

2 Timothy 4:1-8      “Preach the Word, Part 2”  
Joel 1  
Psalm 104:1-15

January 15, 2012

The “drink offering” is a crucial image in 2 Timothy 4,  
and Joel 1 helps us understand the role of the drink offering in Israel’s worship.

Numbers 28 requires a drink offering to be offered with the burnt offering every day –  
and special drink offerings (of wine or strong drink)  
were to be offered on every feast day as well.

When we think of the offerings of the Old Testament,  
we usually think of the bloody sacrifices – the burnt offering and peace offerings –  
the slaughter of animals.

But offerings of grain and wine (the grain offering and the drink offering)  
were also essential parts of the temple service.

As we see in Joel 1, drink offerings and grain offerings were closely associated.  
After all, grain and wine were two of the most common crops -  
and two of the most necessary crops!

Without grain, there is no food.  
Without wine, there is no joy.

When the locusts devour the grain harvest,  
the ground mourns.  
When the swarming locust sucks all the fruit from the earth,  
gladness itself dries up from the children of man.

Notice that for Joel the true catastrophe is not that we have no food left to eat!  
The reason for mourning and lamentation  
is that “grain offering and drink offering are withheld from the house of God.”

The drink offering, then, is not an atoning sacrifice  
(there is no shedding of blood in the drink offering).  
It is rather a solemn expression of joy and thanksgiving.  
Before the worshiper would eat *and drink* in the temple during the covenant meal,  
God himself would “partake,” as it were,  
as the priest poured out the drink offering on the sacrifice.  
The drink offering is God’s portion.  
And only when the drink offering had been poured out,  
would the worshipers then partake

Our Psalm of response, Psalm 104, speaks of grain and wine in similar terms –  
which is why we use Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy” as the tune!

Sing Psalm 104:1-15  
Read 2 Timothy 4

### **Introduction**

As I get closer to the day of my death,  
I begin to see with greater clarity the reason for Paul's urgency with Timothy.

You might say – "Pastor, you're only 41 – you're not that close!"

Are you so sure?!  
Even the actuarial tables would say that I am closer to the day of my death  
than to the day of my birth!  
But every day brings me one day closer to death.

And then, one day it will be my last day.

When Paul wrote to the Philippians he said that he was still pressing on  
to obtain that for which Christ had laid hold of him.

Now he says, "I have finished the race."  
Paul's work is complete.

Timothy must now carry on the work of an evangelist.  
Timothy must now continue in the work that Paul began.

Remember that when Paul wrote these words,  
the Christian church barely existed.

Among the millions of people who lived in the Roman empire,  
there were only a few thousand Christians.

From the way Paul and the other apostles talk,  
it is likely that the heretical groups that used the name of Jesus  
outnumbered the Christians!

[Incidentally, people today often talk about the "Gospel of Thomas"  
or other "ancient Christian" documents that tell "other" stories about Jesus;  
we shouldn't be surprised by that!  
The apostles themselves were well-aware of these "other" stories –  
and warned the church against them!]

And yet Paul has complete confidence that this tiny, beleaguered group  
is going to grow and expand throughout the whole earth!

Why?  
Because Jesus is who he said he was!

Jesus is the Son of God.  
He was born of the Virgin – he suffered under Pontius Pilate –  
he died for our sins – he was raised from the dead –  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father –  
and from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

So far, in our study of the Pastoral Epistles, we have emphasized the first coming of Christ.  
But here, Paul emphasizes his return – his “appearing” –  
and the final Day of judgment.

And one day – as sure as I am standing here today –  
I will stand before Christ the judge.

And the Lord Jesus Christ will look me in the eye  
and ask for an accounting of what I preached and taught –  
for how I did the work of an evangelist –  
for how I handled the word of truth,  
and for how I cared for your souls.

Paul has frequently urged, exhorted, and called Timothy  
to be faithful to his calling as a pastor.

Now he charges him.  
What is a “charge”?

The Greek word for “charge” is the word used in Luke 16,  
where the rich man asks Abraham,  
“let Lazarus *warn* my brothers” about the torments of Hades.  
Or Acts 2, where Peter “exhorts” the people to  
“save yourselves from this crooked generation” by repenting and being baptized.

Throughout Acts, Luke often uses this word to refer to how the apostles  
“testified” that Jesus is the one God has ordained to judge the living and the dead  
(Acts 8:25; 10:42; 18:5; 20:21).

We’ve already seen it in 2 Timothy 2:14,  
where Paul was to “charge them before God not to quarrel about words,  
which does no good, but only ruins the hearers.”

In other words,  
a charge (in the NT) is a solemn warning that judgment day is coming.

And so Paul says to Timothy,  
My son, judgment day is coming.  
You are going to have to give an account for your ministry (your stewardship).  
So pay attention to what I’m saying!

## **1. The Witnesses of Paul's Charge: God & Christ the Judge (v1)**

And Paul starts by calling witnesses.

*<sup>1</sup> 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:*

I want you to think about what Paul is doing by calling God and Christ Jesus as witnesses.

This is a solemn oath that Paul takes –  
which has the effect of a curse!

We don't often think of it this way,  
but if Timothy fails to do what Paul charges him to do,  
then Timothy will fall under the judgment of Jesus Christ!

When a man is ordained,  
he is charged in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus the judge,  
to live and act and speak according to the gospel.

A man who fails in this charge falls under God's curse.

But on the other hand,  
this calling of witnesses also has a positive function:  
it is the presence of God and of Christ Jesus that will strengthen Timothy in his calling!  
It is by his appearing and by his kingdom  
that Christ Jesus will bring Timothy's work to its glorious conclusion!

Christ is coming – he is coming to judge the living and the dead –  
therefore I charge you:

## **2. The Content of Paul's Charge: Preach the Word (v2)**

*<sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.*

The content of Paul's charge is very simple:  
preach the word.

The Word refers back to what we saw last time –  
as Paul said that “all scripture is God-breathed,  
and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction,  
and for training in righteousness,  
that the man of God [the preacher] may be competent,  
equipped for every good work.”

Timothy must be so saturated in the scriptures  
that he is competent to teach, reprove, correct, and train.

A pastor must always be ready to preach.

Preaching is not the same as lecturing.

Preaching is first and foremost the announcement of a message.

The word for “preach” is often translated “herald” in secular Greek.

The herald is one who proclaims a message – who announces the news of some big event.

The *Word* – the message – that has been proclaimed to you,  
is that *Jesus* is Lord.

God has raised Jesus from the dead and seated him in glory at his right hand.

Therefore, repent of your sins

(which means above all else: repent of not putting his kingdom first!).

The point of the gospel is not that you would live a good life (or a happy life).

The point of the gospel is that you would live a Jesus-centered life!

And that is why three things are inseparably attached to “preach the word”:

reprove, rebuke, and exhort.

The first word is “reprove” –

the idea here has to do with disproving, cross-examining, convicting  
(the word is “elencho” – from which we get the word “elenctic”

Francis Turretin wrote an “Institutes of Elenctic Theology”  
in order to “reprove” the errors of his day.)

But the focus here is on the “debating” side of things.

Part of the task of preaching is to “convict” or “convince”

to *persuade* you to turn from your sins and put your hope and trust in Jesus.

The second word is “rebuke” –

if “reprove” has the idea of answering arguments and demonstrating the truth  
“rebuke” has the idea of declaring a verdict.

This word is used for a judge declaring censure or penalty.

In some cases, the pastor needs to convince and persuade.

In other cases, when a person refuses to listen to reason,  
the pastor needs to rebuke.

The third word is “exhort” –

an exhortation can take a lot of forms,

it can be a call, an invitation, a summons, even a demand –

but the common feature of all exhortations

is that they appeal to the will.

Reproof appeals to the intellect –

seeking to convince the mind.

An exhortation appeals to the will –  
where the mind is already made up,  
and the problem is that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak!

For many of you, you *know* what you should do.  
The problem is you don't want to do it.  
You have made your peace with sin –  
and therefore you are at war with God!  
As John Owen puts it,  
“be killing sin, or it will be killing you!”

I can assure you that if there is an area of your life where you are miserable,  
it is because God is being *kind* to you!  
He is reminding you that the wages of sin is death!  
But the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

And that's why Paul says that the pastor is to do this  
“with all patience and teaching.”

In reproving errors the pastor must be patient,  
and gently instruct those who are straying in their doctrine and life.  
In rebuking sin the pastor must also be patient,  
and continue to teach those who have refused to listen in the past.  
And exhortation can never be devoid of doctrine –  
but the pastor must remind his congregation of the very truth  
that he calls them to live by!

Because our doctrine – our teaching –  
is nothing more or less than Jesus Christ, the Son of God!

### **3. The Reason for Paul's Charge: Because People Will Not Endure Sound Teaching (v3-4)**

And in verses 3-4 Paul explains the reason for this charge –  
and the reason why Timothy (and I) must continue in it:

<sup>3</sup> *For the time is coming when people will not endure sound<sup>[c]</sup> 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.*

As I said last time,  
2 Timothy is one of the more ‘pessimistic’ books of the Bible.  
Paul looks around and sees the apostasy and false teaching that has arisen,  
and he warns Timothy that it's only going to get worse.

The day will come when people will not endure sound teaching.

They will have “itching ears” – they want teachers who suit their own passions.

What does it mean to have “itching ears”?

Notice that such a person turns away from the truth, and wanders off into myths.

The idea here is very similar to the one Paul suggested earlier  
when talking about the women who were always learning,  
but never coming to a knowledge of the truth,  
“led astray by various passions” (3:6-7).

The one with itching ears always wants to be hearing something new.  
They are not satisfied with the truth –  
they want more!

The word “passion” makes us think of gross immorality –  
as though they want teachers who approve of their scandalous behavior –  
but that’s not necessarily the case.

Passions simply refer to “strong desires.”

For Paul, the passions are usually identified with the flesh –  
with those desires that lead us away from Christ.

What people want is pastors who will not challenge their *real* passions.

When I first entered the ministry I was told by one man  
“I want you to tell me to read my Bible, and pray everyday,  
and evangelize my neighbors;  
but all this stuff about a new identity, a new family –  
that makes me uncomfortable.”

In other words,

he didn’t mind feeling a little guilty about his mediocre prayer life;  
but he didn’t want to hear anything that would require a fundamental change  
in the way he lived his life Monday through Saturday.

But the gospel requires a fundamental change  
in the way that we live Monday through Saturday.

Reformed churches are often known for how seriously we take the Lord’s Day –  
the Christian Sabbath.

Sure, I want us to do well at that –  
but I am more interested in the other six days!

Paul is so overmastered by the gospel,  
that the presence of God and of Christ Jesus  
is more real to him than the presence of anything else.

So Paul says to Timothy

“I charge you...by the appearing of Christ – and by his kingdom! –  
Preach the word!”

#### **4. The Object of Paul's Charge: Timothy (v5)**

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

And in verse 5, Paul turns to Timothy, in particular, as the object of his charge, and gives him four challenges:

always be sober-minded (don't get excited – think things through)  
endure suffering (it case it hasn't sunk in yet – there *is* no way to glory, except the way of the cross!)  
do the work of an evangelist (get out there, Timothy, and preach the gospel!  
Bring the message – the good news – of Jesus to everyone around you),  
fulfill your ministry (fill up, bring to completion, fill completely  
the diakonian – the ministry – that you have been given).

The pastor is to have the same single-minded focus on the appearing and kingdom of Christ that Paul has.

And Paul (as he does only occasionally in his epistles) concludes his charge by using himself as an example.

#### **5. The End of Paul's Charge: the Crown of Righteousness (v6-8)**

<sup>6</sup> *For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.*

The drink offering was poured out on the sacrifice – the peace offering.

Earlier, I mentioned Paul's letter to the Philippians.

In that letter he spoke of himself as still running the race –  
that he says now “I have finished the race.”

In that letter he also spoke of himself as being “poured out” as a drink offering.

There he had urged the Philippians,

“Do all things without grumbling or questioning,  
that you may be blameless and innocent,  
children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation,  
among whom you shine as lights in the world,  
holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ  
I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.  
Even if I am poured out as a drink offering  
upon the sacrificial offering of your faith,  
I am glad and rejoice with you all.” (Phil. 2:14-17)

Paul is the one who called the church of Rome to “offer themselves as a living sacrifice” –  
so it is hardly surprising to hear him use sacrificial language here.

Paul sees his life (and death) as a pouring out of himself –



but not in a gloomy, morose way –  
but rather in a joyful way!  
In the way of a drink offering (of wine, that gladdens the heart).

And with that joy, Paul says,

*<sup>7</sup> I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup> Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.*

Paul began his charge by calling God and Christ Jesus the judge as witnesses.  
He concludes his charge with a reminder to Timothy that the same Lord, the righteous judge,  
is the one who will award to him the crown of righteousness.

All those who have loved the appearing of our Lord Jesus  
will receive the crown of righteousness –  
because our Lord Jesus Christ is himself our righteousness!

But as we keep our eyes fixed upon that Hero who sits at the right hand of the Father,  
and who will come again to judge the living and the dead,  
we come today to another Hero,  
who this day will be baptized into Christ Jesus – and into his death.