is showing Timothy and us this morning that good serving requires good training. And if we want to be faithful in our training, how do we become a good servant of Christ Jesus? Well, what Paul is going to show us this morning is that if want to be faithful servants of Christ Jesus, we need to train ourselves for godliness in three particular ways.

And you'll see the first one there at the start of verse six. It's the biblical dimension. Paul is calling us to train ourselves for godliness through the Christian story. So, look back at the way he says it. If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus being trained in the words of faith. I'm just curious by show of hands. How many are currently

working in a job or you have worked in a job where ongoing training was a part of the requirement and expectation. Maybe some continuing education or an in-service day. Why is that? It's because if you want to be good at something, you need to train. If you want to be a great athlete, it's not just enough to watch the games from the stands. If you want to be able to get your driver's license when you turn sixteen, it's not enough to just ride a bunch of times with mom and dad. There has to be training. There has to be intentional practice that takes place there and Paul is reminding us of that same reality; that we must train for the Christian life. And that training must be grounded in the story of the Bible, in this Christian story, and he shows us several reasons why. So, look back at the the end of this verse, of this last part of verse 6. He says, we need to train ourselves in the Christian story because we are able to feed on God's word. So, look at that phrase there, being trained. He uses two different words for train in this text. One in verse 6, the other in verse 7, this first one here, the best way to understand what he means by training is think about that time you try to teach your child to eat its first food. So, that son or daughter has been feeding on milk or formula and now they're ready for the solid food and you remember how it goes. When you start giving them that baby food, there ends up being more on their body than in their mouth. And then you're trying to get them to take their fingers and use them as little pincers to pick up those little puffs that the moment they hit their mouth dissolve instantly. It's as if there's nothing there. But you're training them, you're nurturing them, you're nourishing them so that one day, they too might be able to pick up a slice of medium-rare ribeye and savor it in their mouth just like you have done. Great is the reward for that training. And when he speaks here of this word train, that's the picture. That sense of nourishing, of feeding, of raising someone up. And there's this idea behind God's heart for training us in the Christian story that we are a people called to feed on the word of God, to take and to eat. It feeds our souls. It nourishes our lives. It's that living water that that helps to bring about life and flourishing in the faith that God has called us to live out. But we don't just train ourselves in the Christian story to, to feed on God's word.

Notice there at the end of verse 6, it also tells us that we train on God's word and, and train on the Christian story to know God's word. That why he says there being trained in what? Being trained in the words. And I don't want us to just pass right over this reality. Think about this. The God of the universe, the God who created the stars of the heaven, who holds the worlds in their places. The one for whom all things is under His feet, He has chosen to make Himself known to you and to me. The word of God has given us the words of God. And one of the best gifts, one of the best ways that we can pursue Him is through a hunger to know that word as embodied in the Christian story of Scripture. And notice what happens. That when we feed on God's word, when we seek to know God's word, it drives us to another dimension of why we should train ourselves in the Christian story. And it's because we are able to trust God's word. So, look back at that phrase at the end. Being trained in the words of faith. So, what kind of words are these? They are faithful words. They are trustworthy words. Three different times, Paul uses a similar structure in this letter translated elsewhere as trustworthy sayings. He is saying, what we have here in God's word can be trusted. It is all that we need for life and godliness. And if that is true, then, one of the greatest endeavors of our lives should be to know this story, to build ourselves upon the rock of Christ as described in the word of Christ. I want you to see on the screen this text that Paul writes to Timothy later from 2 Timothy chapter 3. And in 2 Timothy 3, verses 14 and 15, Paul is writing to him years later at the end of his ministry about the urgency of knowing the Christian story. And here's what he says in 2 Timothy 3, verses 14 and 15.

¹⁴But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

So, right here at the end of his ministry, Paul is reminding Timothy of the same challenge he's giving him in this text today in 1 Timothy 4, to press on in the pursuit of God through knowing the Christian story. It's what here in 2 Timothy 3, he calls the sacred writings. He says that we need to pursue God and know him through the story of the Bible so that it will shape the story of our lives. The word of God is the power of God to transform us, to make us more like God. It reminds me of a friend of mine I was with not long ago who the Lord has created some opportunities for him to invest financially in the work of Bible translation around the world. And he was telling me the story of how he first stepped into Bible translation. There was a translation that was in process in the country of Guatemala, for this small dialect there with only 30,000 or 40,000 people. Very few of them who were literate, who would even benefit from it. And they, they were behind schedule. They were over budget. And he was asked to basically rescue things and get it across the finish line financially. And he stepped in and he did that. And when that translation was finally done, he traveled to Guatemala with those bringing the first Bibles in the heart language of these people down to them. And this whole time he sees riding through this long travel, this difficult journey, he is questioning God, "Why have I wasted my money on this? What's the return on the investment in what I have contributed to make this happen?" Until one moment changed everything. He met a man by the name of Gaspar. Gaspar was one of the few literate people in that community when they brought the Bibles to it. And when Gaspar was handed his first Bible in that native language, he received it and immediately started weeping. Tears of joy. I mean, imagine the delight that you have been unable to know God through His word and now at last, it is here. And my friend said to me that when he watched that moment, the Spirit prompted him with the question. And that question was, "Is that a good enough return on investment for you? That it brought this man to tears." And then the Spirit prompted him with the second question that convicted him greatly. And He said to him, "What's my return on investment in your life?" And what he recognizes, here is this man receiving the copy of the Christian story in God's word for the first time and it brought him to tears. And yet this one that had traveled from America down there to bring these words questioning God's return on investment came to the conviction and the realization that the Bible sitting on the shelf in his home weren't collecting tears; they were collecting dust. That God's word had been taken for granted. That these words of faith that Paul speaks about here were not nourishing him, were not filling him. That he was not giving himself to it. And that's one of the hearts behind the launch of the training program we're rolling out this Fall. We want to take what we do on Sunday mornings through expositional preaching and through our life groups studying God's word and build on that to go deeper in discipleship. Because we know there are some of you that are ready to take a next step that want to hide this Christian story in your heart in the way that Paul is speaking of here. So that we can understand how the entire story of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation is one big story centered on Christ and his unfolding kingdom. And when we get that foundation, it will drive us to the second dimension that Paul is speaking of here back in the second half of verse six.

He says there, not just that there's a biblical dimension but now, number two, a theological dimension. And here's what it is. He's calling us to train ourselves in godliness through Christian belief. So, let's just start at the beginning of verse 6 again and see how it all fits together.

6If you put these things before your brothers, you will be a servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.

So, if you were to drive around Bryan/College Station right now, you'd see new homes going up everywhere. And those new homes would typically follow a two-step process. Once the land is cleared and prepared, step number one is to lay the foundation. Now, we know during this pandemic season with supply chain shortages that step number two is wait on supplies. But what's supposed to happen is after you lay the foundation, then you come behind that and build the framework. That's what you see with those two by fours out there building those frames around it. And through that framing process it's establishing the structure and support that creates the intent and the integrity of the home. Foundation then framing. That's the process for building a home that could be used in the way it's designed. And Paul is reminding us that same reality is true in the way we pursue God. That it is built on the biblical foundation of Christian story and then it is supported through the theological framework of Christian belief. And where do we see him speaking about this here? Look at the end of verse 6. When he uses that term doctrine. You see that? In the original language, it's the word *didaskalia*. And even all the way back in Acts chapter 5, when the early apostles are being arrested and confronted, the the reason the Jews give for why they must stop preaching is because your doctrine, your teaching, your *didaskalia* has filled the the city of Jerusalem. That we don't want this to go forward anymore. This teaching that's built on this word around Jesus Christ and that idea of doctrine. The best way to understand it is it's the consensus belief of the Christian church from the early church to today. Making sense of how the Bible is established in a theological framework. And the reality that everyone of us needs to recognize is that everyone you ever encounter is a theologian whether they recognize it or not. That every one of us is trying to make sense of how the world works, how we believe about the way the world works and what that means for our life. That's a theology. It may not be a Christian theology but it's a theology nonetheless. And as Paul is speaking here about the importance of Christian belief, he is also signaling to us implicitly in the text that there are several dangers that we might encounter as we pursue Christian doctrine. And the first one you'll notice back at the beginning of the verse is the danger of unknown doctrine. So look back at the way that verse 6 begins.

6If you put these things before the brothers

Now, why does he say that? It's because just before this in verses 1 through 5, he is reminding Timothy of the need to combat the false teaching of the false teachers in their midst. That there is wrong doctrine that might create the danger that right doctrine might be unknown. That there are those seeking to lead God astray and he's saying, resist that, reject it, put it away. And the way that that happens, the way that you overcome false teaching is through right teaching. The way that you confront wrong doctrine is through right doctrine. It's by taking what's unknown and making it known. Did you know you have 168 hours in every week of your life? And let's say you're calculating how much of those do you spend pursuing knowing God theologically? Let's just imagine what that looks like. So, let's give you an hour a week for coming to church

on Sunday morning. And then we'll give you a second hour for being here for life groups. And then maybe we'll give you two hours for your devotional time as you split that up throughout the week. And then let's just imagine you're one of the most committed Christians in the room and we take that four hours and we double it to eight hours because you find other ways during the week to pursue your efforts to know God. Did you know that eight hours out of every week is less than 5% of your week? That even if you maybe one of the most active and committed Christians in the room and pursuing the knowledge of God through Christian belief, it is a fraction of all the different ways that you're being filled and fed different narratives and views from the world around you. Whether through the secular media or the talk radio you listen to from job site to job site or the chatter that you have on social media. The danger that we face is not that we are disinterested in doctrine, we just simply don't know it because we haven't pursued it. It's the first danger he says but it's not just that. It's not just about unknown doctrine but also you'll see as the verse goes on, there's a danger of unsound doctrine. That's why he says there towards the end of the verse,

and of the good doctrine

You see that word good there? Think about that for a minute. What makes doctrine good? Well, the only good doctrine is true doctrine. Doctrine that's sound. God that's, doctrine that's consistent with God's design for the world. And there's a danger that every one of us faces that as we pursue the ability to know God, we might encounter unsound doctrine. In fact, Paul gives that very warning. I'll show you another verse on the screen in 2 Timothy chapter 4, verses 3 and 4. He gives a warning to Timothy about how the pull towards unsound doctrine will only increase in the days ahead. Here's how he says it.

³For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

So, look at the way he speaks about this danger. That soothing voices would tickle itching ears. That we would find teachers to meet our passions in a way that feeds us more of what we want rather than what God wants for us. And how do you know if you might be pulled away from by unsound doctrine? Well, he's giving us a test there. When we want to align our understanding of God's truth in accordance with our passions, that's unsound doctrine. Instead, when we seek to align our passions and preferences with God's word, that's a reflection of the sound doctrine or the good doctrine that Paul is speaking of back here in our text in 1 Timothy 4:6. There is this call to pursue this good doctrine. But it's not good unless the last dimension of verse 6 is true. Because you'll notice at the end of the verse, he gives us the biggest danger of all.

See, the third danger we see here is the danger of unfollowed doctrine. So, notice how the phrase ends

and of the good that you followed.

See, Paul commends Timothy not just because he knows good doctrine but because he follows good doctrine. That it just hasn't hit him here in the head. It has embedded itself in his heart in a way that is leading to growth. It's not just about information but transformation to him. He is

following in it faithfully. He is carrying it out and that reality is the key to finding God and to following him faithfully. That's one of the reasons why for some of you when we even start having a conversation about the training program, you just tune out and assume this is not for me. That's above my grade. That would be too difficult for you to handle. But I want to challenge you with a different perspective. Because rooted here in Paul's call to train ourselves for Godliness for Christian belief is a response to every one of those hesitations when you say it's not for me. Because for some of you, you might say, "Man, these terms that I would have to learn would be too difficult." But I imagine if I followed you to Starbucks this week, I could hear you order something like a Venti, non-fat, double-shot caramel macchiato. Somehow you learned to pronounce that just perfectly and to know what you want, needed to ask for in order to get what you want. You can learn the terms. And others of you say, "Well, maybe the terms I can get, but the concepts, that would just be too difficult." And yet you're sending your kids off to high school where they're learning the Pythagorean theorem and the laws of thermodynamics. We can raise the expectation for them knowing scientific and mathematical concepts. Surely, we can do it ourselves. But maybe for some of you, the real challenge is the effort seems too hard. Man, two hours a week in the classroom, two hours a week of homework. I, I just don't know if I can commit to that. That that would stretch me and 100% it would. And it may not be that right here in this first year, you're in the season of life that will allow that. That's one of the reasons why I'm praying that over the next ten years, God would make it possible for every one of our adult church members to go through this training program. That's how strongly I believe this can transform you. Because even though the effort is significant, we always find time for the things we care about the most. And what Paul is challenging us up here is to wrestle with the question, is it worth it to train ourselves for Godliness? Is it worth it to carve out space in our schedule in order to know God and to answer that question that leads us to the third dimension that he is talking about with us this morning.

It's not just a biblical dimension in the theological dimension. You'll notice in verses 7 and 8, he speaks about the practical dimension. And the practical dimension is this, we're called to train ourselves for Godliness through Christian formation. So, let's notice back here what he says in verse 7. Read it again with me.

⁷Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; ⁸for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

So, let's think about those homes that are being built around here in our community once again. First step is to build that foundation. Second step is to support it with the framework. But when that house comes to completion, you take the foundation and the framework and it's only usable once it gets the furnishings. The furnishings are what creates the ability to live in it in the way it was designed. To take its structural integrity with its systematic intent and to bring that to bear on the way you use it with your life. And that's at the heart of this idea of Christian formation. What do we mean by that? It's embodying the habits and the patterns in your daily and weekly rhythms that are going to shape you to become more like Jesus. And where do we see Paul speaking about that here in this text? It's right there in the second half of 7 when he says,

Rather train yourself for godliness;

If you're to read through the entire book of 1 Timothy, you would find over 40 commands in this book. But right here in verse 7 is the first one given directly to Timothy. And what is that command? It's to train. And it's a different word than the one in verse 6 about nourishing like we're nourishing an infant, teaching them to feed themselves. This training is what you probably thought of when you first saw it. It's got the athletic context in mind. That the athlete in the gym disciplining his body, training, working, preparing for the path ahead. Spending energy for the sake of establishing endurance. That's the idea that Paul is speaking of here when he talks about training. And what are we training for? Well, look back at the end of verse 7. He says,

[train yourself for godliness;](#)

That word godliness only shows up 15 times in the New Testament and 10 of them are in the three pastoral epistles that Paul preached, gives to Timothy and to Titus. It's at the heart of his message in his final days. And that idea of godliness, what is it? It's that place in our lives where you see the intersection of our beliefs and our behaviors. Where what we believe shapes how we live. Where we're seeking to reflect God in our lives. It's that that intersection point between our views and our values, between our doctrine, and our daily life. And right here, Paul is reminding us that doctrine is dead if it's not lived out. If it doesn't lead to practical application through Christian formation. And he gives us several reasons why we need to pursue training ourselves for Godliness through Christian formation. And you'll notice there in verse 7, at the start of it, Christian formation protects us from worldly ways. So, he says there at the start of verse 7,

[⁷Have nothing to do with irreverent and silly myths.](#)

Paul is saying there are things that you're going to be exposed into your life that are worthless and worldly. In fact, in the original language, probably the most natural way to translate the saying in today's word is he says, there are old wives tales all around you. Silly myths. Things that will draw people away. Conspiracy theories, false views of the world. Maybe what we'd call today fake news. He says, don't give that attention. Refuse it. Resist it. And part of the way that that happens is when we're, we're forming ourselves in Christ through the daily and weekly patterns of pursuing Him devotionally, it makes us better equipped to not be drawn away from God through worldly things. Christian formation protects us from worldly ways. But it also, we'll see in verse 8, provides us value in the present. So notice how he says it there,

[⁸for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life](#)

So, there's a double contrast going on here. Physical exercise, spiritual exercise. Something that's of some benefit, something that's of benefit in all things. And I don't want you to hear from this, a permission slip to eat the way you want to and not bother with exercising. He's not saying that physical exercise is worthless, but what he is saying is as much value as that may provide to some portions of your life, there is a greater thing that each of us is called to pursue. And it's not the physical training that will benefit us in this world but the spiritual training that will benefit us in both in this world and the world to come. Look at the way he describes the value. He says, it is a value in every way. It's a rising tide that lifts all boats. If I could tell

you if you did this one thing, it would make every dimension of your life at least somewhat better. Wouldn't you want to give your life to that? Wouldn't you want to spend your time on that? And yet he is saying right here, training ourselves for godliness, pursuing God through Christian formation provides that promise in the present life. But if that's not enough to motivate us, just see the way that he speaks about this contrast between physical training and spiritual training. It comes to the heart of so much of what we do here with investing in the next generation of children in our church. I was over here yesterday and I saw hundreds of our kids playing soccer on those soccer fields with Central Sports Soccer. In just about 6 weeks, we're going to have hundreds of kids back for our Central Kids Sports Camp. And even though Chris Gary is stepping away as our kids minister, he's leaving an amazing legacy. And I know so many of you are going to support us in that not only by volunteering but putting one of those signs in your yard to make things known. We've already got 300 kids coming with hundreds more still on the way. And this verse is at the heart of why we do this. Yes, the physical training, the sports exercise is of some value. But the deeper value, the more transformational dimension of it is the spiritual training that happens both in that moment and through the conversations that emerge because of it. It's at the heart of what we do because it's at the heart of what the Scripture calls us to do.

But I want you to see one more thing before we bring our time to close this morning. That the reason we need to pursue God through Christian formation isn't just the benefits it brings today; but the benefits it brings tomorrow. Because the last motivation that Paul gives us here is that Christian formation promises, promises us reward in the future. And you'll see that right at the end of verse 8 when he says,

[and also for the life to come.](#)

If we want to make the Texas translation of this, he's speaking about the life we're fixin' to have. He says, there's a day coming. There's a future we're headed toward. And the burdens we carry, carry now, the investments we make today are worth it not just because of the benefits we receive here in the moment but because of the benefits that will come to us in that life to come. That the reward is worth the pain now. It is worth the investment. And we need to remember that reward to come not just on Easter Sunday like we did last week, but every week of the year. Because any athlete knows that the clearer they see the reward for their efforts, the more consistent they'll be in the efforts they give to see that reward. And think about the reward that God has offered us in Jesus Christ. It's what we celebrated last week on Easter through the resurrection of Christ. That reward both that salvation that He offers is both one of rescue and reward. That when Jesus goes to the cross, He rescues us from our sin, our shame, our guilt, our condemnation. He takes our righteousness which is filthy rags. He takes our sin which has scarred us and He removes that and rescues from, us from the domain of darkness in order to transfer us into the kingdom of His beloved Son. And in that rescue, we are rescued from the penalty of sin. But Paul is reminding us of here when he talks about the life to come that one day, we will be rescued from the presence of sin. In that place, there will be no more crying, no more mourning, no more sorrow, no more pain. But most of all, there will be no more separation from the presence of Christ. Our reward will be great. The desire of my heart as your pastor, as we start on this third year together, is that for each one of us that heads to heaven, we've been learning about God and about Jesus throughout our entire life. And when we get there, the Lord is going to open up our eyes to understand things and ways we didn't fully comprehend on this

Earth. But the heart for training that's wrapped into this training program specifically and for every effort of our church at large is my desire as your pastor is to make your learning curve in heaven as small as possible. To help us train ourselves for godliness through Christian story, through Christian belief, through Christian formation. So that what we will see in full then, we can know and embrace more now.

Let's take a moment to pray right towards that end as we close our time together. I just want to ask of you as you prepare your hearts to pray. I want to pray specifically for one group of people in the church today. That's for those of you that are praying through or wrestling with or thinking about the possibility of stepping into this training program in year one for us right now. If you'd be willing to just let me know that by raising your hand, I just want to be able to pray specifically for you. I see hands all over the room. Let me see them so I can have you in my mind as I pray over this time together. Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, You know the end for the beginning. Your ways are above our ways, Your thoughts are above our thoughts, and yet by Your Son, You have made Yourself known. You made a way for us, Lord. And there are so many things that compete for our time and attention. And I pray that this word, this truth would give us a hunger to know You more. To train ourselves for godliness in a way where we're more faithful to seek Your face. And I pray especially for the men and women who are wrestling with if You might be leading them towards the training program, starting this Fall. That You would give them a sense of clarity and a sense of opportunity. That You would make it known if this is what you have for them and that You will provide for them the opportunity to follow through with it if that's Your will, God. Lord, we lay this at Your feet. Our church wants to know You more clearly so that we can love You more fully and serve You more faithfully and that's the desire of our heart this morning. We pray it in Christ's name. Amen.