

Session 7

GOSPEL MINISTRY

2 Timothy 4:1-5

Memory Verse

² Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and teaching.

– 2 TIMOTHY 4:2, CSB



Gospel Ministry

THEOLOGICAL THEME: The sufficiency of the Scriptures is the primary theological theme in this passage. If we believe that the Word of God is indeed sufficient for life and godliness, then the primary work for the pastor will be to feed the sheep with it (Acts 6). Furthermore, the church will be regulated by the Scriptures and the Scriptures will take center stage in all her gatherings.

Thomas Manton said, “We must look upon Jesus as a father carrying all his children on his back, or lapped up in his garment, through a deep river, through which they must need pass; and, as it were, saying to them, ‘Fear not, I will set you safely on land!’ Look upon Christ wading with all his children through the floods of death and Hell, and saying: Fear not, worm Jacob; fear not, poor souls, I will get you safely across!”¹ It is a wonderfully comforting thought for a Christian to picture him or herself safely caught up with their Redeemer.

? How important would you say the Bible is to faithfully following Jesus? What role should the Bible play in the church?

? What are some other things that people might view as important in following Jesus?

God has given us an amazing gift in order to sustain our souls and bolster our faith: His Word. The Scriptures contain all that we need for life and godliness. They teach us the truth about ourselves and about God. They help us to draw near to God and give us comfort and rest. When we read, study, and meditate upon the Scriptures with repentance, faith, and humility then we are like the poor soul clinging to a great Redeemer wading us through the floods of death and hell.

That's why it is so critical that pastors preach the Word to the church when they gather together each week. They don't need man's opinions, myths and legends, or inspirational speeches. They need the pure milk of the Word by which they may be nourished and through which they may be guided more surely to their Savior. That's why Paul told Timothy in our passage today, "Preach the Word!"

Session Summary

Paul's aim in this passage was to grab Timothy's attention. The stakes were too high for Timothy miss what Paul had to say. His work was too critical. It was absolutely necessary for Timothy to stay the course and fulfill his ministry. Keep in mind that Paul was writing to a pastor of a local church, Timothy. It isn't sound Bible interpretation and application to simply say that everyone is commanded by God to "Preach the Word". For one, Paul was commanding Timothy to preach the Word in the context of the local church. Only qualified pastors should do this. Not everyone. Paul made that very clear in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

1. The Charge (2 Timothy 4:1-2)

Throughout 2 Timothy up until the first 2 verses of chapter 4, Paul told Timothy the same thing over and over. Yet, this wasn't redundant or excess. Rather, Paul simply emphasized his primary message to Timothy by communicating in different ways and from different angles. Several themes are constant throughout this letter. One is suffering. Paul had suffered and was in jail at the writing of this letter. Timothy had suffered as well and could expect more. The second theme is endurance. Paul wanted Timothy to continue to faithfully carry out the ministry that had been entrusted to him. He had work to do and Paul used this letter to help him stay the course.



What motivation did Paul give in verse 1 for faithfully preaching the Word? How should this motivate us to pursue faithfulness to Him?

In verse 1 Paul delivered a 1-2 punch. First, he told Timothy, “I charge you.” This wasn’t a small thing. All evidence that we have suggests that Paul and Timothy were very close and loved each other in the Lord. They were co-laborers, but their relationship was probably more akin to a father-son relationship than a best friend type of relationship. Paul repeatedly called Timothy his son in the faith. Paul was older than Timothy and had served as a spiritual father to him. Paul was giving Timothy as stern a fatherly warning as he could. We could translate it as “I solemnly warn you”.

Paul then reminded Timothy that his work was to be fulfilled under the gaze of God. Paul held authority in Timothy’s life, but at the end of the day Timothy wasn’t laboring for Paul’s approval. Timothy didn’t obey the word of Paul. Paul wasn’t Timothy’s Lord and Savior. Christians don’t live to please men since they are servants of Christ. Timothy was to labor under the gaze and authority of the Triune God with a view that Christ would one day return. Paul wanted Timothy to realize that two great changes were coming.

First, Timothy would die and he would pass before the judgment seat of God. What would matter at that moment? This is a good practice for us. Five seconds into eternity, what will we care about? What will matter? What will we regret? Second, Jesus would return and God’s Kingdom would be established finally and fully.

Both of these great changes meant two things for Timothy. The first is he would one day joyfully enter into God’s presence where he would rest and worship for eternity. The second is that his opportunity to serve the Lord by sharing the Word with others would eventually end.

? How does it change your perspective of your life when you think about the promise of Jesus' return? How does it impact how you see your neighbors, friends and co-workers?

Paul told Timothy that he must “Preach the Word.” All of the commands that Paul had given Timothy up until this point culminated in these three words. This was the essence of what Timothy was called to do. In fact, as one who has been saved by Jesus, you have the power to preach the Word too! You likely won't do this from a stage on a Sunday morning, but you can do so daily by your actions and words.

Paul alluded to this sacred charge repeatedly in chapters 1-3. Finally, he addressed Timothy directly so that there would be no confusion. Whenever Paul said “rekindle the gift of God that is in you” (1:6), “hold on to the pattern of sound teaching that you have heard from me” (1:13), “what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men” (2:2), and the like, he was telling Timothy indirectly to preach the Word. In 4:2, he stated this directly.

Paul strongly charged Timothy to be ready to fearlessly proclaim the gospel from the Scriptures to all people by exposing their sin, ordering them both to turn from sin and to obey God's commands. Timothy was to do this with patience and great effort.

? Application: Even if you are not a pastor or teacher, what responsibility do you have to properly share the truth of the Bible?

2. Trouble on the Way (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

Paul turned from explaining to Timothy his role as an elder, to paint a discouraging picture. He said that a time was coming when people would reject that which they most needed. Paul wrote in the future tense, but his other letters betray the fact that

this was already happening. It is still happening, of course. Paul anticipated that this sort of attitude toward Christianity would only increase.

How did Paul describe the people that he warned Timothy about in verses 3-4?

Paul said, they “have an itch to hear what they want to hear.” He explained specifically what he meant when he said:

- They will multiply teachers for themselves.
- They will turn away from hearing the truth.
- They will turn aside to myths.

This is a fearful thing to consider. In verses 3-4, Paul described what it looks like to have a veneer of Christianity and religion but to be a dead person walking. One who consistently lives in this way proves him or herself to be a child of the devil, not a child of God.

This is a difficult situation and Paul recognized that it warranted a warning for Timothy. Why? It presented a predicament for the preacher. It would be easier if these people were outright opposed to Timothy and the message of the gospel. It would be less dangerous if they simply rejected Christ and the message of the cross outright, but they didn't. Today, some might say things like, “That preacher talks about hell and sin too much. All he does is makes me feel bad. I want to enjoy today. I'm taking my family somewhere else.” Or, “Do we have to talk about the blood of Christ so much? That's so off-putting. No one is ever going to join our church if we keep this up.”

What can we learn from Paul's negative description to understand how Christians should live?

We can look at Paul's description of these people and turn it inside out in order to discern what a faithful church member looks like. This will give us another way to measure ourselves. It's one thing to say, "well, I'm not turning away from the truth or chasing after myths." Let's look at the inversions of Paul's description:

- I. Rejoices in and is satisfied by sound teaching.
 - 1. Does not look for new teachers, church, or group when encountering hard biblical teaching.
 - 2. Receives Scriptural truth even when it hurts.
 - 3. Contented with what is written in the Scriptures and unwilling to waste time going beyond is written.

 Application: Which of the two descriptions above fits your life more accurately? How does your life give evidence of this?

3. Some Helps (2 Timothy 4:5)

In verse 5, Paul gave Timothy a list of instructions that would help him stay faithful to the task of preaching the Word. These weren't new commands that should be taken as independent of the charge in verse two. Rather, they are sub points to the main point of preaching the Word.

 What commands did Paul give Timothy in verse 5? What jumps out at you? What do you find encouraging or challenging about the list?

 How is self control connected to following Jesus faithfully?

Let's rephrase these commands to get a better handle on them:

- Keep yourself in submission to God's Word.
- Don't give up.
- Preach the gospel to the lost.
- Preach the Word to the church in Ephesus.

The first two commands that Paul gave had to do with Timothy's inner state. Timothy had to be self-controlled so that he could effectively minister through diligent preparation and careful management of resources such as his time. Further, he had to be self-controlled so that he would not act on sinful desires and disqualify himself from ministry. This was an inward battle that Timothy would need to keep fighting.

Similarly, Paul commanded Timothy to endure hardship. Again, we see the theme of suffering and endurance. Timothy needed to lean upon the Lord for the strength and ability to continue to plod in the ministry in the midst of difficulty and suffering.

The first two commands paved the way for the second two. It would be impossible for Timothy to preach the gospel to the lost and the Word to the church if he were unprepared, disqualified, or had quit.

? **Application:** We are not all preachers, but we are all believers empowered to proclaim the truth of the gospel to the lost and searching. If you've never written out your personal testimony and your understanding of the gospel, do that this week. Consider sharing what you write with your group next week.

Conclusion

“Preach the Word” is the essence of Paul’s second letter to his son in the faith, Timothy. All of his counsel and commands before and after the verse emanated from that command like spokes on a bicycle wheel. The church in Ephesus was so precious to God and His Word is so powerful and effective to accomplish His purposes in His people that Timothy was to give his life over to the preaching of it, even in the midst of suffering.

? Do you desire to obey God’s Word for man’s approval or because of your responsibility before God?? How does a person’s life show their motivation for obedience?

? Consider how you can have a Gospel conversation with your neighbor, friend, or co-worker this week. Review the Gospel Conversation exercise and focus study Brentwood Baptist is offering (<https://brentwood.church/groups/group/?id=10591>).

CHRIST CONNECTION: The Scriptures are sufficient precisely because they contain the full counsel of God, which culminates in the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: Since the Scriptures are indeed sufficient, then missions endeavors must be regulated by them. Furthermore, the primary work of the missionary and disciple ought to be to share God’s Word with the lost.



FOR NEXT WEEK

Gospel Good-Bye

Main Passages

- 2 Timothy 4:9-19

Session Outline

1. The Lord Will Repay
2. The Lord Stood
3. The Lord Will Rescue

Memorize

² Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and teaching.

- 2 Timothy 4:2, CSB

Daily Readings

- Monday - 2 Timothy 4:1-5
- Tuesday - 1 Timothy 4:16
- Wednesday - Psalm 119:105
- Thursday - Hebrews 4:12
- Friday - Titus 1:9
- Saturday - 1 Timothy 6:20

References

¹Spurgeon, C. H., and Thomas Manton. *Flowers from a Puritan's Garden: Illustrations and Meditations*. Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2017.