

**Message #14****II Timothy 4:1-4**

We get all kinds of mailings into this church and a great number of them have to do with different conferences we can attend to learn how to market the church. In fact, years ago the Associated Press out of New York concluded that many “baby boomers find churches irrelevant.” As a result, many churches have tried to develop a marketing strategy in order to fill the seats. The marketing strategies are based on trying to figure out new, exciting ways to reach the demographic group they are after. The goal is to change the dynamic of the church so the numbers will go up. So, different churches use different marketing strategies.

**Church 1** says our strategy will be to bring in a long-haired rock band. Let’s put them up on the stage with their electric guitars and drums and belch out songs that mention something about Jesus. Let them wear their T-shirts and jeans with holes in them so they can relate to the youth.

**Church 2** says our strategy will be to show a series of exciting movies. There are more than 500 so-called Christian movies: Cross & The Switchblade; Thief in the Night; The Ten Commandments; Left Behind; The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe; and Jesus of Nazareth, just to name a few.

**Church 3** says our strategy will be to have drama and plays. We will take out the pulpit and turn our stage into an acting studio. We will entertain people with our visual productions and we can act out different scenes from the Bible and from life.

**Church 4** says our strategy will be to have a series of concerts. We will focus on music. We will bring in big name singers and draw in the crowds. We will pay them their fee, the end will justify the means and we will pack out the church.

**Church 5** says our strategy will be to make all people feel good about themselves by having various encounter group sessions so each person will feel important. Let each person talk and each person have his or her own say. All people can come and all can share.

**Church 6** says our strategy will be to put on a series of interesting seminars. We will have a seminar on marriage, on finances, on sex, on aging, on retirement, on investments. That will lure in the people and they will come to the church.

**Church 7** says our strategy is to make our church a happy land filled with all kinds of fun things. We will have a coffee shop; a health club; a tattoo parlor; and even a dance floor. Let’s make church your one stop place for shopping and fun.

**Church 8** says our strategy will be to put on a circus for the kids. We will lure them in by giving away balloons; we will have animals for them to pet and horses for them to ride. We will have a lottery drawing and give away prizes. We will have snacks and airplane rides and dunk tanks; it will be a good time for all.

If you think I have made that up, think again. Every one of the things I have mentioned are the kinds of things happening in many churches this very day. The church is in a marketing mode and they are trying to use anything they can to become culturally relevant.

If we could turn back the clock to the days of Paul and ask him what should we do in the midst of a bizarre religious world that is filled with religious people, who seem to love pleasure more than God, he would tell us exactly what he told Timothy in his final charge—**“YOU PREACH GOD’S WORD.”**

Paul literally was dead serious about this command because he gave this command to Timothy as he was nearing his own execution. It is amazing to me that this text was written nearly 2000 years ago and yet it is as relevant for us today as it was when he wrote it. He knew of all the religious stuff that was luring people. He knew of the men and women who called themselves religious leaders who were moving people away from what was sound and true. But he wanted his son in the faith, Timothy, to stay focused on one goal—**PREACH GOD’S WORD.**

It was God’s Word that had been taught to Timothy (**2:2; 3:14**). It was God’s Word that was able to make Timothy wise (**3:15**). It was God’s Word that could bring people to salvation (**3:15**). It is God’s Word that is inspired (**3:16a**). It is God’s Word that is profitable (**3:16b**). It is God’s Word that is able to bring one to maturity to the point that one may be fit for any assignment (**3:17**). Paul wanted Timothy to **PREACH GOD’S WORD.**

What Paul wants to drive home to Timothy in this key charge is this:

**REGARDLESS OF WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE REST OF THE RELIGIOUS WORLD, AWARD-WINNING BELIEVERS AND AWARD-WINNING MINISTERS WILL CONTINUALLY BE DEDICATED TO THE PREACHING OF GOD’S WORD.**

John Calvin said that this text absolutely refutes fanatics who claim they do not need a preacher or teacher of God’s Word. Calvin said there are many who think that the Bible and the Holy Spirit are enough, but this passage clearly points out in a mandate from God that preachers are needed and their God-ordained assignment is to preach and teach God’s Word.

That word “preach” (kerysso) (**4:2**) is one that means to proclaim and herald. It is a word that means more than just to share something that you think is relevant. It has the idea of some type of formal and even forceful verbal public proclamation and communication of God’s Word in an accurate way. That is what preaching is.

Now when Paul gave Timothy this charge, Timothy did not own a completed Bible like we do nor did he have a library filled with homiletics books like I do. He would have had copies of various inspired letters and his job was to publicly preach God’s Word.

We know from **I Timothy 4:13** that he was to “give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.” We know from **II Timothy 2:15** that Paul commanded that Timothy study the Scriptures to the point that he could accurately present them in a straight way. We also know from **II Timothy 3:16** that the Scriptures were to be viewed as inspired and profitable.

So from these passages we may conclude that Paul’s command to preach God’s Word is a command to systematically study the inspired Word of God to the extent that you may publicly proclaim it in a textually and doctrinally accurate and precise way that is practically profitable.

So the final challenge of Paul to Timothy is to carefully study the Scriptures to the point that you can cut it straight open. That is what Paul would have meant and that is how Timothy would have understood it.

God’s Word is to be the priority of ministry. There are three ways Paul wanted Timothy to view preaching God’s Word:

**WAY #1** – View preaching God’s Word as a very serious charge. **4:1**

The verb “I charge” is a very serious verb. It is an intensive legal command, the kind that is given in a courtroom.

Years ago I was the chaplain for a detention center in Valparaiso, Indiana. In fact, I have a certificate on my wall that was given to me when I left. Well one time there was an attorney for a teen who was trying to buy more time in the courtroom. Finally the judge said to the attorney: “Mr. \_\_\_\_, I order you to be in this court room next Monday and you had better be ready to go. I suggest that you take this order very seriously and any breach will mean you are in contempt of this court.” That is one serious charge. That is the type of word Paul is using here. Now to add further weight to the charge, he gives Timothy three realities about it:

**Reality #1** - This charge is made in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus. **4:1a**

The Greek literally reads I charge you before “the God and the Christ Jesus.” We may understand this as meaning that God the Father and God the Son both monitor whether or not we are doing this. God the Father and God the Son are monitoring our study and our teaching. That is serious.

**Reality #2** - This charge is made in view of the judgment of God. **4:1b**

By referring to the “living and the dead,” Paul obviously believed that no one would escape judgment. Paul was about to die and Timothy was going to live and both would be judged and held accountable for whether or not they devoted themselves to a serious preaching and teaching ministry.

At the judgment of God, one could pack them in by their gimmickry but will lose rewards for disobedience. The man of God had better give an intense effort to preaching God's Word or he will forever regret it.

**Reality #3** - This charge is made in view of the coming of Christ. **4:1c**

**Now there is no question that this verse proves Jesus Christ is God.** In fact, the conjunction "and" which joins God and Christ Jesus, is coordinate and one article "the" goes with both proper nouns proving that point.

But what I also want to point out is **that there is an article "the" before the noun "appearing" and there is another article "the" before the noun kingdom. What that means is that these are two separate and distinct events that Paul wants specifically identified.** The appearing of Christ refers to the Rapture of the Church and the Kingdom of Christ refers to His second coming when He actually comes back to earth to take over the world. These are two separate events.

The connection between the two is that at the Rapture, the believer will receive or lose rewards and at the Second coming, the believer will live in the Kingdom and be entrusted with much or little or nothing contingent upon those rewards.

So the charge to preach the Word is a very serious charge for a minister because eternity is at stake. The next time you are given an opportunity to teach just remember this—your job is not to teach your own ideas, or opinions, or hobby horses, or political views, or social reform; your job is to accurately preach God's Word.

This is why James said, "Be not many teachers, knowing you will receive the greater judgment" (James 3:1).

**WAY #2** – View preaching God's Word as a very confrontative charge. **4:2**

Somehow in this politically correct world that we are in, we have kind of lost sight of this point. The man of God has a God-given charge to accurately preach God's Word regardless of topic or audience. Paul brings out four facts about this:

**Fact #1** - The Word is to be preached in all seasons. **4:2a**

The verb "be ready" is an imperative command which means to "stand on or over something." The point is the man of God is to take a stand on the Word of God whether or not it is an "in season" or "out of season" time. The "in seasons" "out of seasons" concept is one that literally means to preach God's Word when it is convenient and when it isn't. It is to be preached when things are positive and when things are negative. It is to be preached when people want to hear it and when they don't want to hear it. It is to be preached when it is a harvest time and when it is a drought time. The focus is to be on preaching the Word at all times.

This is where the marketing strategies are missing the point. They see numbers dwindling and think they can abandon preaching because it is an out of season time. God demands His Word be preached at all times.

**Fact #2** - The Word is to be preached because it reproves. **4:2b**

This word is interesting because it refers to preaching God's Word in a way that rebukes and exposes one to the point where, as G. Abbott-Smith said, it brings about conviction.

Now you would think by looking at what is happening in most religious settings that the Word is to be preached so that it will make people feel good about themselves or in such a way as it will flatter people or build up their self-esteem. In fact, one famous minister said he does not like to say negative things in his church on Sunday because it may make people feel bad. That is what God's Word is supposed to do.

The charge here from Almighty God is to preach the Word when it reproves people. Preachers and teachers have a very serious mandate here.

**Fact #3** - The Word is to be preached because it rebukes. **4:2c**

This is a very strong Greek word that has to do with preaching in a way that warns someone. William Barclay said that in the great days of the church there was fearlessness in the voice of the preachers. Godly ministers would preach God's Word in such a way that it rebuked people.

Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan (A.D. 380), made an interesting observation when he said, "Who will dare tell you the truth to your face if a minister does not dare?"

**Fact #4** - The Word is to be preached because it exhorts. **4:2d**

Someone has wisely said, "The true function of a preacher is to disturb the comfortable and comfort the disturbed." God's Word, when accurately taught, does encourage and it does exhort. It has the power to come alongside of a person when they are at their lowest and lift them up. Rebukes are not designed to bring a person to despair but to bring them into a wonderful relationship with God.

**WAY #3** – View preaching God's Word as a very lonely charge. **4:3-4**

Systematic preaching and teaching of God's Word and doctrines will not win too many popularity contests. If you accurately lay open God's Word in a way that reproves and rebukes, you won't win too many popularity contests.

Now you will notice that **verse 3** begins with the conjunction "for."

**That conjunction “for” (gar), which begins verse 3, either gives the reasons for preaching the Word—not too many left who will; or it gives the reactions to the preaching of the Word—most won’t respond to it or it gives an explanation as to why Timothy needs to preach God’s Word—most won’t.**

Now when Paul says the “time will come,” this means this will most certainly happen as time moves forward. This is what will be seen in most churches and most people. In fact, the pronoun “they” refers to the people to whom Timothy and others would preach. Four future realities:

**Reality #1 - Most will not endure sound doctrine. 4:3a**

Paul tells Timothy you keep preaching the Word even though the time will come when most people do not want sound, healthy doctrine. They will not even “endure” it. What that means is that they will not listen to it. They would rather listen to religious things that will make them sick rather than make them healthy.

**Reality #2 - Most will heap to themselves unsound teachers. 4:3b**

Most people will heap to themselves teachers in order that they might scratch their religious itch. That word heap means they will stack one right after another. They will select teachers who will agree with them and tickle their ears. They are not interested in God’s real truth accurately expounded, but in their own self-centered lust-filled religious causes. Most people will arrogantly elevate themselves to levels above God’s Word. They will be the judge and jury and will select ministers in view of their own unsound theological opinions.

Homer Kent, in his commentary, said that he observed that people who like their ears tickled tend to start their own churches. In fact, he said they will either get away from or get rid of a true teacher of the Word of God. These kinds of people are often church tramps, jumping from church to church until they find something that tells them what they want to hear.

The truth is preaching God’s Word will chase some people away. It will send them down the road. John Calvin said there has always been a plentiful harvest of preachers and teachers in pastorates and people who have itching ears find all kinds of preachers with itching palms.

Calvin also observed that he never heard any people complain about the tremendous expense to support wicked monks and priests; but for a godly preacher, he heard all kinds of complaints about his support.

**Reality #3 - Most will willfully turn away from hearing truth. 4:4b**

These kinds of people are interested in hearing nice stories that make them feel comfortable rather than God’s truth that makes them convicted.

**Reality #4** - Most will willfully turn to untrue stories. **4:4b**

The word “myths” is a word that refers to stories, narratives and myths which are fictional. They are not true. Paul knew the time would come when the world would lack serious, systematic teaching of God’s Word and people would rather hear nice stories about religious themes and subjects even if the stories weren’t true.

This is a crazy religious world we are in and just exactly what does God want us to do? Paul says to Timothy, you preach God’s Word. Make that your priority; make that your focus and you will finish a winner.