

The Main Duty of the Church
2 Timothy 4:1-2a
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Transcript:

Please take your Bible this morning and turn to 2 Timothy 4. This morning I want to talk to you about the main duty of the church.

And I suppose that there would be many places that we could go to answer a question, what is the main duty of the church? But for today, we're going to look at 2 Timothy chapter 4. And actually, this time and next time, we're going to look at the first five verses. So today, we'll look at the first two verses. But listen to what Paul says to his young protege, Timothy.

He says, I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing in his kingdom, preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, 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. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

The command for the church begins with three words. And those three words begin verse two, preach the word. And when is he to preach the word? Well, verse two says he's to do it in season and out of season. He's to preach it when it's accepted and even when it's rejected. He's to preach it regardless of the climate and regardless of the condition of the hearers. We know from chapter three that perilous times are coming. We know from verse eight, truth is constantly resisted. But Timothy, according to verse 14, is to continue in the things which he has learned and been assured of, knowing from whom he has learned them.

You and I live in a day when preaching is downplayed. It's no longer at the center of the church's ministry. Instead, it has been replaced by various things. Some have replaced it with the arts, like drama and music. Some have even replaced the preaching by talking about it being not the preaching of the word of God, but being more like a sophisticated, urban, and friendly talk. Some churches have even adopted this approach when they advertise their services. They say that they have practical, witty messages with the goal to make them feel welcomed and not drive them away. But when you examine Paul's two letters to Timothy, you find actually the opposite of what the church is doing today. You find that the excellent preacher confronts sin and then he encourages repentant sinners to behave righteously. Let me illustrate that. I want you to listen to what Paul said to Timothy as to what he was to do in the church. And I'm gonna begin in chapter one of 1 Timothy. If you wanna follow along, I will say what the verse references are as I make those comments. First, in 1st Timothy 1 verses 3

through 5, He is to correct those teaching false doctrine. And He is to call them to a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. If you look down at verse 18 and 19, He is to fight for divine truth and for God's purposes, keeping His own faith and a good conscience. If you go into chapter two in the first eight verses, He's to pray for the lost and he's to lead the men of the church to do the same thing. If you look at chapter two, verses nine to 15, he's to call the women into the church to fulfill their God-given role of submission and to raise up godly children, setting an example of faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint. In chapter three, in the first 13 verses, he's to carefully select spiritual leaders for the church on the basis of their giftedness, godliness, and virtue. In chapter 4 verses 1 through 6 he's to recognize the source of error and those who teach it and he's to point these things out to the rest of the church. Also in chapter 4 verse 6 he's to constantly be nourished on the words of scripture and its sound teaching, avoiding all myths and false doctrines. In chapter 4 verses 7 through 11 he's to discipline himself for the purpose of godliness. In chapter four, verse 12, he's to boldly command and teach the truth of God's word. Also in chapter four, verse 12, he's to be a model of spiritual virtue that all can follow. And then in chapter four, verses 13 and 14, he's to faithfully read, explain, and apply the scriptures publicly.

In chapter four, verses 15 and 16, he's to be progressing toward Christ's likeness in his own life. In chapter five, the first two verses, he's to be gracious and gentle in correcting the sins of his people. In chapter five, verses three to 16, he's to give special consideration and care for those who are widows. In chapter five, verses 17 through 21, he's to honor faithful church leaders who work hard.

In chapter five and verse 22, he's to choose church leaders with great care, seeing to it that they are both mature and proven. In chapter five and verse 23, he is to take care of his physical condition so that he is strong to serve. In chapter five, verse 24, through chapter six and verse six, he's to teach and preach principles of true godliness, helping his people discern between true godliness and mere hypocrisy. In chapter 6, 7 through 11, he's to flee the love of money. In chapter 6 and verse 11, he's to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. In chapter 6 and verse 12, he's to fight for the faith against all enemies and all attacks. In chapter 6 verses 13 through 16, he's to keep all the Lord's commandments.

In chapter six, verses 17 through 19, he's to instruct the rich to do good, to be rich in good works and to be generous. In chapter six, verses 20 and 21, he's to guard the word of God as a sacred trust and treasure.

If you go over to the second letter that Paul wrote to Timothy, Paul reminded Timothy in chapter one and verse six to keep the gift of God in him fresh and useful. In chapter one, verse seven, not timid but to be powerful. In chapter one verses eight through 11, never to be ashamed of Christ or anyone who serves Christ. In chapter one verses 12 through 14, he's to hold tightly to the truth and guard it. In chapter two verse one, he's to be strong in character. In

chapter two verse two, he's to be a teacher of apostolic truth so that he may reproduce to himself in faithful men.

In chapter 2 verses 3 through 7, he is to suffer difficulty and persecution willingly while making the maximum effort for Christ. In chapter 2 verses 8 through 13, he is to keep his eyes on Christ at all times. In chapter 2 and verse 14, he is to lead with authority. In chapter 2 and verse 15, he is to interpret and apply the Scripture accurately.

In chapter 2 verse 16, he is to avoid useless conversation that leads only to ungodliness. In chapter 2 verses 20 and 21, he is to be an instrument of honor, setting apart from sin and useful to the Lord. In chapter 2 and verse 22, he is to flee youthful lust and pursue righteousness, faith, and love. In chapter 2 verse 23, he is to refuse to be drawn into philosophical and theological wrangling.

In chapter 2 verses 24 to 26, he is not to be an arguer, but kind, teachable, gentle, and patient even when he is wronged. In chapter 3 verses 1 to 15, he is to face dangerous times with a deep knowledge of the word of God. In chapter 3 verses 16 and 17, he is to understand that scripture is the basis and the content of all legitimate ministry.

In chapter four, verse one and two, he's to preach the word in season and out of season, reproving, rebuking, exhorting with great patience and instruction. In chapter four, verse five, he's to be sober in all things. Also verse five, he is to endure hardship. And again in verse five, he's to do the work of an evangelist. Did you get all of that? That's the job of the pastor teacher. That's my job. I just gave you my job description and every pastor's job description. But unfortunately, many pastors are not fulfilling this description. Many churches are not fulfilling this description. In fact, nothing in this hints at a market-driven philosophy. In fact, most of those commands are impossible to harmonize within the theories that are so popular today. And if there's ever a time where preaching needs to be put back in its rightful place, it is now. So as we look at this passage this morning and next time, we're gonna see first the charge, that's in the first two verses, and then we're gonna see the climate, that's in verses three and four, and then we're gonna see the commitment in verse five. So today we're just gonna look at the charge in verses one and two. So let's begin there.

Going back to verse one of chapter four, it begins with these words, I solemnly charge you. I solemnly charge you. The word charge is often translated to testify. In pagan Greek, it was used to call the gods and the men to witness.

One historian says, an oath sworn by a deity or deities was considered especially binding and dangerous to break. And in the same way, a charge witnessed by a deity or deities was sacred and inviolable. A broken oath would be avenged by the God whose name was violated. Now why would I mention that? Well, I mention that because you and I have to understand when we interpret the Bible, we've got to go back to the time in which it was written. And this is how they viewed it.

This is how they looked at it in pagan Greek culture. In fact, the word that he uses here for charge is *dia marturamai*. It carries the idea of a forceful order or a directive. In fact, you could read it as we have it here in the New American Standard, I solemnly charge or I solemnly witness. It was a very serious charge. And notice why it is serious. Look at what else he says. I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus. This is who is before. It's before God and the Lord Jesus Christ. And the idea before is a compound Greek word and it means one who is in the sight.

Kenneth Wuest says it's used to one who does or says something in the presence of someone else. So when Paul is charging Timothy, he's saying this in the presence of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. And we'll talk about those two words in just a moment. But Kenneth Weiss again says he does this with a consciousness that one has him in sight and in mind. In other words, Paul delivered this solemn charge to Timothy, conscious of the fact that he was doing so in the sight of God, and he wished Timothy to ever so regard the charge. Even when you look at the expression, as he says, in the presence of God and of Christ, in Greek that is a little different than what we're seeing right here. What it's doing in Greek, it requires us to understand that the word God in the names the Lord Jesus Christ, they refer to the same person. So the translation should actually read, our God, even Christ Jesus. You say, well, why didn't you say Lord? Well, the term *kourios*, Lord, doesn't appear in the best of the Greek manuscripts. So in that case, we would leave it out. So he's saying here, I solemnly witness to you in the presence before God, even Christ, or God who is Christ.

John MacArthur says the solemnity of Paul's charge is drawn from the fact that it's tied directly to the awesome majesty of the one who commissions men to divine service. Those who are called to proclaim and interpret the word of God have the most profound responsibility that the Lord places on any man.

I read that and I'm going, yeah, that is so right on. The awesome responsibility that's put on anyone who proclaims the Word of God. And in this case, we're talking about the pastor. We're talking about the preacher of the Word of God. We're talking about the men whom God has gifted to the church, the men whom God has called, who's qualified out for this position of ministry. And it is an awesome and profound responsibility.

John MacArthur continues, he says, "It's for that reason that James warns, "let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, "knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment. "But we all stumble in many ways, "and if anyone does not stumble in what he says, "he's a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well." James 3, one and two. And all again, how true that that is. Because we use our mouths.

We teach with words. Words are extremely important, aren't they? At least our culture seems to understand some of them are very important. At least it was during 9-11, right? People are more serious now when they get a little note or someone says to them, take me somewhere

else when the plane ain't going in that direction and might get a visit from an air marshal with a statement like that. Words mean things, but yet we're in a culture today that no one wants to be held accountable to their words. You know, there was a day and age when you could take a person by their word. You didn't have to bind them to a contract. You have to bind them to a piece of document. You could just take their words, shake their hand, and that was it. But it's unfortunate that we're not there anymore.

Again, MacArthur says, no human being apart from Jesus has ever spoken so perfectly, not even the prophets or the apostles, except when recording God's revealed word, and James readily included himself, for we all stumble among those who speak imperfectly. Well, I can tell you with much humility that I don't speak perfectly. That might shock some of you as you hear that this morning. But this charge is so serious. And if just the charge is what this text is saying and how serious it is, then how serious should the church be looking at this? How serious should the church respond to this? People today gravitate to. We're not looking at the preacher like this. We're not looking at the membership like this. We're not looking at the churches like this. In fact, when many people are looking for a church, they don't put it at the top of their list whether that church is accurately handling the Word of God, whether that word is faithfully taught and preached. They look for other things. Things that appeal to their felt needs. I know we have needs. But you know the Word of God is really all we need. And if you think otherwise, then you need to consider what we're saying this morning. And you need to consider what the Word of God is saying.

Notice that he tells us not only who this is before, but also what he's going to do. It says he will judge the living and the dead. Jesus will judge the living and the dead. When he came the first time, he came as the cute baby in a manger. In fact, most people during Christmas time don't have any problem with a manger scene unless you're a liberal or an atheist or a Satanist. I mean, these are the three groups that have come out every year at Christmas time that don't want.

20:28

Nativity scene displayed on what they call public property. I forget that we all are responsible for taxes for public property, right? We all provide that know, it tells us here that he is the one who's going to judge the living and the dead. And when he comes back, that's how he's going to come. He's going to come as judge. So if he's going to come as judge, don't you think that we should be telling people that? Instead of leaving out those parts that are uncomfortable in scripture? You know, shouldn't we be talking about that? It says in John 5:26, For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and He has given Him authority to execute judgment also because He is the Son of man. He has the authority, and He demonstrated that authority when He was on earth, but we will see that in its full glory when He comes back. Acts 17:30, and 31 says, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead." So Jesus is judge. And as Paul was saying this to Timothy, I solemnly witness in the presence of

Christ, who's gonna judge the living and the dead when he comes, and by his appearing, You need to preach the Word. You're going to be held accountable for that, Timothy. Every preacher will be held accountable for that who has been called into ministry. Every person in ministry is held accountable for how they handle the Word of God. Every believer is accountable. But this charge is specific when you get to verse two, preach the word, and the word preach, that's the first of nine imperatives. Imperative is a command. He uses five of them in verse two. He says preach, be ready, reprove, rebuke, exhort. And then he uses four in verse five, where he says be sober, endure, do, and fulfill. All of those are commands that are given to the pastor-teacher, and specifically here to Timothy. First, he is to preach the Word. He's to proclaim it as an official spokesman for the King. The word preach means to herald. We've seen this word already because in our study of Mark, we saw it in chapter 1, when John the Baptist came heralding the message, right? And then Jesus comes and he heralds the Gospel as well. But it's to proclaim it publicly. The word was actually used for the spokesman for the emperor, who would proclaim in a formal, grave, and authoritative manner, which must be listened to, and the message which the emperor gave for him to announce. And that's what every preacher is doing. He is announcing the word of the king, the king of kings. And the Greek construction here tells us that this is a command that is to be obeyed at once. It's sharp. It's used in military language. It's the pattern for the preacher today. His preaching is not to be characterized by that dignity, or it should be characterized by that dignity, which comes from the consciousness of the fact that he is an official herald for the King of Kings. And it should be accompanied with a note of authority, which will command the respect and the careful attention and the proper reaction of those who are listening. And you know, last week I mentioned that whatever you use to draw people, that's what you're going to have to use to keep the people you draw. And I mentioned last week, if we put a clown up here and you begin to draw people by clowns, then next week you remove the clown. Guess what? People are going to leave now because they came because of the clown. And here's a quote by Kenneth Wuest. He's with the Lord now. He says, there is no place for clowning in the pulpit. I agree. I know that I misunderstood sometimes when I teach, when I preach, I know because I'm so serious. When I'm up here preaching that even when I say something that might be funny, some of you are sitting there going, should we laugh? Should we not? You're kinda working that through in your mind. And then sometimes I have to say, well that was a joke and then you laugh. But again, I'm not up here to be a comedian, I'm not up here to entertain you, I'm up here to explain the Word of God to you so that you can take it

25:45

and by the power of the Spirit of God, apply it to your life. However that will apply. My role is really not to make application for you because application's gonna vary per person. My role is to interpret the scripture for you. And that's a challenge because you know what? There's only one interpretation of Scripture. And it's the original interpretation by which it was written. And so that takes, excuse me, that takes a little bit of work, doesn't it? You know from your own personal reading of Scripture that sometimes you come to places and you're not quite sure what it means and you begin to chase around some terms or you begin to look at some cross references maybe you have listed in your Bible. And you find out after a while, well I've spent

about 30 minutes doing this and this is a little bit of work here. And I'm 30 minutes into it and I still really don't have my answer. See, that's what I deal with each week. That's what every preacher deals with each week that's studied in scripture. Sometimes that's the way it happens. I have for days meditated on a verse and came back to it and said, you know, I still really am not getting what this is saying. And I'm going, Lord, you know, Sundays in two days, I really need some help here. And you read everything that you can read by those who are well-versed in Scripture. It's not uncommon in a passage for me to look at 30 commentaries and to read them and after a while everybody starts saying the same thing. Every now and then you get somebody that says something a little different and then you start seeing why did he say that a little differently than the others. So it takes some work. The charge that Timothy has right here is that he's to proclaim all the Word of God. Every bit of it. And where do we get that from? Well we get it from the term that he uses. He says, preach the word. The term word. This is referring to the whole body of revealed truth. It's the entire written Word of God. It's the complete revealed truth. I think the idea is like Acts 20 and verse 27. It's where Paul said, I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. And then he says also, I kept back nothing. I gave you everything. And even Paul says to Timothy, back in the first letter in chapter 4 and verse 13, till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. And yet we have people today that want to downplay doctrine. Say doctrine's not important. Sure doctrine's important. If doctrine's not important, then how are you going to understand what salvation is? It takes doctrine to understand that. It takes teaching to understand that. It takes teaching to understand the atonement, to understand the resurrection, to understand the person of Christ. It takes doctrine to do that. And when he says to give attention, he's saying that you need to have previous preparation in private. So he says, till I come, give attention. So in private, Timothy, you're to read the scripture, you are to interpret the scripture, and you are to apply the scripture. That's expository preaching right there. Read the text, explain the text, and apply the text. But it takes this attention. And that's the command that he gave to him also.

Even when Jonah was told to go to Nineveh, he was told, preach to Nineveh the message I will tell you. See, the message is not mine. The message is not any preachers in the pulpit today. The message is what God has given in His Word. So again, our goal and our point, as we look at a text, we look at a book, we look at a chapter, is to understand the message. To understand its point, to understand why He gave it, what He means by it. And I believe when you understand all of that, then you can look at how it applies to your life. But he tells Timothy, you need to preach this word and you need to be ready to do it. You have to be diligent. You have to be alert. You have to use every opportunity to preach it. You have to do it when it's favorable. You have to do it when it's not favorable.

Warren Wiersbe says, it's easy to make excuses when we ought to be making opportunities. You know some of us are just like that when it comes to witnessing. We say, well you know I didn't have an opportunity to witness to someone today, but I was around a whole crowd of people. Think about what you just said. Instead of waiting on the opportunity, make it. Make the opportunity. Ask questions. Talk to people. Talk to them about your Lord. Tell them your testimony. Everybody has a testimony. Tell them how you came to know Christ. Tell them

where you were at in your life when Jesus Christ invaded your life. Tell them what was going on in your life when He came in and you heard the gospel. He says here, preach the word, be ready in season and out of season. And the idea of being ready is to stand at hand. You know in the military that's how that happens when they have to be ready for anything that can happen at any time. That's the point of their training. And you know if you think about it that's really the point of our training too. You know we need to stand ready to be able to handle the scripture no matter what we experience or what we encounter or who we experience.

We need to stand ready and here in the case of Timothy, he is to stand ready to preach God's word. He's to make the opportunities, he's to do it when it's favorable and he's to do it when it's not favorable. You know, when I think about when it's favorable or not favorable, I could probably think of a handful of situations where it's not always favorable. We could certainly think about times when it's favorable and probably one of the most uncomfortable times for me is when we have a family gathering and they always hunt for me to lead the prayer. I know in the room that there's unbelievers as well as believers and so your first thought is how do I pray? I mean, to you when you're praying, you're praying to your Lord, you know your Lord. You know, you've experienced the blessings of salvation. You have the Spirit of God, but there are those in the room that haven't. So you're thinking, well, when I pray, should I preach the gospel in my prayer? And sometimes you don't really know until you just start praying. And so sometimes that's favorable for people in the room, sometimes it's unfavorable, and that's usually the unbelievers. They don't want to hear it. But if anything, and being ready to do this, there should be, as like J. Vernon McGee, there's this compulsion that's on us, and we're actually should be chafing at the bit, ready to give out the Word of God. So whether you're standing in the line at the grocery store, or whether you're meeting with a friend or a neighbor, or whether you're at the job place, looking for those opportunities, making those opportunities, ready to give out the Word of God, ready to share the wonderful truth of Scripture.

Adam Clarke says that we need to be urgent whether the times be prosperous or adverse, wherever there is an opportunity, when there is none, strive to make one. The judge is at the door and to every man eternity is at hand. Wherever thou meetest a sinner speak to him the word of reconciliation. Do not be contented with stated times and accustomed places merely. All time and place belong to God and are proper for His work. Wherever it can be done, there it should be done. Satan will omit neither time nor place where he can destroy. Omit thou none where thou mayest be the instrument of salvation to any.

In other words, you might be with a friend or with a family member or with a group of people and you might be thinking, well, this is really not the time or this is not the place. But Satan doesn't think that. That's what he's saying. He's to be ready. And he's to be ready in season and out of season. So what does that mean? Well, I've already given you some hints of that. The word season means opportune, when opportunity occurs. It refers to a favorable occasion for some event. So yeah, there's times when there is a favorable occasion to speak the Word of God. And you've had them, I've had them. And you're like, praise the Lord. You come out of there rejoicing because you're like, they were receptive. But then there's also out of season,

inopportunities, an unfavorable time. But that's the time when we don't usually say anything. And I think probably some of that is because just simply we don't want to be rejected. We don't want people turning on us. Well, I agree, no one wants to be rejected. No one wants to be persecuted. In fact, even Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, when the messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him three times, he prayed, actually prayed three times for God to remove it and God chose to leave it. Said, my grace is sufficient for you. So he changed his tune at that point and he said, you know what, I'm gonna boast in my infirmities then. I'm going to find a different way to deal with this and complaining about it is not the way to deal with this. It's not getting me anywhere. It's not helping me at all. So I'm going to start boasting about it. I'm going to boast about my trials. I'm going to boast about my trouble.

Matthew Henry says that we are to do this work with all fervency of Spirit. Call upon those under thy charge to take heed of sin, to do their duty, to call upon them to repent and believe, and to live a holy life, and this both in season and out of season. In season when they are at leisure to hear thee, when some special opportunity offers itself of speaking to them with advantage. Nay, do it out of season, even when there is not that apparent probability of fastening something upon them because thou dost not know, but the Spirit of God may fasten upon them. For the wind bloweth where it listeth, and in the morning we must sow our seed, and in the evening not withhold our hand. We must do it in season, that is, let slip no opportunity, and do it out of season, that is, not shift off the duty under pretense that it is out of season. Don't you like the Elizabethan language? That's the language of the King James Bible, by the way. It's a beautiful language. In fact, sometimes I hear people pray with the Elizabethan language, and it's just the way that they perceive it. So preach the Word. Be ready. Be ready to give that word out at any time, whether it's favorable or unfavorable, whether it's an opportunity or not an opportunity. Just be ready. And then he says, convince, rebuke, and exhort.

Convince, rebuke, and exhort. Again, all of these are imperatives, all of these are commands. So Paul's telling Timothy, when you preach, you need to convince. And the idea of convince means to reprove or to rebuke, to disgrace, to put to shame. I heard John MacArthur say one time. He says, I purposely offend people when I preach. What do you think about a statement like that? Please, no answers. We can talk after the service. But he purposely offends. Now I've listened to John MacArthur since 1985 and I can honestly tell you that most if not all the messages are very strong, very powerful, very convicting, and I'm very thankful for that and to sit under the teaching done in that manner. But I also know that there are the opposites. There are preachers that don't do that. In fact, what they do try to do is win the favor of everyone. I don't think that there's necessarily anything wrong with wanting to be received unless you're putting that over your Lord. Because here in this case, as I have just reiterated, it's a command to Timothy. It's a command to every preacher. And some of these commands are very uncomfortable but because you love the Lord Jesus Christ and you take serious the call of God and you obey out of love. And so here's the idea of the second one, convince, reprove, rebuke, disgrace, put to shame. A.T. Robinson adds, give honor or blame. Freiburg in his lexicon says, is showing someone that he has done something wrong and summoning him to

repent. In the words of Matthew 18, which are the words of Jesus, he says, moreover, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. And if he hears you, you have gained your brother. Isn't that the goal? Gain your brother or sister whom you have seen sin, be in sin, whether that sin is against you or really sin is against God and it's against everyone. In Luke 3 verses 18 and 19 it says, and with many other exhortations he preached to the people but here the tech chart being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, this is talking about John the Baptist, concerning Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, also added this above all, that he shut John up in prison. So in other words, Herod didn't want to hear this. Herod wanted his brother's wife. John's telling him he can't have his brother's wife. The law does not allow him to do that. And Herod said, put him in prison. Shut him up. And then of course the day came when his wife's daughter danced before him, pleased him. He liked it. He promised with those, said, I'll give you up to the half of the kingdom, just ask. And she went dancing back to her mom, said, what shall I ask? And she hated John the Baptist, so she said, bring John the Baptist's head on a platter. And he did it. He finally shut him up. And that may happen to some of you. May happen to me in the coming days. That people will do the extreme to shut you up. So what do you do? I would rather obey God than man. God, give me the courage in those moments to be faithful and obedient. That's what you pray, right? All of us still know what's going to happen in situations that we're in. We can stand here so boldly and say, well, I would do this and I wouldn't deny my Lord, but you know what? Peter denied the Lord three times when he was in those situations. Did he not? We don't know what's gonna happen until we're there. My prayer is that when we're there, we're faithful. We're faithful to Christ. You know the Puritans had much to say about this. Richard Baxter, he said, oh, sirs, deal with sin as sin and speak of heaven and hell as they are and not as if you were in jest.

George Swinock said, reprove compassionately. Passion will heat the sinner's blood, but compassion will heal his conscience. The reprover should have a lion's stout heart, or he will not be faithful in a lady's soft hand, or he is not like to be successful. Some men would receive more blows with more patience if they were given them with more prudence. So he says convince. Secondly, he says rebuke. These two words are very closely related in meaning. And it could be just this. Reproving may have more to do with affecting the mind, with helping a person understand that what he believes or is doing wrong. Rebuke, on the other hand, may have to do with the heart, with bringing a person under conviction or guilt. Freiberg in his Greek lexicon says, "The word means to warn and to strongly admonish."

Kenneth Wuest adds, it refers to a rebuke which does not bring the one rebuked to a conviction of any fault on his part. It might be because the one rebuked is innocent of the charge or that he is guilty but refuses to acknowledge his guilt. This word implies a sharp, severe rebuke with possibility of suggestion in some cases of impending penalty. Even where the preacher has experienced failure after failure in bringing sinners or saints to forsake their sin, or where there seems to be little hope of so doing, he is to sharply rebuke sin. He is to discharge his duty. And the responsibility is upon his hearers to deal with the sin in their lives.

Third, he says to exhort. And the word he uses for exhort is para-caleo. Caleo means to call, para is a preposition, which means to come alongside. So you come alongside and you call. And it has a wide range of meanings in the New Testament, but the idea is calling out to someone to admonish. And the word here in this context means to admonish. But it carries the idea of encouragement.

Warren Wiersbe says preaching must be marked by three elements, conviction, warning, and appeal. 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. That's why Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 2:11, as you know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you as a father does his own children that you would walk worthy of the God who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. He exhorted them like a father. In 1st Thessalonians 5:14 he says, We exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the faint hearted, uphold the weak, and be patient with all. This is an awesome task! And I've heard people say, you know, what I do in my life is my business. And who are you to invade my business? Brothers and sisters, you read the one another's in the New Testament and we're all each other's business. If we were to reprove one another, admonish one another, and again to one another's right there, that's being involved in each other's life. So much so that there are times when you have to rebuke, but then there's times also when you encourage. So he's to convince, rebuke, exhort, and he's to do all of this with all long-suffering and teaching. He's not to be afraid to reprove or rebuke, but he's to do it with long-suffering and doctrine. And his personal feelings are never the grounds for the reproof. Doctrine is that ground. So he says, do it with long suffering, or you might have patience. And it's the idea of an emotional quietness in the face of unfavorable circumstances. So maybe it's in those moments when it's an inopportune time and he's preaching. And he's at this point where he is having to do this with this long suffering. Or as one preacher said, you suffer long. The idea is abiding under, being patient with people. And so he's calling Timothy to do the same, be patient with members of the flock who have been persistently stubborn and were resisting their pastor's admonition. But you also have to do it with doctrine, dedicate, you have to do it with teaching. Teaching is what is taught. It's instruction, it's the act of teaching.

Marvin Vincent says long suffering is to be maintained against the temptations to anger presented by the obstinacy and the perverseness of certain hearers. And such is to be met not merely with rebuke but also with sound and reasonable instruction in the truth. John Calvin adds, those who are strong only in fervor and sharpness but are not fortified with solid doctrine weary themselves in their vigorous efforts make a great noise, rave, no headway because they build without a foundation. So there to do this not only with long suffering or patience but also with instruction. That's the foundation to preaching. That's the foundation to reproving and rebuking and exhorting. See, it's only through careful teaching of the Word that those tasks can be successfully carried out by the man of God. An unbeliever will never 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 Christ of the Word of God in his heart. So beloved, this is the

main duty of the church. Some think it's fellowship. Fellowship's nice. I love to fellowship. But we can't just all sit around and fellowship. If we expect to grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, there has to be instruction. It's almost kind of like Bible studies that are done and nobody studies. And even the person supposedly leading it didn't study it either, and so they're all sitting around pulling their ignorance. They're talking about what they don't know about the Bible or the passage that they're looking at instead of saying, as someone has studied it, this is what it means. Somebody has to study it. Somebody has to teach it. And beloved, that's what I've chosen to be faithful to do, even if every pew in here is empty.

Well, as we come to the conclusion of this. Let me just ask you, are you ready to share the gospel? Are you ready? Are you ready to share the love of Christ? Are you ready to tell people how they can be forgiven of all their sin? Are you ready to tell them what Christ did for them on the cross, where He died in their place? Are you ready to talk about the truth? Are you never ready to talk about the truth? Just want to go throughout life, not bothering anybody, and no one bothering you. You in your own little world. See, we have to do the same thing. We've all been commissioned, according to Matthew 28, 19, and 20, to go and make disciples. That commission is given to everybody, every believer. Not just the pastor. So we're all to be ready to give out the gospel. We're all to make opportunities. We're all to do it when it is favorable and when it's not favorable. And sometimes we have to convince, sometimes we have to rebuke. But it's all got to be done with great patience and instruction. So that's our mandate. That's our ministry. That's our task. And if you've been discouraged for various reasons about what you're supposed to be doing, hear what I'm saying. Hear what Paul is saying. Hear what the Spirit of God is saying this morning. What our responsibility is. It's not to just join a church and sit and do nothing. It's to be faithful to the Word of God. Faithfully give it out, faithfully live it, faithfully demonstrate it in the lives of your brothers and sisters, as well as unbelievers that you're around. Show them that there is a difference in your life, that you have been transformed. You're not the same person you used to be. You know, when I meet people for the first time, whether I work with them or in another situation, I want them to know I know Christ. I want to have that kind of conversation. Thankfully, I met two guys this week that had that conversation with me. I didn't say anything about what I do till the end, but they were sharing Christ with me. I loved it. It was great. It's nice to be witnessed too. Right? But it was very encouraging to see two brothers being faithful. They didn't know me from Adam. They didn't know me from anybody else. But they took it upon themselves to talk about Christ to me. Praise God. Think about that person or persons who talk to you about Christ.

I remember the brother who shared Christ with me and I got saved. I remember at some point later, I'm out in my yard and I'm having a bonfire. I'm kind of going through all my stuff. I'm just all the stuff that I had that I didn't need any of that stuff anymore as a Christian. I didn't want any of that influencing my life in a bad way. I had me a big bonfire burning all my vinyl albums. I even burned my friends. He wasn't too happy about that, because I thought he didn't need it either. He didn't need to hear Led Zeppelin, you know what I mean? So I'm doing all this, and all of a sudden this guy walks up. Turns out he was from a church. He walks up on me doing

this, and we had a pretty interesting conversation as I'm continuing to put stuff into fire. See, I played in a heavy metal band back then. It was called Venom., snake venom. What do you think of with venom? Well, you don't want to get bit by a snake, right? Definitely don't. Not a venomous snake. And, you know, we were just kind of loud and obnoxious, drug sex, rock and roll. That was it. That was everything about it. And God took that away, so graciously took it away. In fact, He took a lot of things away. And sometimes He does that, doesn't He to a heart that's stubborn, to a heart that's hard. He humbles you. Be thankful for the humility. Be thankful when the trials come and they humble you, because that's what trials do. They humble you, don't they? And they're uncomfortable. They're grievous, as Peter says. But they're also beneficial. Especially if you're running around saying, I know Christ, I know Christ. And yet you go through a trial and you just crumble and you give up on Christ. And you run and you get mad at God. Well, Peter says in 1 Peter 1, 7, he talks about that trial of faith, which is more precious than gold, which perishes, may be found under praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. See, the point of the trials is to make you strong. And every one of them are different. And every one of them test your faith. Whether you have it or not, or whether it's weak or strong, they test your joy too, don't they? You know in Philippians 4 when Paul told the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord, and again I'll say, rejoice in the Lord. That was a command he was giving them. Yeah, he knew their circumstances and he also knew his circumstances and that's the same book where he talked about where he learned how to be content in everything. Don't you want that too? Get in this Word. It's right there. Be faithful to be here. It will be taught to you. It's we have to comfort the afflicted and we have to afflict the comfortable. So which are you today? Let's pray.

We thank you, Heavenly Father, for this opportunity for us to open up the bread of life together today. We pray your spirit will apply this to our hearts. And much of what was said was easily applied, I'm sure. Help us Lord when we're having what we would call a bad day to find a moment to praise you, find a moment to be thankful, because you did not give us what we deserve. We don't deserve your mercy. We don't deserve your grace. We don't deserve your love. We don't deserve your kindness or your compassion. We deserve your wrath. That's what we deserve. We don't even deserve heaven. That's a gift. And my prayer is Lord for each person in here this morning that they intimately know you. They don't just know about you, but they know you personally and they have experienced forgiveness of their sins and the transformation that the Spirit of God does in them. Lord, if there's some in here that don't know you, I pray that you'd bring them to yourself now. Amen.