

THE CALL TO PREACH THE WORD

I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead ^[b]at His appearing and His kingdom: ² Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. ⁵ But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” 2 Tim. 4:15

The church in Ephesus urgently needed corrective discipline. Young Timothy was left in charge of the church by Paul, but he was faced with so many challenges and conflicts that he was ready to throw in the towel.

Destructive doctrines were being taught that disrupted the entire life of the church. Christians were acting unlovingly toward each another. Moreover, it seems, unqualified men had become elders and deacons and fallen into sin.

Some women were flaunting their wealth and exerting authority over men with the intend to teach. Sin was ignored. But worst of all, the gospel message and its reputation in the unbelieving community was seriously threatened. Timothy was in over his head!

As a result of these problems, Paul wants to affirm and bolster Timothy's courage, so he spells out in the letters to Timothy how Timothy should faithfully execute his duties. The fundamental solution to achieving all these necessary changes would be found in God's revelation –the holy scriptures.

The God-ordained means to save, sanctify, and strengthen His church is preaching and teaching. Churches only grow to maturity when the Word of God is faithfully and systematic expounded to them.

In the text before us, the Paul calls the young Timothy to faithfulness regarding his calling, giving him 9 imperatives in these 5 verses. The first command is the most important one: **PREACH THE WORD!** The other commands amplify the call to preach.

THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE CALL TO PREACH THE WORD

Verse 1, says, *“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom.”*

The word “charge “means to solemnly entrust. Paul charges Timothy to preach the word and reminds him of seriousness of the call. In a few words reminds Timothy of some “eternal realities.” The reality of the true and living God, who will judge of all, and the reality of the Lord Jesus Christ and His second coming and earthy kingdom.

Timothy must have felt the heavy weight of those words. For Paul was really saying, *“Timothy, I will be gone soon, but God is present. God is watching! Eventually you will stand before Him to give an account for your work. He will judge your motives, assess your public ministry, evaluate your private life, and sift through the secret areas of your soul. Timothy, take the counsel I am about to give you seriously.”*

What an immense responsibility the preacher has been given! And it is impossible to exaggerate the dignity and importance of preaching.

Martyn Lloyd Jones – *“The work of preaching is the highest and greatest and most glorious calling to which anyone can ever be called.”*

Matthew Simpson, in his book, *Lectures on Preaching* states: *“The pulpit is a scared place, where we do sacred work, proclaiming a scared message from heaven. When we stand in the pulpit we are standing in Christ’s place, and around us are immortal souls; the unseen Lord in our midst; the Holy Spirit hovers over the assembly; angels are watching, and heaven and hell wait for the results.”*

The pulpit is not a place for uncalled and imposters. The pulpit is not a place for comedians and jokers. It is not a place for story-tellers. The God appointed elders of church are responsible to uphold the sanctity of the pulpit.

THE SUBSTANCE OF THE CALL TO PREACH WORD

Verse 2 says, *“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”*

The word preach means **“To proclaim.”** Its in the emphatic mood, stressing that the proclamation is to done with authority.

The substance of our preaching is the word of God and nothing else. The bible is the manual. It is as if Paul were saying *“Timothy, be the man of one book! Be a bible man. That’s the charge.”*

John 12:49, *“For I did not speak on my own, but the father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken.”*

The pulpit is not a place for our own ideas, political speeches, therapy sessions, motivational talks, self-help advice, worldly philosophies, or scientific theories. Martin Luther would say, *“The pulpit is the throne of the word of God.”*

To preach the word is to preach Christ. Christ is the Word of God. The focus of our preaching is the person of Jesus Christ and His redemptive work on Calvary’s cross.

1 Cor. 1:23 says, *“We preach Christ and Him crucified.”* And 2 Cor. 4:5 says, *“For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

We do not preach to elevate ourselves but elevate the Lord. God forbid! The totality of our preaching should focus on the birth, the life, the death, the resurrection, and the return of our Saviour.

In **verse 2**, Paul exhorts the young preacher, *“to be ready in season and out of season.”* To be ready you must first get ready. No preacher can effectively communicate God’s word without spiritual preparation.

Hard, long hours of study and prayer are a fundamental part of the daily life of the man of God who is called to preach.

Poor preparation makes poor preaching! Prayer and study, study and prayer make for good preparation and powerful, effective preaching. Study will give us knowledge, but prayer will keep us humble.

Prayer gives edge, entrance and weight to God’s word. Prayer in the closet, we give us power in the public!

Acts 6:4, “*the elders gave themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.*” In prayer we admit our weakness and our constant need of grace.

We are to preach in season and out of season, in other words, when it is convenient and when it so not convenient. There is no off season for the preacher. There is no standby time. Our message is always *in* season and *for* the season.

Again **verse 2**, the preacher is exhorted, “*to reprove, rebuke, and exhort.*” The preacher will need much patience and long suffering to do the particular work of *reproving, rebuking and exhorting.*

We must care for the truth and we must care for people. *Conviction, correction and encouragement* are all required essentials for edification the saints.

THE STRUGGLE OF THE CALL TO PREACH THE WORD

Look at **verses 2-3**, there we told, “*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables*”.

Paul foresaw and predicted a time when biblical preaching would be out of season. He foresaw a day when unbelievers would be church goers, who would try to call the shots.

They will have itchy ears. They want to hear what they want to hear, and not what they need to hear. The sound doctrines of the word rattle them.

They despise hearing about the doctrines of sin, repentance, judgment and hell. They want a cross-less gospel, a bloodless gospel, a watered-down gospel, a gospel that doesn't offend or save. They are seeking *another Jesus, another gospel, another spirit*, not the one of the bible.

Godly preachers are not man-pleasers, they are God fearers! True-to-God preachers preach to an audience of one. God is their audience and they fear Him, and no other. The one thing God honours is His word, and if a man fears God, he will honour His word. And God shall honor him.

God's Word must be the cornerstone for our ministry, for it will form the substance of all we preach and teach. Nothing will convert souls, change hearts and renew minds like the Bible.

By much training and discipline, we will learn to handle the word both as an offensive and defensive tool.

The word describes itself as a sword. The God-honouring preacher must at times draw the sword of the word, the sword of the spirit, and plunge in the heart of sin and kill the evil. There is no sin-killer like the word of God. Sin killed Christ, but the Word lives to kill sin.

Like a skilled surgeon—the Holy Spirit through the preacher opens a wound, exposing the cause of the patient's sickness, cutting away the destructive root of evil, all in order to heal and restore to life.

The word of God is also described as a hammer. It alone can smash the stoney heart. Strike the hammer of truth, and the Spirit of God will break the sinful heart in pieces.

The word of God is also a fire. The word purges. It cleanses. It purifies the faith the believers and warms their hearts. The Word of God is a fire, and all opposition is wood. It will destroy its enemies.

No enemy can withstand the force of God's Word. The sinners must feel their sins. Feel the enormity of the guilt and shame and that punishment belongs to them, should they persist in their refusal to repent and receive the forgiveness and salvation the Lord freely offers.

I also want to say, there is a great difference between preaching and teaching. Teaching informs you; preaching moves you. *Teaching* speaks to your mind. The spirit-filled preacher gets to your heart.

And we must prepare for the Calvary Road of suffering. There is no crown without a cross. Suffering for the elder is *normal*. Sometimes he suffers at the hands of his own people, sometimes at the hands of a fallen world. Either way, God will use it to conform you to the image of his Son.

Jesus suffered. Paul suffered. Calvin and Luther suffered. Spurgeon suffered. You will suffer. How? I don't know; as an old saint said, *God does not break every man's heart alike*. Study these men's biographies and you will be strengthened in your sufferings.

Finally **verse 5**, and last 4 imperatives: *"But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."*

It is required of every preacher to be evangelical, and to point the unsaved to Christ in their preaching. Any sermon which doesn't summon the sinner to embrace Christ is an incomplete sermon.

And in order to fulfill our ministry, we must not allow fear, pride, laziness, neglect, or suffering to cause us to be unfaithful in the work to which the Lord Jesus has called us. We are obligated to fulfill our ministries with great diligence, integrity and impartiality.

1 Tim 4:12 *"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and purity."*

Verse 15-16, *"Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers."*

The 10 commandments of preaching, to summarize the foregoing thoughts.

1) Thou shall not put words in God's mouth.

- God doesn't like to be misquoted.
- Do not add or take away from the 66 books, goes without saying

2) Thou shall exalt God with your preaching

- Leave the listeners in awe of his holy, majestic, glorious divine attributes.
- So that they *"ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name."* Ps 29:2
- Exaggerate His greatness and goodness

3) Thou shall always preach a Christ-centered message

- Paul said, ***“For I was resolved to know nothing among you but Christ and Him crucified.”***
- His Gospel has the locked-in power to save.

4) Thou shall prepare with study and prayer before you preach

- There is no excuse to be ill prepared for the task.
- Be utterly dependant on Spirit of God to provide the wisdom, the grace and the strength for your speaking ministry. Ask God to stretch you wide.

5) Thou shall preach the Word of God with authority

- God’s man doesn’t give pep talks, to make people feel better.
- God’s mouthpiece must be willing to say with boldness, ***“Thus says the Lord.”***
- There is no power in opinions and suggestions

6) Thou shall edify the hearers to faith and obedience

- Help people to think and live out the word. Move them to action.

7) Thou shall speak much of sin and grace

- The subject of man’s depravity and sinful state must not be avoided
- People need warnings against the evils of contemporary society (abortion, apostasy in the visible church, etc.).
- Sin kills, grace makes alive
- Sin condemns; grace justifies
- Sin resents; grace forgives
- Contrast the 2 in your sermons

8) Thou shall preach with clarity and passion

- Preach with simplicity, clarity and passion.
- Solid preaching is both passionate and engaging.
- A preacher must be dynamic. He is more than some soft speaker.
- The pulpit is for preachers. Desks are for speakers.

9) Thou shall honour the context of the text above all

- Context is king!
- Preach with precision, for we must stand in judgment for it.

- Don't to attempt to preach something you yourself haven't understood.

10) Thou shall not neglect to preach and teach doctrine

- Christians often lack "iron" in their bloodstream- doctrinal iron.
- Some are spiritually anemic
- Doctrine feeds the soul, reassures the faithless, matures the child of faith.

May the love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Spirit be with you all.