

Session 8

UNBROKEN CHAIN

2 Timothy 4:1-8

Memory Verse

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

– 2 TIMOTHY 4:1, CSB

Unbroken Chain

THEOLOGICAL THEME: Paul wrote to Timothy at the end of his life to give a solemn charge of how to be a godly, effective pastor. His words are helpful for any believer who wants to live a life of impact.

Transitions are a part of life. We all experience times when someone hands a position of responsibility or influence to someone else. The one passing the torch typically spends intentional time preparing the one who will receive the leadership role and take over when the previous leader is gone.

Both parties in a transition have important roles to play. The one handing off must be willing to do what is necessary to impart the needed information or training so that the one who is taking over can handle his or her new responsibilities well. Although the process can go wrong in plenty of ways, there are also many examples over the years of those who have had very successful transitions. Today, we will look at Paul's words to Timothy in a time of transition.

❓ When have you been involved in passing the torch in some way?

❓ What kinds of things make this process easier or more difficult?

❓ What are some important attitudes each person needs for a successful transition of leadership or power?

Session Summary

In a letter to his son in the ministry, Timothy, Paul gave some strong, sound advice about how to stay focused and effective. The solemn charge was direct and applicable for Timothy and any believer who wants to glorify the Lord. Paul explained why this charge matters and how to accomplish it. Paul passed the torch as he neared the end of his ministry to Timothy, a young pastor who was just getting started.

Each of us who follow Jesus have been called to reach the world with the gospel. To fulfill this calling, we need to be intentional about sharing what we know from the Word, obeying the Word ourselves, and taking advantage of every opportunity we can find to do the work of an evangelist. Our goal is to be like Paul who looking back at his life was able to say confidently that he knew a heavenly reward was coming his way.

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

The apostle Paul sent this letter to his ministry protegee, Timothy. Paul did much of his teaching and discipling through letters. In this letter, Paul gave Timothy a strong charge regarding his continuing work as a young pastor. Paul's use of the word "charge" emphasized to the seriousness of the words that would follow. If Timothy wanted to be a godly pastor, he needed to heed Paul's instruction.

Paul reminded Timothy who would judge his work in ministry. Timothy was not only accountable to Paul or those who ministered to but also to the Judge of all, Jesus Christ.

To be prepared for the day when Jesus returned, Paul gave specific advice to this young pastor that all Christ followers can take to heart and apply to our lives. First, he challenged Timothy to preach the Word. It was not enough that Timothy knew the Word or believed the word but that he was diligent to preach the Word. This is still true for all pastors today. They must be dedicated to preaching the Word and keeping their focus on Scripture without getting distracted by other things. Those who are not called to be pastors will not preach in the same way, but we are to meditate on and speak the Word to ourselves and others constantly.

? How might the average believer apply the idea of preaching the Word each day? You may not have opportunity to speak in front of a room, but what influence has God given to share His truth with others?

Paul also told Timothy to be ready in season and out of season. Timothy was charged with being ready and prepared to preach at any moment. Whether it is a perfect setting or not, a godly pastor needs to take advantage of each opportunity that comes his way to preach the Word. All Christians need to be ready to share the Word and how it applies to our lives with others.

? How can you be ready “in season and out of season” (v. 2)? What preparation is required for this?

Paul continued his charge with the specific goal of preaching the Word. Timothy needed to help people see how God’s Word impacted their lives. When handled appropriately, Scripture can guide, encourage, motivate, convict, and challenge the choices we make in our daily lives. Preaching is all about holding up the Word of God before people and letting the Holy Spirit do His work.

? Application: How do you need God to work through His Word in your life?

2. The Need for Preaching (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

Paul also laid out the reason behind his strong charge. There is power and motivation in knowing why something is a big deal. When people understand the “why,” they are more likely to take up the charge with passion and dedication.

? Why would it be important for Timothy to understand the reason Paul encouraged Him toward preaching the Word faithfully? How would this be helpful when it became difficult to continue in ministry?


People are not naturally inclined to welcome God's Word into their lives. They are much more apt to look for what they want to hear. Paul described this as us having itching ears and looking for what would scratch and make them feel better. Think about how you've seen this to be true in your life and in the lives of those around you. Most of us would rather hear what we desire and feel better about ourselves than be convicted by hearing the Word of God. The same was true of the people in Timothy's day.

? What are some "itching ears" of the world? What specific ways do "itching ears" threaten the integrity of the church today?

The tendency to pick what is easiest for us to hear and deal with is strong. Paul said those who desire such things will accumulate teachers who reinforce their desires. This is a good reminder that the teachers who make us feel the best are not always the ones we need. We can't assume teachers are sound or faithful to God based on their number of followers. Comparing what a person teaches to Scripture is the best way to determine the validity of their teaching. Each person must test what they hear against the Bible, and every teacher or preacher must be committed to the things Paul taught Timothy.

Accumulating the wrong kind of teachers is dangerous and will lead people to believing anything that comes along. Not only might they reject God's Word, but they are also susceptible to buying into whatever the world tells them to believe. Not many of us set out to trust a lie of Satan, but when we choose to reject the truth, we will be easily swayed and wander off into believing myths.

Consider all the different myths the world promotes that Christ followers can be vulnerable to believing. Some believe people can or must earn their way to heaven. Another myth says if the good things a person does outweigh the bad things he or she does then that person is set for eternity. A different myth claims God only loves us when we are good, and we can do bad things to extinguish His love. The list goes on and on because what Paul told Timothy is still very true in our day. People look for teachings that back up the way they want to think and feel to their own detriment. That is why preachers must preach the Word faithfully and every Christ follower should beware of the danger of rejecting Scripture.

 **Application: How might you be guilty of looking for teaching to feed your selfish desires, even subconsciously?**

3. Fulfill Your Ministry (2 Timothy 4:5-8)

The broken state of the world should not make Christians feel defeated but should make us even more zealous about fulfilling the work of the ministry. Thinking about the way the enemy deceives lost people should cause those who know Jesus to be more dedicated than ever to focus on what God has called us to do.

Think about it. What would be different if all church members paid attention to their lives and were serious about living for the Lord? Consider what Paul told Timothy to focus on and how your life could have more impact if you chose to follow these same instructions. To fulfill the ministry you've been called to, you must be sober minded about everything and willing to endure suffering. We need to stay submitted to the Holy Spirit and follow Him in all things, being prepared to trust the Lord even when things get tough.

Paul also encouraged Timothy to do the work of an evangelist. Even those who are not gifted in evangelism are called share the gospel. In the Great Commission, Jesus made it clear that anyone who follows Him is called to go and evangelize wherever and whenever he or she has opportunity. We are all evangelists about something—whether about fitness, essential oils, homeschooling, public school, good deals, or anything else. We all talk about what we believe in.

? How can you seek to be more intentional about being an evangelist for Jesus?

Going back to the idea of transition, Paul referred to himself as a drink offering that was typically poured out completely on the altar. As he considered his death, Paul used this picture to describe the way he had lived and poured out his life for the Lord. He was passing on the torch to Timothy, knowing he was almost finished with the work he had been given on earth.

? A drink offering was poured out completely. Can you say that you have lived your life this way for the Lord? Why or why not? Where might you have held back in living for God's purposes?

Paul knew when he finished his race, a reward would be waiting for him, and he was ready to receive that reward. He wrote with great confidence at the end of his life, just as he had lived with great confidence since his salvation. It is almost as if he was picturing the award ceremony at which he would be honored. Being motivated by heavenly rewards to come isn't wrong, as those things are all found in Jesus. On that day, those who live faithfully will hear Jesus say, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21). Stay the course and fulfill the ministry you have been given.

? Application: Where is God calling you to stay the course right now? Why can you trust Him to sustain you, even when it's difficult?


Conclusion


This passage of Scripture is sound advice for pastors. Although most followers of Jesus are not actually called to full time pastoring, Paul's words to Timothy provide excellent application for the average believer too. With all the world uses to come against Christians, it is imperative to stay focused on the calling of God on your life.

For pastors, this means to keep preaching the Word, even when the message is difficult. For those not called to be pastors, the goal is to keep sharing what you learn and know about the Word so you can help evangelize the lost world. People are attracted to what makes them feel good about themselves and their choices. Paul described this as having itching ears and looking for something to scratch that itch to give relief. We are called proclaim the truth in a world of lies.

Every one of us has opportunities to share truth with those who need to hear it. Paul reminds us that even though it can be tough at times, it is always worth it to obey the Lord and bring glory to Him. Our goal is to be like Paul and live in such a way that at the end of our lives we can confidently say we know we will receive a heavenly reward for the choices we made.

 What stands out to you from today's lesson? Where is God calling you to change or adjust to live faithfully for Him?

 How can we as a group encourage one another to stay on guard and not give in to our "itching ears" when it comes to the Word of God?

 How is God calling you to live as an evangelist? Who will you seek a gospel conversation with this week?

Here's How to Become a Christ-Follower:

Read the following verses and ask after each one: "What does this say to me?"

- **All have sinned:** Romans 3:23 & 1 John 1:8
- **The wages of sin:** Romans 6:23 & John 3:18
- **But while we were sinners, salvation was provided:** Romans 5:8
- **Become a Christ-follower:** Romans 10:9-10 Confess and Believe

Accepting Christ is Just the Beginning:

Next Steps:

- Publicly profess your faith by being baptized (Matthew 10:32-33; Luke 3:21; Romans 6:4).
- Join a church which follows the Bible, where you can grow in your faith through prayer, Bible study and fellowship with other Christians.
- Get involved in groups for encouragement and accountability.
- Begin a daily personal worship experience with God where you study the Bible and pray.
- Share with others what Jesus has done for you. Tell your story (Romans 10:14; Matthew 28:19-20).
- Begin to live for God (Romans 12:1-2, 9-18; James 1:19-27).

Prayer Prompts:

1. What do you need to submit to the Holy Spirit to fulfill the ministry you have been called to?
2. What opportunities has God given you to live out your faith and preach the gospel in your day to day life?



FOR NEXT WEEK

The Gospel First and Always

Main Passages

- Romans 1:1-17

Session Outline

1. The Gospel of God (Romans 1:1-6)
2. Encouragement for the Church (Romans 1:7-15)
3. Not Ashamed (Romans 1:16-17)

Memorize

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

- 2 Timothy 4:1, CSB