

Preach the Word

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul charges Timothy to preach the word to fulfill his ministry, regardless of its popularity
2. aim – to cause us to see Scriptural truth as central to both our discipleship and our mission
3. passage – 2 Timothy 4:1-5

b. outline

1. The Charge to Preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:1-2)
2. The Rejection of Preaching the Word (2 Timothy 4:3-4)
3. The Fulfillment in Preaching the Word (2 Timothy 4:5)

c. opening

1. the **central nature** of this passage
 - a. a passage of Scripture that I have *both* anticipated preaching *and* dreaded preaching
 1. a passage *central* to my ministerial work for nearly 30 years
 - a. **i.e.** I take it as a **mandate** for what it means to be a full-time minister (**1 Cor. 9:14**)
 - b. so, I have *anticipated* preaching it to “explain” my mission as a preacher
 2. a passage *honest* about my experience in ministerial work for nearly 30 years
 - a. **i.e.** I have experienced the **raw honesty** of the passage as a full-time preacher
 - b. so, I have *dreaded* preaching it because it “explains” so much of the response to my work
2. the **transition** of this passage
 - a. **reminder:** ignore chapter breaks – the thought in chap. 3 continues *unabated* into chap. 4
 - b. in fact, **4:1-5** is nothing more than the *conclusion* of the previous chapter
 1. Paul starts with a sobering reality check about the nature of *many* in the church (**3:1-9**)
 2. he reminds Timothy of his legacy of faith, having been mentored in the “*sacred writings*”
 3. which, Paul reminds Timothy, are *theopneustos*, the very “breath” of God, containing all that is needed in the church for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness
 4. so (now), Paul turns to his *conclusion*: here is what is expected of you, O Timothy
 - a. and ... here is what you will be **up against** as you attempt to do what is expected ...

I. The Charge to Preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:1-2)

Content

a. the **background of the charge**

1. **again:** a *charge* that Paul lays before Timothy – a command to specific action(s) in the church based on an understanding of the theological and doctrinal truths given to him by the apostle
 - a. **1 Tim. 1:3; 5:21; 6:13** – his commands to Timothy to address *false doctrine*, apply *church polity* well, and *model* the good fight of the faith before the church
 - b. **2 Tim. 4:1** – his *first and only* charge in *this* letter – *the entire reason that Paul has written*
 1. everything else Paul has said so far has been *leading* him to this point ...

b. the **witnesses to the charge (v. 1)**

1. **note:** the similarity of this phraseology to **1 Tim. 5:21:**
“*in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to ...*”
2. the charge is not simply a command of *the apostle*, but the **very will of God** (not a “suggestion”)
 - a. which is what makes this passage a **mandate** for anyone who serves as a pastor or preacher
3. the charge is “*in the presence of ...*” = *witnessed by* an authority that has *originated in that authority*
 - a. in the presence of “*God*” = the authority is the Triune God – it is the decree of God himself that stands behind this charge – it is *his* will that this work should be accomplished
 - b. in the presence of “*Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead*” = the *central* authority of this charge is the Judge of all the earth – the **authority of authorities (Matt. 28:18)**
 1. the “*living and the dead*” is every human being, who will stand before Christ and be judged as to his/her “standing” before God – righteous *in* Christ or rebellious *outside* of Christ
 2. thus, to Timothy: *you* will be judged by Jesus for your *obedience* to this command
 - a. **note:** the response that comes to doing what is commanded here will *utterly determine* who is “in Christ” and who is not – the charge is *from* Christ because it is *his* way of salvation

- c. in the presence (“*appearing*”) of “*his kingdom*” = in the very cause of Christ in this world – *why* the church exists in this age, in *anticipation* of the coming rule of Christ over all things
 1. the kingdom is *advanced* (formed) upon the earth by the substance of this charge
 2. thus, to Timothy: what *you* are to do here is what *brings in* the kingdom of Christ

c. the substance of the charge (v. 2)

1. **note:** the charge contains five (5) imperatives, one (1) in v. 2 and four (4) in v. 5
 - a. vv. 3-4 are a “part” of the charge (i.e. the *push-back* that will come as a result of obedience)
 - b. however, it is a *single charge* with a *single intention* = one command viewed from different angles
2. “*preach the word*” = proclaim the entirety of the substance of the gospel as it is revealed in Scripture
 - a. “*preach*” = to announce; tell; herald; proclaim; to shout out a message; to *convince through words*
 1. not just the *homiletic act* performed by a “professional”, but all proclamation of truth
 2. “*the word*” (*logos*) = the fullest revelation of God to the world; the “speaking” of God by which he reveals himself and his will to creation (i.e. as in “*the Word made flesh*”; **John 1:14**)
 - c. **given the context:** the *theopneustos* = the Scriptures or “*sacred writings*” – but, not just the Bible as a “textbook” of information, but the whole *metanarrative* that flows from it
 1. i.e. the overarching interpretation of revelation that provides a pattern or structure for belief
 2. i.e. all that God has determined to do in creation through Jesus Christ now revealed to us
- d. **preaching is the God-ordained means by which the gospel is revealed, through which the Spirit moves to form the elect into fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ**
 1. the *means* of preaching is *Scripture* – true preaching brings forth the substance of the Bible, the “*whole counsel of God*”, not the opinions or “advice” of the preacher (i.e. as exposition)
 2. the *message* of preaching is *Christ* – true preaching focuses the attention of the audience of the *central person* of Scripture, Jesus Christ, not on the “self” (i.e. for self-denial)
 3. the *maintenance* of preaching is *discipleship* – true preaching advocates for the steady growth of the audience in maturity of faith through an ever-increasing understanding of Christ
 4. **IOW:** God has ordained that followers of Jesus Christ will not only be *saved* by preaching, but that they must also receive a steady diet of biblical preaching in order to be *sanctified*
 - a. thus the strong emphasis on preaching during the Reformation and in reformed churches
3. “*be ready in season and out of season*” = take the preaching task *seriously*, for it is a *serious* task
 - a. **note:** “*in*” and “*out*” are prefixes to the Greek word for “a time or season” (*kairos*)
 1. when it is “vogue” or “popular” (generally) or when it is treated by *individuals* as “valuable”
 - b. **IOW:** there will be times when preaching is exciting and welcome, and there will be times when preaching is dull and resisted, *even in the life of the preacher himself* – but, *take it seriously*
4. “*reprove, rebuke, and exhort with complete patience*” = do *all* that the preaching task *demand*s
 - a. **note:** there is *fundamentally* no difference between preaching and teaching in the N.T.
 1. the assumption is that teaching the things of God *will produce results in the life of the hearer*
 2. preaching is simply less *subtle* in its *expectations* – good preaching will *enunciate them*
 - b. **note:** many (today) believe that the essence of “good” preaching is simply to entertain or inform
 1. e.g. that was a good “message” today preacher (**IOW:** it kept me awake)
 2. *true* preaching is to reprove the hearer, rebuke him in his sin, and exhort him to holiness
5. **preaching is the long-term discipline essential to the spiritual health of the believer**

II. The Rejection of Preaching the Word (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

Content

a. the steps of the rejection of sound teaching

1. “*the time is coming*” – a repetition of the phrase in **3:1** (“*in the last days*”) = not some future, eschatological time, but in the *regular time* of the church; in the church *down through time* (**now**)
2. “*not endure*” = they won’t “put up with”; they won’t “accept”; they won’t “have anything to do with”
 - a. i.e. they will *reject* preaching that is focused on doctrine, theology or biblical understanding
3. “*having itching ears*” = a euphemism for a desire to hear *only what one wants to hear* – a focus on hearing only that which is *pleasurable* to the hearer (e.g. Scrooge: “speak comfort to me Jacob”)
 - a. i.e. they will *insist* on preaching that is comforting and soothing to their *fleshly desires*
4. “*accumulate ... teachers*” = they will employ only those who will preach *what they want to hear*
 - a. i.e. they will abandon expository biblical preaching for short, humorous, topical **homilies**
5. “*wander off into myths*” = they will become biblically and theologically illiterate, without discipleship
 - a. i.e. they will be easy prey for heresy and apostasy, *and their preachers will even promote it*
6. e.g. the similarity to **Isaiah 6:** “*who will go for us ... send me ... say to the people ... how long*”

b. the essence of the rejection of sound teaching

1. what Paul is *really* saying: **that many in the church will insist that their preachers lie to them**
 - a. **i.e.** Fleetwood Mac (1987): “tell me lies, tell me sweet little lies”
 - b. **e.g.** tell me I’m saved because I prayed a prayer once; tell me that God does not expect me to be holy, but only to be happy (contra **Heb. 12:14**); tell me that God loves me just the way that I am, continuing to identify myself with my sin (contra **1 Cor. 6:9-11**); tell me that Christ does not expect me to mortify the longings of my flesh, but just to pretend that I love him (contra **Matt. 16:24**)
 - c. **e.g.** tell me that I don’t have to forgive my brother 70x7 times; tell me that church attendance is optional; tell me I don’t need to be a member of a church; tell me that prayer and Bible study is only for super-Christians; tell me that I am free to build my career to retirement as my goal; tell me that I should never be confronted for anything; tell me that fellowship is more important than discipleship; tell me that the church is supposed to be a reflection of the culture around it and embrace the same ideologies; tell me that I can still call myself a Christian even though I have little knowledge of Jesus and that my view of him is mostly of my own imagination; tell me that my attitude towards preaching is simply to tolerate it; tell me that you (preacher) will never confront me (or anyone else) from the pulpit; tell me that you love me with sweet little lies ...
2. **principle: it is normal for people to wander away from a church promoting Christ-centered discipleship and an emphasis on expository preaching – goats can’t handle sheep food!**
 - a. **i.e.** preaching is a ministry of both extraordinary joy and extraordinary disappointment – but, the preacher is called to preach the word *even when many will reject both him and the message* ...

III. The Fulfillment in Preaching the Word (2 Timothy 4:5)

Content

a. the fulfillment of the charge (v. 5)

1. “as for you” = even if you are rejected, **do your job!**
 - a. “*be sober-minded*” = keep a level head; do not become overly discouraged or burned out
 - b. “*endure suffering*” = endure the rejection even of those who you *thought* were committed
 - c. “*do the work of an evangelist*” = not a circuit-rider, but one who *continually* proclaims the gospel
 - d. “*fulfill your ministry*” = do what you have been set aside by Christ and the church to accomplish
2. **application: preaching is what God has ordained as one of the key ways of accomplishing his purposes in the elect – the regenerated person loves to hear the Bible expounded, because he knows that the Scriptures are able to “make you wise for salvation through faith” (3:15)**