

INTRODUCTION

1. What is the priority of the preacher?
2. That's the question I want to address this morning.
3. To do that, I want to invite you to take God's Word and turn with me to 2 Timothy chapter 4.
4. It is in this letter where Paul instructs his young protégé in the ministry, Timothy.
5. For those of you not familiar with this book, this is Paul's final letter before he is martyred for his testimony of Christ.
6. And the words he pens to Timothy are those that are for every preacher.
7. This is their primary duty.
8. Read 2 Timothy 4:1-5.
9. This passage answers the question I raised. What is the ***The Priority of the Preacher?*** Preach the Word!

10. This is not a program or a passing fad; it is the central ministry of the church.
11. Let's learn how important this is for the church.
12. Paul begins in verses 1-2 with a *command* to Timothy.

I. The Command (vv.1-2a)

“I solemnly charge you” or better “command.”

The Greek word (*diamarturomai*) is forceful and directive” (MacArthur Study Bible).

It could be translated “to testify” (DBL Greek) or “witness” (Wuest)

The language is very similar to 1 Tim.5:21 and 6:13:

1 Timothy 5:21 begins the same way: “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels...”

1 Timothy 6:13 says, “I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus...”

So it is a command and...

A. It is Serious (v.1)

The reason is...

1. Because who it is before

“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus”

“Presence” (enopion) or “in sight” of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Paul says it’s “in the sight of God and of Christ Jesus,” the Greek construction here is referring to the same person.

So it should read, “in the sight of God, even Christ Jesus.” The word “Lord” does not appear in the best Greek texts (Wuest).

Paul not only tells us this command is serious because of *who it is before* but it’s also serious...

2. Because of what He is going to do

He identifies Jesus as the One “who is to judge the living and the dead.”

- a) God the Father has granted all judgment to the Son

John 5:26-27 NASB, For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; 27 *and He gave Him authority to execute judgment*, because He is the Son of Man.

b) Paul made this point to the Athenians

Acts 17:30-31 NASB, Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, 31 because He has fixed a day in which *He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed*, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.

Notice now the specifics of the command...

B. It is Specific (v.2)

What does Paul command Timothy and all preachers, teachers and churches to do?

“Preach the word!”

The term “Preach translates the first of nine imperatives (or commands) Paul uses in this passage, five of them in verse 2 (preach, be ready, reprove, rebuke, exhort) and four in verse 5 (be sober, endure, do, fulfill)” (MacArthur).

1. Timothy is to preach the word

How is he to do this?

The word “preach” (kerusso) means “to herald, to proclaim publicly” (MacArthur) as an official spokesman for the King.

The word was used of “the spokesman for the Emperor, proclaiming in a formal, grave, and authoritative manner which must be listened to, the message which the Emperor gave him to announce” (Wuest).

“The word is in a construction which makes it a...command to be obeyed at once. It is a sharp command as in military language” (Wuest).

Kenneth Wuest says, “This should be the pattern for the preacher today. His preaching should be characterized by that dignity which comes from the consciousness of the fact that he is an official herald of the King of kings. It should be accompanied by that note of authority which will command the respect, careful attention, and proper reaction of the listeners.”

Not only is Timothy to preach as an authoritative spokesman for the King of kings but he is not to hold back.

He is to...

2. Timothy is to proclaim all the Word of God

The Greek term for “Word” here refers to the whole body of revealed truth” (Wuest).

It is “the entire written Word of God, His complete revealed truth” (MacArthur).

- a) **1 Timothy 4:13 NASB**, Until I come,

give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.

“Attention” Gr.proseche (pres.act.imp.),
“implies previous preparation in private”
(Rienecker).

- b) **Acts 20:27 NASB**, For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.
- c) Acts 20:20 - “I kept back nothing.”
- d) **Jonah 3:2 NASB**, Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you.

There was a day when we preached “all” the Word of God.

The puritan preacher John Trapp said, “Once we had golden ministers and wooden vessels, now we have wooden ministers and golden vessels” (The Golden Treasury of Puritan Quotations).

When is Timothy to preach all the Word of God?

2. Timothy is to always be ready to preach the Word

Paul continues in verse 2 by saying Timothy is to “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season.”

He is to “be ready” (*espitemi*), “to stand by, be present, to be at hand” (Wuest).

The verb suggests the ideas of urgency, preparedness, and readiness.

“It was used of a soldier prepared to go into battle or a guard who was continually alert for any surprise attack” (MacArthur Study Bible).

“The exhortation is for the preacher to hold himself in constant readiness to proclaim the word” (Wuest).

“There is a compulsion upon us. We should

be chafing at the bit, ready to give out the Word of God” (J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible*).

- a) He is to “be ready in season and out of season”

“In season” - “season” (eukairos), “opportune – when opportunity occurs” (Strong). It refers to a “favorable occasion for some event” (Louw-Nida).

“Out of season” - “season” (akairos), “inopportune” (Strong), “an unfavorable time” (Friberg).

Adam Clarke says, “Be urgent whether the times be prosperous or adverse, whenever there is an opportunity; and when there is none, strive to make one” (Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the New Testament).

Warren Wiersbe says, “It is easy to make excuses when we ought to be making opportunities” (The Bible

Exposition Commentary).

Notice the next three commands...

b) He is to “reprove, rebuke and exhort”

(1) “Reprove” Gr. *elegcho*
(aor.act.imp.), It is translated
“convince” in the AV. It means “to
reprove, rebuke” (Strong), “to
disgrace, put to shame” (Liddell-
Scott)

A.T. Robertson says it means “to
give honor or blame.”

It is “showing someone that he has
done something wrong and
summoning him to repent”
(Friberg).

This is ultimately why Herod put
John the Baptist to death because
he was “rebuked by him concerning
Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife,
and for all the evils which Herod

had done” (Lk.3:19).

- (2) “Rebuke” Gr.epitimaō
“Reprove and rebuke are closely related in meaning” (MacArthur).

“Reproving may have more to do with affecting the mind, with helping a person understand that what he believes or is doing is wrong. Rebuke, on the other hand, may have to do with the heart, with bringing a person under conviction of guilt” (John MacArthur, 2 Timothy).

Friberg says in his Greek lexicon the word means “to warn, strongly admonish.”

- (3) “Exhort” Gr.parakaleō, this word has a wide range of meanings in the NT from “calling out to someone to admonishing” (MacArthur). The word here, in this context, means to admonish but also “carries the idea

of encouragement” (MacArthur).

Warren Wiersbe says, “Preaching must be marked by three elements: conviction, warning, and appeal (“reprove, rebuke, exhort”). To quote an old rule of preachers, ‘He should afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted.’ If there is conviction but no remedy, we add to people’s burdens. And if we encourage those who ought to be rebuked, we are assisting them to sin. Biblical preaching must be balanced.”

Paul says in **1 Thessalonians 5:14 NASB**, We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

- c) He is to do all this “with great patience and instruction”

“Don’t be afraid to reprove or rebuke

but do it with long-suffering and doctrine. The minister's personal feelings are not the grounds for reproof: doctrine alone is that ground" (KJV Bible Commentary).

- (1) "Patience" Gr.makrothumia, it is translated "longsuffering" in the AV. It is a "state of emotional quietness in the face of unfavorable circumstances" (Friberg).

The word literally means "to abide under" and refers here to "patience with people" (MacArthur).

Paul is calling for Timothy to be patient with members of his flock "who may have been persistently stubborn and were resisting their pastor's admonitions" (MacArthur).

- (2) "Instruction" Gr.didache, refers to "what is taught, teaching, instruction or the act of teaching" (UBS).

This is “foundational to preaching, reproof, rebuking, and exhortation. It is only through careful teaching of the Word that those tasks can be successfully carried out by a pastor. An unbeliever will not be convicted of his sin and come to salvation apart from some instruction from God’s Word about his lost condition and his need for saving faith in Jesus Christ. Nor will a believer be convicted of his sin and brought to repentance and restoration apart from the work of the Word in his heart” (2 Timothy).

So Timothy is commanded to “preach the entire counsel of God’s word” in both favorable and unfavorable times.

He is to help his members understand when they’re wrong by bringing them under conviction by the Word of God and encourage them to right behavior.

And he is to be patient and let the Holy Spirit do His

work in them.

As he does them he must remember this one thing...

II. The Climate (vv.3-4)

A. It's Going to Change (v.3)

“For the time will come”

“Time” Gr.kairos, “season, period of time” (Strong). It's not referring to “chronological but epochal time” (MacArthur).

This word is used in chapter 3, verse 1 in the phrase “perilous times will come.” Verses 2-7 tell us what will characterize those times.

1. They will not “endure sound doctrine”

“Endure” Gr.anechomai, “put up with, bear with” (Strong). It could be translated “tolerate” (MacArthur).

“Paul here warns Timothy that in the dangerous seasons of this age, many people

would become intolerant of the confrontive, demanding preaching of God's Word" (MacArthur).

- a) "Sound doctrine" is "healthy teaching"
- b) They will not put up with or tolerate healthy teaching
- c) 1 Kings 22:1-8 gives a good example of this. Here the King of Israel hated Micaiah because of the truth he spoke to him. The king always viewed it as bad news.
- d) Regardless of whether people will tolerate it or not, it is to be preached. Paul told Titus the same things in **Titus 2:1 NASB**:

"But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.."

- 2. They will "accumulate for themselves teachers"

- a) This will happen “according to their own desires”

“Desires” Gr.epithumia, “lust, cravings”

Kenneth Wuest says, “These who set themselves against Pauline theology are dominated by their own private, personal cravings. Those cravings consist of the desire for personal gratification.”

Warren Wiersbe says they have “desires for religious novelties.”

- b) This will happen because they want “to have their ears tickled”

Paul told the Corinthians “And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God...and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith

would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.” (1 Cor.2:1, 4-5 NASB).

“Because of their ‘itching ears’ they would accumulate teachers who would satisfy their cravings for things that disagree with God’s truths” (Wiersbe).

Warren Wiersbe says, “The fact that a preacher has a large congregation is not always a sign that he is preaching the truth. In fact, it may be evidence that he is tickling people’s itching ears and giving them what they want to hear instead of what they need to hear.”

- c) Because of their “lust” and “itching ears” they will “accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.”

“Accumulate” Gr.episoreuo, “to accumulate further, seek additional

(Strong) or “accumulate in piles”
(Wuest).

John MacArthur says, “Instead of receiving sound doctrine, such churches fiercely reject it, wanting rather to have their ears tickled with unbiblical notions that raise their comfort level, justify or overlook their sins. They also reject as unloving anyone who presumes to hold them accountable to doctrinal beliefs and moral standards they deem outmoded (old fashioned or out-of-date) and irrelevant. Consequently the preacher whom they least like to hear brings the message they need most to hear” (*2 Timothy*).

(1) In **Jeremiah 5:30–31 NASB**,
through Jeremiah the Lord
lamented:

“An appalling and horrible thing
Has happened in the land: 31 The
prophets prophesy falsely, And the
priests rule on their own authority;

And My people love it so! But what will you do at the end of it?"

- (2) Not many years later, the Lord told Ezekiel:

“They come to you as people come, and sit before you as My people and hear your words, but they do not do them, for they do the lustful desires expressed by their mouth, and their heart goes after their gain. 32 Behold, you are to them like a sensual song by one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; for they hear your words but they do not practice them.” (**Ezek.33:31-32 NASB**).

Marvin Vincent says, “They shall invite teachers en masse. In periods of unsettled faith, skepticism, and mere curious speculation in matters of religion, teachers of all kinds swarm like the flies of Egypt. The demand creates the supply. The

hearers invite and shape their own preachers. If the people desire a calf to worship, a ministerial calf-maker is readily found.”

I am afraid we are creating these kinds of churches today. Both Willow Creek Community Church and Saddleback Valley Community Church were started after each pastor went through the neighborhood and surveyed people seeking to learn from *them* what kind of church they would attend. And then they gave them what they were searching for.

Gary Gilley in his book, *This Little Church Went to Market*, writes, “The new paradigm church has caught the wave of our times and has created a church for the entertainment age. Rather than expose and correct the superficiality and wrong mindedness of a generation addicted to fun, amusement and

self, the modern church has all too often chosen to go with the flow and give ‘them’ what they want. To be sure they have camouflaged their product with religious words and Bible verses, but when the wrappings are removed it is very difficult to distinguish what the modern church is offering from what the secular world is offering” (p.41).

He continues later by saying “Give Christians the need oriented pop-psychology that they had grown to love, they decided, just alter it a bit with a little Scripture and some references to Jesus – they would never catch on that what they were swallowing was not biblical Christianity at all, but an almost unrecognizable perversion” (p.75).

Timothy and all preachers and churches need to recognize the climate is not going to be the same.

There's not always going to be a hunger for truth. I believe that will continue to less and less.

Not only will they not put up with health teaching but...

B. They will Turn Away to Myths (v.4)

“Turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths”

“Turn” is Gr.apostrepho, “More correctly, *will turn aside*” (Vincent).

The Greek word used here “strongly implies that they once professed to hold to the truth that they “will turn away from” (Knight).

They turn aside to...

“Myths” Gr. Muthos, “fables, tales.” The word means “to signify what is not true, is not historical, and lacks reality”

This is like the people in **Acts 7:57-58 NASB** who “cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse. 58

When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.”

Or it’s like the people in **Zechariah 7:11-12 NASB** who “refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears from hearing. 12 They made their hearts like flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets; therefore great wrath came from the Lord of hosts.”

Paul is saying, “In spite of the culture and the rejection of the Word, you, Timothy are to “fulfill your ministry.”

How is he to do that? Now we come to the 6th command and this command will seal...

III. The Commitment (v.5)

A. Be Sober

“Sober” Gr.nepho, translates “be watchful”

(NKJV). It literally means “to be free of intoxicants.” Here it is used metaphorically of being “level-headed, well balanced, and in control of one’s faculties” (John MacArthur, *2 Timothy*).

“In the midst of a changing world, a changing church, and even a changing Gospel – which is not really the gospel but a distortion of ‘the gospel of Christ’ – he is to remain committed to the changeless truth of God’s Word.

B. Endure Hardship

Kakopatheo, “to suffer evil” or “hardships”

1. For many years, Paul suffered countless hardships (**2 Cor.11:23-27 NASB**)

Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. 24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was

shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. 26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; 27 I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

2. He also suffered the daily pressure of concern for the churches (**2 Cor.11:28 NASB**)

Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.

“There is no such thing as a faithful ministry that is not costly. A painless ministry is a shallow and fruitless ministry” (MacArthur).

C. Do the Work of An Evangelist

1. Notice that Paul does not tell Timothy to be

an evangelist but to “do the work of an evangelist.”

2. Proclaiming the Gospel was not all of Timothy’s ministry, he was to “preach the Word.”

D. Fulfill Your Ministry

“Fulfill” Gr. *plerophoreo*, “carries the basic idea of giving full measure or bringing to completion. In relation to a person’s work, it also carries the ideas of eagerness and wholeheartedness.”

Colossians 1:25-29 NASB says, “Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, 26 that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, 27 to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man

with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. 29 For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power

CONCLUSION

So what is to be our mission and mandate today and for the years to come? Preach the Word! Be ready regardless of the climate; convincing, rebuking, exhorting with the Word by being patient with the hearers – knowing that the time is coming when they will no longer desire to hear but will raise up teachers who will teach to satisfy their own desires. LET’S PRAY.