

## Preach the Word!

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**Text:** 2 Timothy 4:1-5 - Page 996 in the pew Bibles.

If you knew that you were nearing the end of your life and you wanted to tell your children one thing, what would it be?

In other words, if you wanted your children to go on to make an impact on the world in their day and time, what one thing comes to your mind that is most important that you would charge them to do?

We know that the Apostle Paul saw Timothy as his dear son. At the beginning of 1 Timothy, Paul calls him “my true child in the faith.” Likewise, in 2 Timothy, he addresses him as, “my beloved child.” But Timothy was more than just a spiritual son to Paul. He was the one whom Paul poured himself into in order to carry on the apostolic work of the gospel.

We read several places in Paul’s letters that say that Paul saw himself as someone who was entrusted with the gospel. Jesus gave him a precious deposit and charged him to be faithful with it. And we know that the Holy Spirit was working in Paul, moving him at His will in Paul’s preaching and writing. As Peter tells us of those whom God used to write Scripture, they were men who “spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:21)

But then we also read that at the end of his life, Paul entrusted that precious deposit to Timothy. Twice, once in each letter, Paul charged him fervently to “guard the deposit entrusted to you.”

We see the seriousness, the preciousness, and the urgency of Paul’s view of the Word of God that was entrusted to him. It was a treasure of infinite value. Something he cherished and it was something he wanted to protect and guard from corruption. It was his very life, for he knew that this Word would be life and death and would have eternal and transformational consequences for people. In them he saw THE key to salvation and eternal life and it had been entrusted to him.

And now, at the end of his life, how do you think he felt when he knew he would no longer be here to guard such a prized and precious treasure?

So he looked to Timothy, his cherished child in the faith as one whom he trusted to carry this Word to the world.

The letter of 2 Timothy is the result of Paul’s entrusting the gospel to Timothy. And although this passage has the most application for pastors and those who preach the gospel for a living, there is also plenty of application for all believers. We are all called to be a prophetic voice in the world, proclaiming the Word of God wherever we are and whatever we do for a living.

So in a very real sense, I feel the urgency and passion that is inherent in this passage. I sense the preciousness of the Word of God and the jealousy that Paul must have felt to guard it against those who would try to water it down or change it or corrupt it in any way. My prayer is that you and I would both be forever impacted by these words to Timothy, and that we would share that same sense of preciousness, and have that same urgency and passion for the Word as well.

*I 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: <sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. <sup>3</sup> For 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, <sup>4</sup> and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. <sup>5</sup> As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Timothy 4:1-5 ESV)*

**Main Idea:** We must faithfully proclaim the Word of God in our world.

### **1. Understand the urgency of the Word. (v. 1)**

Paul begins his charge by reminding Timothy of the seriousness and urgency of what he's about to say.

*I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus* – this quite simply means that when we proclaim God's Word, is to be done with an awareness that we stand before God and before Christ. We are not hidden in what we do. God is a God who sees all, and that should give us pause and shape our actions. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:2, "But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God."

Paul was not only aware that he was giving his charge in the presence of God, but he was also making Timothy aware of it, also. In doing so he was making Timothy accountable to an authority higher than himself, and reminding him that Paul is charging him, not by his own authority, but ultimately by God's. God was the one who was charging him. Paul was merely the messenger.

And so it is with Pastor Rob and me as we bring the Word of God to you. We do so, not bringing our own opinions. Except about dogs. I actually love dogs. But we stand in the presence of God, bringing to you the very words of the living God. We both believe in the preaching philosophy that we should not preach our own ideas and agendas, but we believe that the ORIGINAL message of the Scriptures should dictate the message of our sermons. In other words, we want the Bible to speak for itself on its own authority.

Therefore, whatever the Bible says, is what it says.

And this aligns perfectly with chapter 3, verse 16 of this same letter, which says "All Scripture is breathed out by God..." The Greek word used here is often translated "inspired." It is the *inspired* Word of God. That doesn't mean that these are inspiring words that motivate people like you would hear from wise people of the world. You can go online or to a bookstore or library and find wise and inspiring quotes from people like Walt Disney, Mahatma Gandhi, or Eleanor Roosevelt. That's not the definition of *inspired* that we're talking about here. When it comes to the Bible, what "inspired" means is that although these words were written by man, God is the One who is speaking them, so that as we read our Bible, we should be reading it and receiving these words just as if God was right here speaking them to us right now.

It is beyond a weighty matter to be charged to carefully and humbly speak the words of the living God. Which leads to what Paul says next...

- *I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus **who is to judge the living and the dead*** – The thing that I must keep in mind continually as a preacher is that the words that I preach and teach have eternal consequences. There will come a day when the people to whom I preach will stand before the Lord in judgment. Many times people's eternal destiny will be affected. This is the urgency of preaching the uncorrupted, undefiled Word of God. // Because the Scriptures are the actual words of the living God, this makes them of life and death importance to be preached and taught. And because of this, look what Paul says next...
- *I 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*** – If the “judging the living and the dead” speaks about your eternal destiny, this speaks about our judgment as preachers. We will be held accountable for every word we say. James tells us in James 3:1, “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness,” because we are handling the Words of the eternal, holy God which speak directly of eternal, holy things.

These words that you hold in your hand in your Bible, these are the very words of the One who Created the stars. Where else can we go? These are the very words of eternal life. These words and these alone are the truth that can set people free. They are God-breathed words of truth and life! Jesus summed it up well when He said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4)

You know, I never, ever thought I would stand at a pulpit and preach. I've always said that God has a sense of humor. For as long as I can remember, ever since I was a small child, I've had a speech impediment. There was a time when I wasn't able to say one sentence without stuttering. And while, by God's grace, it's much better today, sometimes I still wrestle with speaking. Preaching was never in my wildest dreams. I was the music guy. On the one hand I am terrified to stand up here for fear that I'm going to stumble in my words and look like a fool and have you all see me as a failure. I'm a fallible, sinful human being who most of the time can't even talk right. //

But on the other hand, I sense this overwhelming fire in my soul for the truth of God's Word. I know that the Word of God is the only hope for mankind and I sense an urgency, a call, beyond what I can even explain, to proclaim that Word. // And so I throw myself at the mercy of the Almighty God who made my mouth, completely dependent upon Him to do what I know I can't.

So the first thing is, we must understand the urgency of proclaiming the Word of God. Second...

## 2. Understand what is required for the Word. (v. 2)

*preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.*

Here Paul is telling us what the implications are, what truly has to follow. If the Scriptures are the actual Word of the living God, carrying the full authority of God himself, and the preaching of these words carry eternal consequences, then that means these words have full authority over *us*.

The thing about this is, people generally do not like that. Our natural tendency is to be the captain of our own soul. Consequently, preaching the Word is often not very popular, whether it's with people outside the church or inside.

This is what is meant by "be ready in season and out of season." There is the obvious meaning here that we should always be ready to proclaim the Word. You never know when the situation you're in will call for being ready to proclaim the Word of God.

But there's another meaning being inferred here as well. John MacArthur comments on this, he says, "The dictates of popular culture, tradition, reputation, acceptance, or esteem in the community (or in the church) must never alter the true preacher's commitment to proclaim God's word." // I have to tell you. There are times that that isn't fun. I mean we never want to offend someone needlessly. We don't want to be a jerk. // But sometimes being faithful to God's Word, when you love the people you're interacting with enough to tell them the hard truth, and you weight the eternal consequences of NOT telling them the truth, with the consequences of being seen as intolerant, mean-spirited, or harsh, I will choose being called names every time.

Look what is involved in this charge:

*reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.*

That "reprove" and "rebuke" part – yeah, people tend to not like that so much. You tend not to get on people's Christmas card list by doing these things. You tend to possibly get "unfriended" on Facebook. But you know what saddens me the most? What saddens me the most is when people stop listening to you because you're not saying "nice" things that they want to hear. Jeremiah knew that feeling very well.

It's in those times that you have to remember that if you're staying true to the Word of God, it's not you who is speaking, but God. And therefore, it's not you they are ultimately rejecting.

Look what Paul says in chapter 3, verse 16 again:

*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness*

To reprove means to reprimand; to express disapproval.

The word rebuke seems even more harsh, it means to censure severely. To scold.

And you may not approve or agree that there are times when we need to reprove and rebuke someone. But again, that is what the Word of God says. What we sometimes forget is that God demands obedience from all people without exception. That has never changed. And what Paul is saying is, we need to be ready and be faithful to proclaim the Word whether it's popular or not, and whether it's convenient or not! Why? **Because this Word is the only thing that has the power to save them!** The Word of God is the means through which God's power and grace come to sinners to save them.

In the Old Testament when Israel wandered into idolatry and forsook their God, He didn't just bring sudden judgment with no warning. He certainly *could* have. But He sent prophets to warn His people. To plead with them. To cry out against them. // Have you ever read Jeremiah? Or Ezekiel? Or some of the other Prophets? It's not always fun reading. There's a lot of rebuking and reprovng going on! The prophet Jonah was even sent to a pagan people to call them to repentance. But know this...in sending the prophets, God was being merciful and loving and gracious! He was lovingly warning them, pleading with them, "Don't keep going that way! Turn around before you go too far and face certain judgment!"

This is the call of the Church today in our society. It's part of preaching the gospel. Preaching the gospel is much more than just saying, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." Part of preaching the gospel effectively is lovingly letting people know, "Man, I had to learn this, too, but you're sinning against a holy God. What you're doing is against His perfect and eternal Word. Let me give you good news, though..."

But lest we get out of balance and in the flesh here, Paul also says, "exhort, with complete patience and teaching." We are to exhort, which means to spur on or encourage, to urge someone to go in a certain direction. This is the positive part of our calling. But we do so patiently, knowing that it is God who works in them both to will and to do His good pleasure.

Brothers and sisters, listen to me here. Never be afraid to speak the truth of God's Word to people. If we are bound by the thought that we have to be the ones who actually "seal the deal" with them, then we aren't fully trusting in God to do His work through His Word. You might get rejected and they might not speak to you again. But then again, they might just respond positively if they see how much you care. But the important thing

is to plant the Word of God in their spirit. That seed might get into their heart and begin to work in them, and all of a sudden they begin to get increasingly restless and uncomfortable in their life. That Word which was planted in their heart might begin to awaken their conscience that had been hardened, until one day they come to the end of themselves, their eyes are opened, and they cry out to God. That's the power of the Word of God!

Folks, there is responsibility on both sides of this. As Paul said in Ephesians 4:15, "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ."

But on the other hand, what happens when we're on the receiving end of this? How will you respond? Will you respond humbly, recognizing that God's Word has authority over you and that God loves you and wants to bring correction to you as a loving Father who loves His children? Or will you get offended and prideful and push back against such correction?

But whether we receive push back from our listeners or not, we need to keep something else in mind, which is our third point today:

### **3. Understand the world's desperate need for the Word. (vv. 3-4)**

*<sup>3</sup> For 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, <sup>4</sup> and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.*

This passage pretty much speaks for itself. It's what we're seeing today.

Paul says people will not endure sound teaching. That word "endure" means "to put up with" or "to tolerate." We've definitely come to the day when people don't tolerate sound teaching from the Word of God.

Paul says they "accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions" and "turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths." Notice the contrast between "sound teaching" and "teachers to suit their own passions." Two things to note here:

- First of all, what constitutes "sound teaching?" Well, when we remember the context that this passage is in, we know that the Word of God is the standard for sound teaching. Not Paul's opinion, or someone else's opinion, but God's Word alone.
- Second, notice that these people accumulate for themselves "teachers" to suit their own passions. A teacher is supposed to be someone who imparts true information for someone to learn. The posture of a learner should be that of humbly receiving information that they don't choose, but rather information that is simply true. Here, however, you have people who seem to already have an idea what they want to hear and so they find people who will tell them that. They certainly don't want to have someone reprove them or rebuke

them. They probably don't even want to be exhorted and they certainly don't want to be taught sound teaching because that would mean they would have to change their lifestyle. They would have to give up their precious independence and individualism and lay down their sins (which they've chosen to embrace as something they identify with). And to say that they're wrong? Well, who are you to do that? What right do you have?

And then we as Christians get intimidated by this way of thinking and capitulate. We certainly don't wish to offend anybody. See, the trap we often fall into is creating a false dichotomy that says, in essence, "I don't want to be seen as mean-spirited and judgmental so therefore we just need to love them, even if we don't agree with them." When in actuality, no such dichotomy is necessary. We can befriend them and love them and still tell them the truth.

But as soon as we get to that place where we are afraid to speak the truth of Scripture to them, we have ceased to love them // and now, by being silent, we have enabled and validated their sin that will eventually send them straight to hell for all eternity. That's because if people don't perceive their sinfulness and poverty of spirit, they will never be able to sense how desirable Christ is as their Savior.

And so I ask you...how is that loving them? If we truly believe that the Bible is the Word of God, and that it is true in all that it says, and that these Words alone can save us, then how much do you have to hate someone to withhold from them the only truth that will free them from their slavery to sin? How much do you have to hate someone to "love" them straight into hell? //

In contrast, Paul weeps for such people.

**Philippians 3:18-19** <sup>18</sup> *For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears [the NKJV says, and now tell you even weeping], (many) walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup> Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.*

And speaking of the hard letter of correction that Paul had to write to the Corinthians, Paul says to his readers in 2 Corinthians 2:4 –

*For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.*

In Matthew 23:37, Jesus laments:

*"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" //*

So first, understand the urgency of the Word.

Second, understand what is required for the Word.

Third, understand the world's desperate need for the Word.

#### **4. Understand your marching orders for the Word. (v. 5)**

<sup>5</sup> *As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*

The word “sober-minded” means “clear-headed.” In other words, our thinking shouldn’t be clouded with self-serving agendas or worldly ways of thinking. Rather our thinking should line up with the Word of God. Does the Word of God say something is a sin? Then call it a sin. Does the Word of God give clear instruction about something? Then take heed to it. Don’t try to make it say what you want it to say.

Then Paul tells Timothy to “endure suffering.” Which is exactly what we will have to do if we obey Paul’s charge here in 2 Timothy. You will suffer. If not physically, then certainly emotionally when people abandon you and chide you and mock you and call you all sorts of names. There are instances even here in the United States where people are suffering financially because they have stayed true to God’s Word. There is a cost! But we do it as a good soldier, and one who is captivated by our glorious King whom the world has rejected.

Then he says, “Do the work of an evangelist.” This is what tells me that this whole passage concerns more than just the church. Certainly it applies first to believers in the church, but doing the work of an evangelist speaks of ministering to the unsaved as well. You don’t have to be called to the full time vocation of evangelist. But we all are called to proclaim the gospel wherever we go. As we go about our day, preach the gospel! As we go to school, or to work, or to the grocery store, or take a walk in our neighborhood, preach the gospel! The time is getting short. Christ could come back at any moment. The person you pass in the hall might die in a car wreck on their way home. We have such good news for the world! Proclaim it!

There is a popular quote that is often mistakenly attributed to Francis of Assisi. It goes, “Preach the gospel at all times. If necessary, use words.” Aside from the fact that Francis probably never said that, the quote is horrible advice. Preaching the gospel requires the use of words. Yes, our lives and our actions should line up with our preaching, but it is through preaching, through proclaiming the gospel that the power and grace from God to change lives comes.

Finally, fulfill your ministry. While this passage may have particular application for pastors, everyone has been called to ministry. Whatever you do for a living, wherever you go in your day, you are a missionary there. A faithful minister always brings the Word of God to bear upon whatever situation he finds himself in. We should never leave our environment unaffected by the truth of God’s Word.

[Shift gears]

As we prepare to partake of the bread and cup this morning, I want to call you to take inventory of your life. Have you been a faithful minister of God’s Word? Or have you wasted your time being influenced by the world?

We all come up short in this area at times, but the answer is not an endless cycle of guilt or trying harder to do better. The answer is always the gospel. This is God's grace being offered freely through His Word. And He offers His grace to you today through Christ.

As the elements are passed, take a few minutes and think honestly about your life. After the trays come to you, please hold your elements so we can take them together. But as you are waiting, take that time to honestly evaluate your calling and ask God for forgiveness where needed, and receive the grace that He offers.

1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

- Ushers may come with the elements
- 1 Corinthians 11:23-25
- Pray
- Closing song

The Lord bless you and keep you;

<sup>25</sup> the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;

<sup>26</sup> the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.