

## **“Preach the Word”**

*October 28, 2018*

2 Timothy 4:1-5

### **I. Introduction**

Paul has come to the conclusion—not only of his letter to Timothy—but to his life on earth as well. These words were dictated, probably to Dr. Luke, perhaps just days or weeks before Paul’s execution by beheading. For the past 30 years he has traveled, witnessed, worked, and preached throughout the Mediterranean world. He has been loved and hated, supported and attacked, praised and cursed. Whatever can be said of his life, it certainly wasn’t dull!

The final section of 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy, which begins with today’s Scripture, contains the last inspired words of Paul, who knew that his earthly life was nearing its end—in **verse 6** he wrote, **“For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure”** (2 Timothy 4:6). It was time for Paul to give his final charge to Timothy, his **“dear son”** (2 Timothy 1:2) in the Lord, as he passed the torch of leadership on to him.

It’s interesting that Paul expressed no regrets as he came to the end of his earthly life. He even forgave those who made his situation difficult (2 Timothy 4:16). More than seventeen people are referred to in this chapter, which shows that Paul was a friend-maker as well as a soul winner. Though his own days were numbered, Paul thought of others.

Although they were written to Timothy, Paul’s commission in these verses applies to every minister of the gospel in every age, every place, and every circumstance. In a more general sense, it can be applied to every faithful believer both as individual workers for Christ but also as part of a local congregation. The spiritual life and faithfulness of a congregation is always closely related to the spiritual life and faithfulness of its pastor and its leadership. For this reason, churches are responsible, under God and with God, to hold their pastors and leaders accountable to this divine commission.

## II. The Charge

Paul began his charge to Timothy with words that point out the seriousness of this divine commission: “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the Word” (2 Timothy 4:1-2a NAS/NIV). This was a serious command, and Paul didn’t want Timothy to miss the importance of it.

It was serious, not only because Paul was facing death, but even more because both Paul and Timothy, and for that matter all Christians, will be judged one day when Jesus Christ returns. Writing to Christians in Corinth, Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:10, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.” It is here at the bema seat that Christians will be rewarded for what they have done for the Lord—turn to 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. This is an awards ceremony for Christians. There is a judgment seat for non-Christians—it’s called the great white throne. Turn to Revelation 20:11-15.

Paul was obviously focusing on the Lord’s judgment of believers. It would do us all good to occasionally reflect on the fact that one day we will face God and our works will be judged. This thought should encourage us to do our work carefully and faithfully. It should also deliver us from the fear of man—our final Judge is God. Finally, the realization that God will one day judge our works should encourage us to keep going even when we face difficulties. We are serving Him, not ourselves.

After reminding Timothy of the gravity of his commission, Paul gave the command: “Preach the Word.” The word “*preach*” means to herald, to proclaim publically. In Paul’s day, a ruler had a special herald who made announcements to the people. He was commissioned by the ruler to make his announcements in a loud, clear voice so that everyone could hear. He was not an ambassador with the privilege of negotiating; he was a messenger with a proclamation to be heard and heeded. Not to heed the

ruler's messenger was serious; to abuse the messenger was even worse. Timothy was to herald God's Word with the authority of heaven behind him.

By "the Word" Paul undoubtedly meant the entire written Word of God. The Word of God is what both sinners and saints need to hear. Sinners need to hear that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). Sinners need to hear the Gospel. People need to hear words like Romans 3:23 that says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The unsaved need to hear Romans 6:23 that says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." And they must also hear Romans 10:13, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Christians need the Word of God so that they know how they should live, e.g., Romans 12:1-2 which says, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will." As we saw a couple of weeks ago, the Word of God—the Bible—is God's **Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth**.

### III. The Means

Paul then gave the means—the when and the how—to carry out this commission from God;

**A. When: In season and out of season** First, Paul wrote that Timothy should "be prepared in season and out of season." He needed to be alert and ready to preach the Word, when it was favorable and even when it wasn't favorable. The thought is that of a soldier who is ready to go into battle on a moment's notice or of a guard who stays continually alert for any threat of infiltration or attack by the enemy.

A sense of readiness and willingness to serve the Lord at any cost and at any time is a requirement not only for preachers but for all Christians. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 3:15, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." Writing to believers in the church where

Timothy was ministering, Paul had written earlier in [Ephesians 5:15-16](#), “Be very careful, then, how you live-- not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.” As one commentator wrote, “*It’s easy to make excuses when we ought to be making opportunities.*”

**B. How** Paul then gave 3 more commands concerning how to carry out this commission. **1) First, preach the Word to correct.** Paul had just written in [2 Timothy 3:16](#) that “All Scripture ... is useful for ... correcting.” Correcting means to help a person, Christian or non-Christian, understand that what he believes or is doing is wrong. **2) Second, use the Word to rebuke**, i.e., help a person see the sin in his life. The prophet Nathan was called by God to rebuke King David for what he had done to Bathsheba and her husband—turn to [2 Samuel 12:1-7a, 13a](#). Through Nathan’s rebuke David was convicted of his sin. Sin must be addressed in the unsaved and in the saved—writing about an elder who had sinned, [1 Timothy 5:20](#) says, “Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.”

**3) Third, use the Word to encourage.** After correcting and rebuking disobedient believers or repentant sinners, the faithful preacher or leader is to then come alongside them in love and encourage them in spiritual change. In [1 Thessalonians 5:14](#) Paul wrote, “And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.”

Paul wrote that God’s speaker must be patient as he uses the Word to correct, rebuke, and encourage. He will not always see immediate results. Just as God is patient with us, we need to be patient with others. An old-time saying reminds us that “*Rome wasn’t built in a day.*” Notice, too, that the emphasis is on the Word of God. Turn to [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#). True preaching is the explanation and application of Bible doctrine—God’s Word. Anything else is just religious speechmaking.

#### **IV. The Reason**

Paul then gave the reason for preaching the Word: The day was coming when men will refuse to listen to sound teaching and will collect teachers who will titillate—tickle—their ears with unbiblical notions that raise their comfort level, justify or even overlook their sins. It is a short step from “itching

ears” to turning one’s ears away from the truth. They turn to fables (myths). It is unlikely that man-made myths will convict anyone of sin or make them want to repent. Instead the result is a congregation of comfortable, professing Christians, listening to a comfortable, religious talk that contains no Bible doctrine. These Christians—many of them false Christians—become the prey of every false cult because their lives don’t have a foundation in the Word of God.

We are in the midst of such a time. God’s Word is being compromised. Sometimes it has been stripped of its clear meaning or it is relegated to a place of secondary authority behind personal “revelations” claimed to be from God. Such false Christians reject as unloving anyone who presumes to hold them accountable to doctrinal beliefs and moral standards they claim are outmoded and irrelevant. There is no longer any absolute “right or wrong.” Situational ethics is the law of the land, i.e., right is determined by the situation rather than judging by an absolute moral standard like the Word of God.

Many churches today are filled to overflowing with those who want their ears tickled with the myths of easy-believism and the many variations of self-ism and so-called positive thinking. They have come to have their egos fed and their sins approved, not to have their hearts cleansed and their souls saved. They want only to feel good, not to be made good. Sadly, such myths serve to religiously insulate people from the true gospel and drive them still further from the Lord.

## V. The Challenge

Paul finished his admonition to “Preach the Word” with a challenge: “**But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.**” This challenge is a good challenge for each one of us, too.

**A. Keep your head in all situations**—don’t get caught up in all the new fangled ideas. In the midst of a changing world, a changing church, and a changing gospel—which is really no gospel at all—remain committed to the changeless truth of God’s Word. This does mean that you know what God’s Word says. This means that when you hear a “*religious talk*,” you, like the Bereans of [Acts 17:11](#), compare what you

heard with God's Word. But you aren't on your own, [James 1:5](#) says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."

**B. Second, endure hardship.** Don't be surprised when hardships come your way as messenger of the Gospel; as a Christian. Jesus told His disciples in [John 15:20](#), "Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also."

**C. Third, do the work of an evangelist.** Not all of us have the gift of evangelism, but we have all been called to be evangelistic. Jesus gave the Great Commission in [Matthew 28:19-20](#) and in [Acts 1:8](#) to all the disciples that were gathered with Him—not just the 11 Apostles. Proclaiming the Gospel is the duty of every Christian. [Romans 10:14](#) says, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?"

**D. Finally, discharge the duties of your ministry.** [Ephesians 2:10](#) says, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

When one becomes a Christian, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside him and He brings gifts to be used—turn to [1 Peter 4:10-11](#).

## VI. Conclusion

Let me ask you something I haven't asked for a while in morning sermon—are you a Christian? Do you believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sins? That's good, but that's not enough—the devil knows that Jesus died for your sins, too. Let me put it a different way: Is Jesus your Lord and Savior? Have you ever asked Him to forgive your sins and have you ever made Him your Lord? If not, why not do it today so that you can be assured of where you will spend eternity?

If you are a Christian, is Jesus' lordship of your life obvious? Is your life any different from the nice guy you work with or the good person that lives down the street from you? What is your priority or

goal in life? What does the Bible say about priorities? Are you using your God-given gift to serve God? Are you ready to share the Gospel with others? When/if hardship comes your way as a Christian, do you thank God for the opportunity to serve Him or do you search for a quick way out? How well do you know God's Word? Are you able to discern if what you hear is from God or not? God says that these are His expectations of you—How are faithful are you?