

Preach The Word!

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Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[0 : 00] Well, if we could, this evening, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, for a short while, if we could just look back at that passage that we read in 2 Timothy chapter 4.

2 Timothy chapter 4, and I want us to just focus our attention on verses 1 and 2. 2 Timothy 4 and verse 1.

Where Paul writes, 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, preach the word, be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke and exhort with complete patience and teaching.

Therefore, we must not drop this baton. We must not drop the baton. We must preach the word. We must preach the word.

[3 : 38] That's what Paul says here to Timothy. And Paul's words here in these opening verses, they are the mission and the mandate of every preacher of the gospel. Preach the word.

And Paul says that we are to preach the word powerfully. Preach the word persistently. Preach the word pastorally. And preach the word patiently.

Timothy, preach the word powerfully, persistently, pastorally, and patiently. Powerfully, persistently, pastorally, and patiently.

They are our headings this evening. So preach the word powerfully, he says. Preach the word powerfully. Paul says to Timothy, 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, preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, and exhort with complete patience and teaching.

[4 : 46] Now, as you know, Paul is repeatedly reminded and reaffirmed to Timothy that the gospel of Jesus Christ, that is the power of God unto salvation. But as Paul brings his letter to a conclusion, he seeks to add more weight and more worth to what he's saying.

And he does so by asserting and affirming to Timothy that his calling as a pastor and preacher of the gospel, his calling is not from the church.

His calling is from the sovereign and solemn charge of the king and head of the church, Jesus Christ. And, you know, with his apostolic authority, Paul says in verse 1, I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead.

I charge you, he says, preach the word. Preach the word. You know, Paul's authoritative statement here, you could almost say it's very similar to what was often said by the Old Testament prophets.

You remember what the Old Testament prophets always said when they spoke a word from the Lord. It was, thus saith the Lord. And that's, in many ways, that's what Paul is saying here.

[6 : 02] Thus saith the Lord, Timothy, preach the word powerfully. Thus saith the Lord, preach the word powerfully. And I say that because the word charge, there in verse 1, I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus.

The word charge, it's a word of warning. It's a word of warning because Timothy's sovereign and solemn charge is not only given from Jesus Christ and his role and responsibility as the king and head of the church.

This charge is given from Jesus as also the judge of all the earth. Which is why Paul is warning Timothy. He's giving Timothy a word of warning.

He's reminding him and reaffirming to Timothy, one day you will have to stand before Jesus, Timothy, and give an account of your ministry.

One day you will have to give an account for your ministry. So I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, preach the word.

[7 : 15] And you know, of course, Timothy was well aware that it was appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment. Timothy was well aware that one day he would have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account.

But you know, with his final words here, Paul hands over the gospel baton, as it were. And as he hands it to Timothy, he hands it over with a word of warning.

And he says to Timothy, Timothy, one day you're going to have to stand like me. You're going to have to stand before King Jesus and give an account of your ministry.

And you know, reading this really tests me and terrifies me as a minister. That one day I will have to give an account of my ministry here in Barvis.

I will have to stand before Jesus and give an account. Which always makes me question after every sermon. You probably don't think about it when you leave here, but I do.

[8 : 19] Did I preach the gospel clearly and compassionately? That's what goes through my mind. Did I teach the truth of the Bible faithfully and fervently?

Did I remind the saints that there is a heaven to be gained? Did I warn the sinner that there is a hell to be shunned? Did I preach the gospel in all its beauty and in all its glory?

Did I preach the word powerfully? That's what Paul is saying to Timothy. Timothy, preach the word powerfully. Because you're going to have to stand before King Jesus and give an account of your ministry.

And you know, that's why James gave that word of warning in his letter. James, when you read his letter, he says, Not everyone should become a preacher because preachers shall receive a stricter judgment.

You're going to be judged on the message, says James. You're going to be judged on the message that comes out of your mouth. So preach the word powerfully.

[9 : 26] And this is also what Paul reminded the Corinthians. He said to the Corinthians that the ministry of the faithful and the ministry of the false teachers in Corinth, they will be tried and tested by fire on the last day.

And Paul says to the Corinthians, if their ministry has been a faithful ministry of preaching Christ and him crucified, if their ministry has been a ministry of gold and silver and precious stones, it will stand firm.

But if their ministry has been a ministry of wood, hay and stubble, it will be burned up with fire. Paul says the fire will test the quality of each man's work.

The fire will test the quality of each man's work. So Timothy, preach the word powerfully. Preach the word powerfully. Then he says, preach the word persistently.

Preach the word persistently. 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 in his kingdom, preach the word, be ready in season and out of season.

[10 : 37] Reprove, rebuke and exhort with complete patience and teaching. So when Paul issued this sovereign and solemn charge to Timothy, Paul not only reminded and reaffirmed to Timothy who he served as a pastor and preacher of the gospel, Paul also reminds Timothy what he was as a pastor and preacher of the gospel.

Because when Paul issues this sovereign and solemn charge to preach the word, the word he uses there for preach at the beginning of verse 2 is the word *keruso*, which means herald.

He's a herald. That's what Timothy was. As a pastor and preacher of the gospel, he was a herald. Because a herald, a herald was an appointed messenger of the king.

A herald was an ambassador of the king. A herald was a servant of the sovereign. He was sent by the sovereign with an announcement of good news.

A herald was to publicly proclaim the decisions and even the declarations of the king. And, you know, we're familiar with this medieval form of sharing and spreading good news.

[11 : 51] Because a herald didn't post it or plaster it all over social media like they do nowadays. No, a herald would call everyone everywhere to come.

He would call them to come and listen to the king's message. And the way he would attract the attention of the audience was by ringing a bell.

And I'm sure we've all heard them saying, hear ye, hear ye, this day the message of the king. They would call the people to listen to the message of the king.

But, of course, Timothy, he wasn't living within the British Empire. Timothy was living within the Roman Empire. And Paul was writing from a Roman prison.

But the concept is still the same. But Caesar, the Caesar in Rome had heralds. And he would summon all these heralds to his palace.

[12 : 48] And he would give them the message that they were to proclaim. And they were to proclaim the message throughout the Roman Empire. And, of course, the herald was only allowed to say what Caesar decreed.

He wasn't allowed to add anything to it. He wasn't allowed to subtract anything from the message. And once this message had been proclaimed and where the herald had to proclaim it, he would have to return to Rome and give an account to Caesar.

And there were witnesses who went with the herald to ensure his faithfulness to the message and his faithfulness in proclaiming the message that had been entrusted to him from the Caesar.

And if it was found that the herald had even amended or altered the message even slightly, he was put to death immediately.

And, you know, that's the illustration Paul is using here with Timothy. He's saying that this is your sovereign and solemn charge to preach the word. Paul is reminding and reaffirming to Timothy and to every preacher of the gospel that he's a herald.

[14 : 05] He's a servant of the sovereign. He's a messenger of the master. He's an ambassador of Christ. Therefore, Timothy, preach the word. Don't add or subtract from scripture.

Don't twist it or distort it. No, as a herald, preach it. Preach the inspired, inerrant, and infallible word of God. Preach it in its entirety.

But preach the word persistently. That's what I love what he says. Preach the word persistently.

Preach the word, as he says there in verse 2, in season and out of season.

Preach the word in season and out of season. As you know, in the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon helpfully reminds us that to everything there is a season and there's a time for every purpose under heaven.

And as you know, that's the case not only in our personal lives, but also in the life of a congregation. Because there are times and seasons in a congregation when there is development.

[15 : 12] There are also times and seasons when there is deterioration. There are times and seasons when people are warming to the gospel. There are also times and seasons when people are waning from the gospel.

There are times and seasons of revival, but there are also times and seasons of regression. My friend, there are times and seasons of light and life in a congregation and there are times and seasons of darkness and death in a congregation.

There are different times and seasons in the experience of a congregation, which is why Paul reminds and reaffirms to Timothy as a pastor and preacher in a congregation, that his role and responsibility as a herald of the gospel is to preach the word persistently.

Preach the word in season and out of season. Preach the word constantly and consistently and continually.

Because regardless of what changing season you are in within your congregation, the word never changes. So preach the word persistently.

[16 : 25] The word never changes because it remains the only rule to direct us on how we may glorify God and enjoy him forever. Timothy, preach the word powerfully.

Preach the word persistently. Preach the word pastorally. Preach the word pastorally. 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 in his kingdom, preach the word, be ready in season and out of season.

Then he says, reprove, rebuke, and exhort with complete patience. And teaching. So Paul is issuing this sovereign and solemn charge to Timothy.

And he's not only reminded and reaffirmed to Timothy that he's to preach the word powerfully and persistently. But as a preacher and pastor, he must preach the word pastorally.

Preach the word pastorally. As you know, the word pastor or pastoral. It's a very biblical word.

Because a pastor is a shepherd.

[17 : 34] And a pastor shepherds the flock of God as God's under-shepherd. Therefore, as a shepherd, a pastor is to know his sheep. A pastor is to seek to protect his sheep.

A pastor is to feed his sheep and lead his sheep. A pastor is to have this intimate and informative knowledge of the flock within his congregation. He's to be aware of the situations and circumstances that are facing the homes and families within his community. He's to be alert to the sins and the sicknesses and the sufferings and the stresses and the struggles and the sorrows of those under his pastoral care. And Paul says to Timothy, with that personal and sometimes private knowledge of people in your congregation and living within your community, in your preaching, you need to be pastoral. You need to preach the word pastorally. Which means, Timothy, that as an under-shepherd of God, as a pastor of people, you can't be distant. You can't be disconnected. You can't be detached in your preaching. No, you need to be relevant to people. You need to be real with people.

[18 : 54] You need to seek to relate to people. Your preaching can't be all information and yet no application. Because you need to preach about the priorities and the pitfalls of the Christian life. You need to declare the delights and even the dangers of following Jesus. You need to highlight the happiness of heaven. And also the horrors of hell. But, Timothy, you can only do that when you're aware and you're alert to the needs and necessities of your congregation and your community. Timothy, that's why your elders and your deacons are so important. Because they're to communicate and let you know what's going on in the congregation and the community. And by doing so, it will impact and influence your preaching so that you can pastor the flock of God by being pastorally sensitive in all that you say to the people in front of you.

[19 : 54] Timothy, preach the word pastorally. Preach the word pastorally. But in order to explain and emphasize the need and necessity for pastoral preaching, Paul describes pastoral preaching using those three imperatives. And it's interesting that he uses these three. Reprove, rebuke, and exhort. Reprove, rebuke, and exhort. Timothy, he says, in order to preach the word pastorally, you need to preach to both the sinner and the saint. You need to reprove the sinner and the saint. You need to convince the sinner that they are a sinner. And you need to convict the saint of their indwelling sin. More than that, you need to rebuke the sinner and rebuke the saint. You need to expose sin in the life of the sinner. And you need to express and emphasize sanctification in the life of the saint. Timothy, you need to exhort the sinner and the saint.

[20 : 57] You need to exhort and encourage and enable the sinner to seek the Lord while he may be found. But at the same time, you need to exhort and encourage and enable the saint to strive to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Timothy preached the word pastorally by reproofing the sinner and the saint. By rebuking the sinner and the saint. By exhorting, encouraging and enabling the sinner and the saint. Because, he says, verse 3, The time is coming. Timothy preached the word pastorally. But, having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions. They'll only hear what they want to hear, not what they need to hear. And in the end, says Paul, they will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. Timothy preached the word pastorally. And do it, he says there at the end of verse 2, with all teaching. Do it with all teaching.

[22 : 12] It was R.C. Sproul who said, All of my teaching is preaching. And all of my preaching is teaching. All of my teaching is preaching. And all of my preaching is teaching. Therefore, we must preach and we must teach the word pastorally. Using, as he says, all doctrine. You can't just highlight our hobby horses and speak about our specialist subjects. No, Paul says, Timothy, cover the whole council. The whole council of God. Preach the word. Preach the word powerfully. Preach the word persistently. Preach the word pastorally. And lastly, he says, Preach the word patiently. Preach the word patiently. I charge you, he says, in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead.

[23 : 12] And by his appearing in his kingdom, preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke and exhort with complete patience and teaching.

I'd love to test you on this one. I don't suppose any of you remember what passage I first preached on when I became your minister in 2014.

The question I had as a young minister at the age of 26 was, What advice do you give to a young island minister as he starts out in the ministry?

What advice do you give to a young island minister as he starts out in the ministry? And I sought to try and answer my own question using scripture. And the scripture we came to was this passage in 2 Timothy 4.

I'm sure you remember the sermon so well. Because as you know from this study in this letter, Paul is giving advice to a young minister who's very much at the beginning of his ministry.

[24 : 25] And as we've seen this evening, Paul is reminded and reaffirmed to young Timothy that as a pastor and preacher, he's to preach the word powerfully and persistently and pastorally.

But then Paul says at the end of verse 2, and he says this with over 30 years of experience in the pastoral ministry. So by this point, the end of his life, Paul has been a minister for 30 years.

So with 30 years of experience in the pastoral ministry, Paul says to Timothy, Timothy, preach the word patiently. Preach the word patiently.

And you know what Paul says here is fascinating. Because the word patient, patience there, in the end of verse 2, same word that Jesus uses in the parable of the sower.

And as you know, the parable of the sower is in many ways there's a parable all about preaching. When you read through the parable, Jesus explains the parable. And he says to us that the seed, in the parable of the sower, the seed is the word of God.

[25 : 35] And the sower, the sower's responsibility, is to scatter the seed as best as he can. But the results of the scattered seed, that all depends upon the response of the soil.

And the response of the soil, says Jesus, that is reflective of the human heart. Because as Jesus explains in the parable, there's a hardened heart, where the seed just falls by the wayside.

It doesn't penetrate any deeper. There's also the hollow heart, where the seed falls onto the shallow rocky ground. It springs up for a while, but it quickly withers. Then there's the hungry heart.

It wants more than it can have. And it's the seed that falls among the thorns. But there's also, says Jesus, a healthy heart, where the seed of God's word falls into the good soil, and it bears and brings forth fruit.

And this is what Jesus says in Luke chapter 8. The seed that fell into good soil are those who hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

[26 : 51] They bear fruit with patience. And as every good gardener or crofter or farmer knows, sowing seed doesn't have instant results.

Waiting is always part of the process. Waiting is part of the process. And you know, I'll be honest with you. As you know, I've been here for eight years.

And what I've discovered in that time, besides many things, I've learned a lot of things in those eight years. But what I've discovered is that the hardest thing about preaching, and David knows this, is preaching patiently.

Preaching, the hardest thing about preaching, is preaching patiently. Because, as it's illustrated in the parable of the sower, preaching is a hidden work.

The results aren't instant. What's going on under the surface of the soil, no one knows. No one knows what's going on under the surface of the soil in a human heart.

[27 : 59] And it can take years. It can take years for the sown seed to take root and to bring forth fruit. Maybe that was your experience.

You were hearing the word for years. And it took years for that seed to take root and bring forth fruit. You might be thinking about your own children, or your grandchildren, and the seed that they've had sown upon their heart.

And you're asking the Lord, and you're asking the Lord, when? When, Lord? When is it going to take root? When is it going to bring forth fruit? And, you know, it's hard.

The hardest thing about preaching, the hardest thing about praying about the gospel, is to preach and pray patiently. But as Paul learned through his many years in ministry, Paul wasn't called to fruitfulness.

He was called to faithfulness. He wasn't called to fruitfulness. He was called to faithfulness. That's what we're called to. We're not called to fruitfulness. We're called to faithfulness.

[29 : 03] Faithfulness in preaching, faithfulness in prayer. That's why Paul could say to the Corinthians, Paul may plant. Apollos may water. But it's God alone who gives the increase.

It's God alone who gives the increase. And that's the hard part. We want it now. But we have to keep praying and keep preaching patiently.

So, Timothy, preach the word. Preach the word powerfully. Preach the word persistently. Preach the word pastorally. And preach the word patiently.

Sow in tears. That you may reap in joy. 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 in his kingdom, preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season.

Reprove, rebuke, and exhort with complete patience and teaching.

[30 : 04] Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee for thy word.

We thank thee that it is living, it is active. It is infallible and inerrant. And it is inspired. It is God-breathed. And we give thanks tonight that as we have opened thy word, thou art one who has breathed out of it.

And our prayer is that thou wilt breathe life into us. And remind us, Lord, to keep praying. To keep praying patiently. To keep preaching patiently.

To know, Lord, that through the word and through prayer, that there are a God who promises to do in us and for us exceedingly abundantly above all, more than we could ask or even think.

O Lord, our prayer is that as the seed is sown week by week, and as it has been sown on hearts, even in years gone by, O Lord, that thou wouldest grant it to take root, that it would bring forth fruit, that we look at our children and our grandchildren, we look at our friends and our neighbours, who have heard so much, who have heard the gospel so often.

[31 : 23] But Lord, our longing is that they too would come, that they would have a healthy heart, that their heart would respond in faith and obedience to Jesus Christ.

Lord, keep us preaching. Keep us praying. Keep us at the throne of grace, knowing, Lord, that thou art the one who promises to hear and to answer in accordance with thy will.

Do us good, then we pray. Go before us and cleanse us, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Amen. We're going to bring our time to a conclusion this evening by singing in Psalm 126.

Psalm 126 in the Scottish Psalter, page 419. Psalm 126, we're going to sing the whole psalm.

Now this is, as you know, one of the songs of ascent. So you could call this the sower's song.

[32 : 32] It's all about sowing in tears and reaping in joy. As we see there in verse 4, As streams of water in the south, Our bondage, Lord, recall, Who sow in tears a reaping time, Of joy and joy they shall.

That man who bearing precious seed, In going forth doth mourn, He doubtless, And that's the important word, He doubtless, Bringing back his sheaves, Rejoicing, Shall return.

We'll sing the whole psalm To God's praise. When Zion's bondage O'er terpile Outspend the dream Wary Then filled with laughter Was our love Our tongue with melody They on the heathens Said the Lord Great things for them hath poured The Lord hath done Great things for us When's joy to us is brought As streams of water

In the south, Our bondage, Lord, recall, Who sow in tears A reaping time, Of joy and joy they shall.

That man who bearing precious seed, In going forth doth mourn, He doubtless bringing back his sheaves, Rejoicing shall return.

[34 : 57] The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, The love of God the Father, And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with you all, Now and forevermore. Amen.