

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE - 9.17.2023

PART 28 - THE PRIORITY OF PREACHING

I. INTRODUCTION

2 Timothy 4:1-5

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: **2** preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. **3** For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, **4** and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. **5** As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

II. A PROVOKING CHARGE

1 charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom:

- This passage certainly has enormous importance for those whose primary responsibility is the preaching and teaching of God's Word.
- But there are practical applications for every single follower of Christ.
- We cannot disconnect this passage from what Paul wrote just before.
- Paul writes, "You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings..." (2 Tim 3:10).
- Timothy has faithfully imitated Paul's teaching, life and conduct. He has made it his own. That is what a faithful follower of Jesus does.
- Then he delivers the imperative, Timothy must also continue in what he has learned and firmly believed (4:14).
- And he grounds the exhortation with two compelling reasons:
- First, what he learned and believed is valid because of who he learned it from, the apostle of Christ Jesus.
- Second, that he learned and believed is valid because it was consistent with the Scripture he was taught and familiar with since his childhood.
- And lastly, he asserts two of the most important and foundational principles concerning Scripture that help us continue in our faith.
- First, is Scripture's origin—All Scripture is divinely inspired.
- All Scripture, every word is God-breathed. God is Scripture's one and only Divine Author.

- Second, is Scripture’s purpose—Scripture us totally sufficient.
 - All Scripture is useful to instruct, to correct our wrong thinking and actions, to bring us to repentance and faith, to exhort us in right and holy living, and to train us to conform to God’s righteous standard.
 - Scripture is the chief means by which God brings us to maturity and grows us up in him.
- Paul now delivers this final charge to Timothy in the last of his recorded letters.
 - Paul begins the charge with certain motivators and incentives to provoke Timothy to faithfulness in keeping the charge.
 - “I charge you...”—The language of these words means “*to solemnly urge*”. It is a solemn charge from the apostle of Christ Jesus to Timothy.
- “In the presence of God...”—we saw this same formula at the end of 1 Timothy (6:13-14). Paul reminds Timothy of the One who is watching him deliver this charge.
 - God is called upon to witness this exhortation.
 - This is not meant to frighten Timothy but to impress upon him that his response to this charge and everything else in the letter is happening before the watchful eyes of the Sovereign God of the Universe.
- “...and of Christ Jesus...”—The charge and Timothy’s response is also being observed by the very One whose message Timothy has been entrusted with. The good deposit is not Timothy’s message, it is the message of Christ Jesus, Timothy’s Savior and Redeemer.
- “Who is to judge the living and the dead”—Christ is coming in judgment.
 - Timothy must remember that he will one day have to give an account of how well he kept and preached the Word, how he followed this charge, how he discharged the ministry he was entrusted with.
 - James reminds us of this very same thing. He warns that those who teach will be judged with a greater strictness (James 3:1).
 - The writer of Hebrews also exhorts us to obey and submit to our leaders who are given the charge of watching over our souls, knowing that they will have to give an account (Hebrews 13:17).
- “And by his appearing and kingdom”—Lastly, he reminds Timothy of what we all long and hope for, the coming of our Lord in all of his glory on the Last Day when he will fully and finally establish his kingdom.
 - This is a commission from God, ultimately it is from him, not the apostle.
- And the truths about God’s watchful gaze, the coming judgment, the glorious appearing and kingdom of our Lord, must exert a powerful influence in Timothy’s ministry and provoke him to faithfulness.
 - If he keeps these reminders before him, he will fulfill this charge.
 - And these truths should provoke to faithfulness every one who teaches and preaches the Word of God and those who listen to preaching and teaching.

III. AN PRESSING CHARGE

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

- The urgency and pressing nature of the charge is conveyed by the abruptness of these commands.
 - This is Timothy's prime directive—Preach the Word.
 - Preach means to “herald” the Word, it is the public proclamation of God's Word.
 - Notice, it is THE WORD that is to be preached. That is the whole body of doctrine he has heard from Paul, the gospel treasure that has been entrusted to him and that he was also charged with passing on to others. It also consists of the OT Scripture.
 - Timothy must be faithful to proclaim this message.
 - Timothy is to boldly herald it and so must every faithful gospel preacher.
- While the pastor has other responsibilities to which he must attend, his priority is the public proclamation of The Word.
 - Recall how the apostles were burdened trying to meet physical needs that they had the congregation appoint deacons so that they could devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4).
 - The ministry of the Word is the priority.
- To faithfully preach the Word, the preacher must be committed to the absolute authority of God's Word.
 - To faithfully preach the Word, the preacher must be committed to the diligent study of God's Word.
 - To faithfully preach the Word, the preacher must be committed to a fearless proclamation of God's Word.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PREACHING MINISTRY

- The command to preach is the priority, and then Paul expands on it.
 - “Be ready in season and out of season”—Timothy must be ready to preach not only when he feels like it, but when he doesn't feel like it.
 - He must be ready when it is not only when it is convenient but inconvenient.
 - This is not just about preparation but about availability.
 - Paul's example in 4:17.
 - Timothy, like a good soldier, must be on duty at all times. He must be ready at a moment's notice to preach the Word in any and every situation.
- “Reprove, rebuke, exhort”—God's people must be corrected with the Word of God.
 - Timothy's preaching must aim for conviction that moves people to repentance.
 - He is also to exhort in his preaching, encouraging in the right things.
 - All good preaching employs God's Word for all of this and more.
- “With complete patience and teaching”—he will need the patience of the farmer. We won't see instant results. We are to be faithful in preaching and teaching and leave the results to the Holy Spirit.
 - Our preaching must be accompanied by careful teaching so that the Word will be profitable to the hearers.
 - We have been called to a doctrinal ministry. Which is why elders must be able to teach (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:9).

IMPORTANCE FOR THE HEARER

- You need to hear the word of God preached and taught. You need the faithful preaching of God's Word.

- So what is your responsibility if you need what God is telling preachers to do?
- It is to be an active listener of gospel preaching.
- Jesus said, "Take care then how you hear..." (Matthew 8:18)
- George Whitefield's sermon on "How to Listen to a Sermon."
- (<https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/howtolisten.html>)
- 1. Come to hear with a sincere desire to know and do your duty.
- 2. Give diligent heed to the things that are spoken from the Word of God.
- 3. Do not entertain even the least prejudice against the minister.
- 4. Be careful not to depend too much on the preacher, or think more highly of him than you ought to think.
- 5. Make particular application to your own hearts of everything that is delivered.
- 6. Pray to the Lord, before, during, and after every sermon.
- You need to pray for an attentive heart, pray that the Spirit would give you understanding, pray for how you are to put God's Word into practice in your life. Pray for God to give you what you need from the preaching of His Word. Pray for God to give you a desire to sit under the ministry of the Word.
- And you need to pray for faithful preaching of the Word and for preachers.

IV. A PRESENT CHARGE

3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

- Here is reason for the urgency and relevancy of the charge, the present-day, contemporary scene that Timothy finds himself in, and that we find ourselves in today.
- The time is coming when people will not want to listen to sound teaching.
- Now this sounds like Paul is thinking of a far off time in the future, but as we looked at with the phrase, "last days", while there is an anticipation that things will go from bad to worse, the time has already begun.
- We are in the time when people will not endure sound teaching.
- We are in the time when people are turning away from listening to the truth.
- We are in the time when people are finding teachers that suit their own passions and are wandering off into myths.
- Why does this happen? Because people's natural tendency is to wander away from the truth.
- Because people have an itch for novelty.
- And because they want that they will select teachers that give them what they want to hear.
- They are not listening with a view to the truth but to have the tickle in their ears scratched.
- This is the present spiritual danger the people of God are confronted with.
- This is why faithful preaching is needed.
- If you are not under faithful preaching, you are susceptible to this drift away from the truth.

- Faithful preaching has a prophetic edge calling people to reject error and hold to the truth.

V. A PERSISTENT CHARGE

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

- The charge continues with how Timothy is to respond to the present content he finds himself ministering in and to the kind of people to whom he is called to minister to.
- Four succinct commands calling him to boldness and faithfulness.
- “Always be sober-minded”—He is to always keep his head. Always be self-controlled.
- “Endure suffering”—this is a recurring theme of this letter. Timothy will be opposed if he remains faithful.
- He must persevere in faithful preaching even though some will not listen to it and he must not compromise the truth even under the threat of suffering.
- “Do the work of an evangelist”—because people are ignorant of the true gospel, Timothy must make preaching the gospel his life’s work.
- “Fulfill your ministry”—Timothy will face difficult days ahead. But that must not deter him from fulfilling his ministry. He must labor until the task is accomplished.
- The charge will always be pressing so he must persist and persevere in it.
- And because we know we are in the last days, we know times of difficulty are in store for the people of God, the more difficult the times and the harder of hearing the people, the clearer and more persuasive our proclamation must be.
- We must not shrink back from heralding the truth!

CONCLUSION

- The weight of this charge must have seemed overwhelming to Timothy.
- But no one is up to the task. No one is able to measure up to all of this faithfully.
- For the minister, this passage is not a call to embrace an impossible or impractical burden.
- It is an invitation to enter into a life of profound dependence upon Christ and the strength he graciously supplies.
- For you who sit under faithful Bible preaching and teaching, may you desire it more and more.
- May you have a growing distaste and repulsion for the sensational and the things that tickle the ear, and may you crave the truth, and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls (James 1:21).
- May God grant you the grace and strength to be a doer of the word and not a hearer only.
- and may the Lord give you what you need from this message today.
- To the praise and glory of His name.

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?