

Title: Preach the Word
Text: 2 Timothy 4.1-5
Theme: Preach the Word
Series: 2 Timothy
Prop Stmt God's ordained method for reaching people with the gospel and growing his church is through the faithful preaching of His Word.

Read Text:

Today we begin the final chapter of the Apostle Paul's final letter. Every word is measured. Every phrase is focused. As with the rest of Scripture, there is no fluff and no filler. Paul feels the nearness of his death. At the end of this chapter he urges Timothy, "Do your best to come before winter." A few verses earlier he said, "Do your best to come to me soon." We don't know if Timothy ever made it. If the words were not urgent enough already, Paul invokes the language of an oath. The seriousness of this text weighs not only upon the preacher; it weighs upon the church.

If the preacher is to labor in the ministry of the word and is to preach diligently, plainly, faithfully, wisely, humbly, boldly, zealously and sincerely, then that means that the church needs to hear the Word preached. God has given this command to preach the word because his church needs to hear the Word being preached. The man preaching should be diligent in preparation to preach, the people listening should be diligent in their listening. In other words, I need to give myself to the preparation of preaching and give myself to preaching. And you need to give yourself to prepare to hear the Word and give yourself to hearing. Both are a labor; both a glorious labor. Both are worth our investment. If you are going to examine what you hear and sift it to ensure that you are hearing God's Word and not man's, you need to be engaged in the sermon.

1. **These are weighty words.** (1)

I've been called to testify in a court of law before and was asked to raise my right hand and make an oath. "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?" I do. And in that moment, I was reminded that my words were heard by more than man; they were heard and known by God. The stakes are higher. In this text, Paul doesn't ask Timothy to repeat an oath, he places him under one. He is about to give him a charge and wants Timothy to know that this charge is weighty because of Who this charge is being made in front of.

A. **Who**

God and Christ Jesus – there is simply no greater audience, no higher witnesses, no more serious accountability and Paul invokes this because what he is about to charge Timothy with, and by application, every preacher, is that serious. This only heightens the sense for the church. As we are going to see, preaching is a serious business.

B. **What**

Judge the Living and the dead – this phrase reminds us that everything is Coram Deo (before the face of God). God is not only the witness to the charge; God is a witness to how I keep this charge. God is a witness to my sermon preparation and a witness to my preaching and a witness to your listening. Everything I say about him and his Word, he hears. That is sobering because I am called to talk about God to you and I have to talk about God in front of God to you and will be held accountable for it.

C. Why

Appearing and his kingdom – this phrase is a reminder of why I or anyone would do this and it is a reminder of why you need preachers to do this. Christ is going to return. Christ is going to establish his kingdom on this earth and is going to rule and reign in person. This world, as it is, is not forever. You need to be reminded of that, because you are tempted to forget it and you need faithful preachers to keep that in front of you so that you will live for what matters and not waste your life.

2. This is a serious charge. (2)

I say “charge” as if it is singular, but when you look at verse 2, you see that there are 5 commands that Timothy is given. So, why did I say (for point #2), “this is a serious charge” instead of saying “these are serious charges”? Here is why. Even though there are 5 commands, commands 2-5 explain how we are supposed to do command #1. The first and the prominent command is to...

A. Preach the Word

You will often hear people say that the message of the church does not change, but the methods do. For example, we use sound amplification, heating, air conditioning and publishing methods that are relatively new in the history of the church. However, there are some methods that are commanded by God and that we are not permitted to change. Preaching the Word is one of them. And because of that, we are best served when we keep the language of the Bible to describe the functions of the church.

To preach means to declare. Preaching is declaring propositional truths that God has revealed. When someone preaches properly, he is announcing and proclaiming truths that God has already established in his Word. Preaching is the marriage of message and methodology. God has decreed that his Word be declared. (OT and NT) That is why when I preach, I do not share some thoughts for you to consider because they might be helpful if you are so inclined. No. I declare what God has revealed. I declare it with authority because God is the author. Therefore, this is not a talk that is shared; this is a sermon that is declared. But, in order for the sermon to actually be authoritative, the content of the declaration has to be consistent with what God has revealed. Just because I (or any other preacher) says something with passion and conviction does not mean that it is true. You are not under any obligation to submit yourself to what I say, simply because I say it. You are under obligation to submit yourself to what God has revealed. Therefore,

I have the responsibility to study and to labor in the ministry of the Word so that I declare is what God has revealed. If, what I declare is what God has revealed, then you have the responsibility to submit to it.

Do you see the wisdom of God in this? You and I are so prone to thinking that we are in charge. We are so prone to thinking that we can have a “take it or leave it” attitude toward God’s Word. We are so prone to believing that life is all about us. We are so prone to thinking that our word, our opinion, our perspective, is the right one. I need, and you need to be humbled. Every week I need to hear the Word. I need to be reminded that I am not God. My word has no authority. My opinions do not count. God’s Word is my authority. One of the reasons why we often stand for the reading of the Word is a reminder to us that we stand under this Word. Because God’s Word has authority, God’s Word is to be declared in a manner that reflects that authority. I know that some of the things that I preach bother some of you. But, I do not apologize for that. I make no apologies for declaring what God has revealed. In fact, I would need to apologize and seek your forgiveness if I did not declare what God has revealed.

Jesus plays for keeps.

God says what he means and means what he says. I dare not pretend otherwise. When the preaching of the Word is no longer the focal point of the primary weekly gathering of the church, the seeds of decay for that church have been planted and are sprouting up.

The pastor has to give preaching, his primary attention. He has to give himself to prayer and study of the Word in order to declare with humility, with boldness, with confidence, with clarity, with accuracy, with compassion and with the Spirit’s power, the Word of God. The congregation has to expect the preacher to do this. And the congregation is to treasure the preaching of the Word. They are to expect it, pray for it, long for it, be prepared to listen with their hearts, be hungry for it, be engaged with it, be discerning during it, and be humbled by it.

Cornerstone, I love you. No pastor is more blessed than me to have a congregation who come and who not only endure sound teaching, you relish it. Granted, some of you appear to be bored out of your gourd, but for the most part, you are a joy to preach to. I want to applaud you, thank God for you and encourage you. And I want to encourage you to cultivate an appetite for good preaching. Expose yourself to men who preach expositionally, faithfully, and soundly. Brothers like David Platt, Matt Chandler, Kevin DeYoung, Mark Dever, John MacArthur, John Piper, R.C. Sproul, Steven Lawson, Ligon Duncan, and Al Mohler are guys I can commend to you.

B. Be Ready (to preach the Word)

To be ready to preach the Word in season and out of season, means to be prepared to declare what God has revealed whether or not it is perceived as being convenient. It is not always a convenient time to preach the Word. It was certainly not a convenient time for John Knox. John Knox was a Scotsman who became a preacher and a pastor in his

beloved country of Scotland. He is well known for his prayer, "Give me Scotland, or I die." His bold preaching of the gospel was not convenient because Mary (known as bloody Mary because of all of the Protestants she executed) had ascended to the throne. The "season" for preaching was over, but John Knox believed this text and he preached the Word even when it was out of season and his ministry was that of a trailblazer that led the way for many other pastors who kept preaching the gospel in spite of the persecution they would face. It was reported that Mary, Queen of Scots, said, "I fear the prayers of John Knox more than all the assembled armies of Europe." John Knox was a man who preached the Word out of season, knowing that it would offend men. But he was willing to offend men because he was unwilling to offend God.

If a preacher is preaching the Word, he is going to do it whether or not it is convenient. His ministry is also going to be characterized by reproof. If the sermons you listen to never include reproof, then someone is not faithfully preaching the Word.

C. Reprove

What does it mean to reprove? It means to correct. It means that you take the time to point out that what someone is doing is actually wrong. So, let me connect a couple of dots. It is not convenient to preach the Word now. It is not convenient to reprove. Reprove is no longer in our vocabulary as a culture. We have attempted to eliminate the category of sin and evil. Instead of using God's words to describe things, we think we have found better expressions. This is what parenting sounds like now. "Honey, we don't do things like that, because, well, uh..., uh... it is just, sort of, not appropriate. You are better than that. And I am sure you did not mean to do that. So, let's pretend that this did not happen and we'll try again and do better next time, ok?" There is no recognition of sin, or evil, or rebellion against God and the authority that God has established and the consequences now and for eternity in view of that. If you talk about hell, people want to accuse you of emotional abuse. If you reprove someone you can be accused of a hate crime. It is not convenient to reprove. I feel the wind of our culture blowing against this pulpit. I get weary with the conflict and feel tempted at times to not say all that needs to be said. But, verse 1 is real. It is real for me and for you.

D. Rebuke

Rebuke is like taking reproof and kicking it up a few degrees. To reprove is to tell someone that what they are doing is wrong. To rebuke is to take the steps in an effort to actually stop them. For example, let's say that we have a brother in Christ who struggles with alcohol. He professes faith in Christ, but he is vulnerable to this. What should my relationship look like to him? What should your relationship look like? Your relationship to him should, when it is needed, have a measure of reproof. You should love him enough to warn him about not fighting everyday against this sin. Your relationship should also, when it is needed, have a measure of rebuke. Reproof is lovingly warning him about giving into this sin. Rebuke is going over to his house, inviting yourself in, opening up his refrigerator, taking out his beer and pouring it down the drain while you sing In Christ alone. Rebuke means to take steps to help someone actually stop sinning.

If we are going to help each other follow Jesus better, we have to help each stop sinning when it seems as if we can't stop on our own. But notice this. If I never reprove you from the pulpit because I ignore all of the passages that have reproof in them and if I never rebuke you from the pulpit because I conveniently skip over all of the passages that have rebuke in them, then you as a parent will probably not have the categories in your mind to help you parent as you should and will not have the example of God's Word to base your parenting on. As a friend, if you only hear pleasant sounding, happy-motivational talks coming from the pulpit, you would never dream of actually helping another person stop destroying their life. You would be paralyzed by a lack of confidence in God Word to be so bold.

Now, there is something else that we must remember. The hero of the Bible is Jesus. Everything points to him in some way. So, when the Word reproves us and rebukes us, it does so by not only pointing out our sin, but it points to our need of Christ and it points to our provision of salvation, forgiveness, grace and help in Christ. (Gospel) The reproofs and rebukes the Bible gives us are given to cause us to look to Christ. Therefore, the preacher should preach reprove and rebuke with grace and compassion. If he angrily uses the pulpit to push a personal agenda, he is committing ministerial malpractice. The pulpit is not his to do with whatever he wants; the pulpit is governed by the Word. And because the message of the Bible is so consistently about Christ and points us over and over to the gospel, we can exhort with patience and with teaching.

E. Exhort

What good counsel this is! Preach with patience. Isn't that good? In other words, I cannot expect to accomplish everything in one sermon. I need to be patient and trust the Spirit of God to do the work of God through the Word of God over time. Keep plowing. Keep planting. Keep weeding. Keep watering. Keep fertilizing. Keep farming. Keep teaching. Which means that God wants me to keep pushing you. If you are in your 80's you have more to learn. You have not heard it all. You have more to grasp, more to be amazed by, more to learn so that your worship is deeper, your love is stronger, your affections are greater, and your trust is truer. There are believers here in their 20's who need to see believers in their 70's and 80's who are passionate for the Word. Older believers, you know more than anyone else how much you need to be prepared for tough days. Living a gospel-centered life is not for wimps. But, many want to live as if "I've done my time. Now, leave me alone. Let me coast. Entertain me. Don't push me. Don't challenge me. Don't make me think." Every one of us is vulnerable to the warnings of verses 3-4.

3. These are tough days. (3-4)

And they will get tougher.

If you are doing a good job, then people will not leave the church. (is that always true?) There is some truth to that. There are plenty of times when if we had done a more effective job at helping that brother or sister, then they would not have gotten

discouraged and left. And when that happens, and it does, I need to look at myself in the mirror and confess my failure and seek to learn from it. However, that is not always the case. There are times when people simply do not want to hear the truth. They want you to affirm them and tell them how spiritual they are, how right they are, how wonderful they are and agree with them. When you don't do that, but instead tell them the truth, some will leave. They will look for someone to affirm what they already believe about themselves. It is easy to assume that a good church is growing. Sometimes it does not "grow" because it is a good church.

Sound teaching is referring to preaching with doctrinal content that has depth to it. Please read this verse and realize that this pulpit HAS to be known for this. If I am doing my job then I am going to be guilty of the charge of taking you deeper into the Word. Now, I should not talk over your heads, but neither should I gloss over things and not force you to think. God's Word is deep because God is deep. I want you to have deep thoughts of God so that your love of God will go deep. If you don't have deep thoughts of God, then your love for God and your worship of God will be cheap and shallow and God is worth deep thoughts and deep worship.

Not only that, but I have to prepare you for tough days. Your faith is going to be under assault. You will be criticized and quite possibly persecuted for being a follower of Christ. You need deep roots to withstand the storm. Deep roots in God come from deep thinking about God. But listening to and tracking with and grasping deep truths about God in a whole-life engaging manner takes effort on your part. It is so much easier to be entertained. You know what the word amuse means, don't you? A (negative prefix) muse (to think) = to not think. I can amuse you. I can tell you engaging stories, humorous anecdotes and motivational, feel-good talks that make you feel good in the moment. But, you can't run a marathon on a diet of cotton candy and Mountain Dew.

You are in a war. Your heart is tempted to worship "me-time" or money, or stuff, or vacation, or pleasure, or sex, or respect or resentment, a host of other things. You are so tempted to place your affections and your trust in so many things that cannot save you. But, those things are paraded before you by your heart and by the world in a way that is designed to entice you. How do you fight against that? How do you fight against the glossy appeals and enticements of our world?

When I am hungry, I am tempted to eat a greasy fast food hamburger, unless it is sitting next to a sizzling 20-ounce Delmonico steak, grilled medium rare, covered with a pile of sautéed mushrooms, nestled next to a steaming hot baked potato with butter, sour cream, cheddar cheese, chives and little pieces of bacon just kind of oozing out, and finished off with a wedge of Snickers cheesecake. Now, that fast food hamburger looks like garbage to me. That is what good theology will do for your spiritual palate. It will teach you. It will train you. It will develop your spiritual taste buds so that when the enticements of this world come and they come, they will not hold the same power. When you compare the promises of this world up against the promises of God, the promises of this world do not measure up. What does deep theology do? It helps you grasp how deep

God's promises are. It helps you grasp how amazing God's plan is. It blows your mind and heart with humility.

4. **Don't give in or give up.** (5)

Verse 5 ends the ministry admonitions that Paul gives to Timothy. These 4 commands summarize all that he has said in this letter.

A. **Realize what is at stake.** – be sober-minded

Heaven and hell are real. Jesus plays for keeps. The gospel matters. You have a soul. You will live forever somewhere. People are dying. This world will not last. People need Jesus. Don't waste their time with silly stuff in the pulpit.

B. **Endure suffering.**

If you preach and minister like this, you can expect conflict. Don't run from it. Endure it. Suffering will not last. God's Word will.

C. **Preach the gospel.**

People always need to hear the gospel.

D. **Fulfill your mission.**

Don't quit. It's worth it.

Conclusion:

Today, this text has ministered to me, so I have tried to preach it to myself. God heard the words of this sermon and God knows what you have heard and God knows how you listened.