

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 8/23/92  
II Timothy 4:1-5 "The Preeminence of Preaching"

**Intro:** "When America Cried For Bibles" 1777

Q: What does God expect of the man behind the pulpit? What should the person in the pew expect of the one who stands behind the sacred desk?

Challenge: The passage we're studying today has a major message for the church today. This is a foundational text for God's people. Its instruction is absolutely essential for every person who assumes a teaching ministry in this church, and for every person who sits under those who teach. That's all of us!

4:1 "I charge thee..."

These are solemn words. Paul is writing within weeks, perhaps even within days, of his martyrdom. According to a fairly reliable tradition, he was beheaded on the Ostian Way. As he begins what we know as ch 4, he pens his final words, his final instructions for Timothy. He begins with a charge--lit. "I affirm solemnly."

What would sustain Timothy after Paul was gone? What methodology should Timothy use to advance the cause of Christ after the death of his mentor? What does God expect of a person in leadership position in a local church? Paul left no room for misunderstanding when he told Timothy...

"I charge you"--The word has legal connotations. It means to testify under oath. Listen. What Paul charged Timothy to do holds for every man in the ministry, and beyond that to all Christians. What makes the charge so serious? Notice the next phrase, "...before God and the Lord Jesus Christ...(1)"

Q: What does God expect of a minister of the gospel?

**Proposition:** In II Timothy 4:1-5, Paul lays out the expectations in 2 areas in the life of the minister of the gospel.

I. What God expects in our Public Ministry (1-4)

A. The Task (2)

B. The Target (2)

1. Those in error

2. Those in sin

3. Those doing well

C. The Test (3-4)

II. What God expects in our Personal Ambition (5)

Here's the first expectation...

**I. What God expects in our Public Ministry (1-4)**

Paul didn't leave Tim wondering what was expected of him. If you'll notice, you'll see 9 imperatives in vv 2, 5: preach, be diligent, reprove, rebuke, exhort, watch, endure, do, make full proof.

Illust:

The first area Paul nailed down for Tim had to do with his Public Ministry. What did Paul want Timothy to know about his public ministry? 3 instructions...

### A. The Task (2)

Watch carefully. What is a minister's primary responsibility?

V 2 "PREACH THE WORD."

Paul's motive for writing to Timothy concerned the future of the gospel after his departure. So he charged Tim to PRESERVE the gospel in ch 1. To PARTICIPATE in the ministry of the gospel in ch 2. To PERSEVERE in the gospel in ch 3. And now in ch 4 he finishes with this charge, PREACH the gospel. Don't just hear it. Don't just protect it. Don't just suffer for it. Get out and aggressively preach it!

Why? Remember what we saw last week in 3:14-17? We learned this basic truth--God's Word is sufficient and dependable: for salvation (14-15), for sanctification (16), and for service (17).

What do you think God would expect us to do with something that is powerful enough to do all that? Preach it!!

That's our task as ministers of the gospel.

"preach" = herald a message; to proclaim before the public

Right there is the job description of every minister of the gospel. He is a herald. His task is to preach the Word.

In Paul's day, a ruler had a special herald who made announcements to the people. He was commissioned by the Emperor to make his announcements in a loud, clear voice, so everyone could hear. He wasn't to negotiate the message. He was simply to proclaim it.

That's exactly what Paul had done for the past 30 years. Authorized by the King of Kings, he journeyed throughout the world preaching the Word. Sometimes he stayed a few weeks. Sometimes a few years. But his task was always the same--to announce the good news about the Person and Work of God's Son, Jesus Christ. Wherever he went, Paul told people the truth--the truth about God, the truth about man's condition, the truth about God's provision for our need in Jesus Christ, and the truth about the response God requires from all of us, to repent and believe.

What Paul did, he expected Timothy to do, even after he was gone.

Illust: Story of William Tyndale...

A great price has been paid so we might have the Bible. We must preach it.

Illust:

Tran: There's our task. But who do we hope to impact as we herald the Word?

### B. The Target (2)

The next 4 commands modify the main verb "preach".

V 2 "Be diligent in season and out of season."

That's another military word. To be diligent means "to stay at one's post." That is, we are to preach the Word with the diligence of a soldier guarding his post.

When should we preach? "in season, out of season" = whether convenient or not, whether it's popular or not

Q: To whom should we give the Word? Who needs to hear it?

A: The next 3 commands identify 3 groups we need to target.

1. Those in error--reprove
2. Those in sin--rebuke
3. Those doing well--exhort

1. God's Word convicts. God's Word reveals error. God's Word reproves wrong thinking. Doctrinal error must be confronted in the church. I must not confront doctrinal error by my opinion, but by the Word. We must use the Scriptures to reprove those in error.

Quote: Wiersbe hit the nail on the head when he said, "True preaching is the explanation and application of Bible doctrine. Anything else is just religious speechmaking." (254)

2. God's Word also serves as a scalpel. As a skillful surgeon uses his scalpel to remove deadly cancer cells from a patient, so the man of God must use the scalpel of God's Word to rescue a brother from the cancerous effects of sin. So at times we must "rebuke" people who have sin in their lives. That's never pleasant. But it's essential.

Quote: To quote an old rule of preachers (Wiersbe), "He should afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted."

Illust:

3. May we never forget this third group. Thank God for people who think right, and are living right! What do they need? They need "exhortation." They need a word of "encouragement" to keep on keeping on. And how do we encourage someone who is already doing well? Give them the Word!

God's Word does all this--With it we can reprove. With it we can rebuke. With it we can exhort. But how should we use God's Word?

"with all longsuffering and doctrine"

Ministering God's Word is not like shooting bullets, but planting seeds.

Key: The pastoral ministry is primarily a "teaching" ministry. Preaching and teaching go hand in hand (see 1:11). Don't forget that Paul called this gifted man "Pastor-Teacher" in Eph 4:11.

Illust:

Observation: Allow me to bear my heart. It grieves me when I see what has happened in our day. We have turned the pastorate into a profession. Many have forgotten that it's a calling, a divine commissioning, a ministry. Our society offers perks for ministers (clergy credit cards, clergy discounts, clergy tax incentives). I'm not saying those are necessarily wrong. But the water is muddled so that we view ministry as a job, a profession.

Add to that the fact that our society places high cultural expectations on "ministers"--to do weddings, to serve on community service boards, to act as CEO's of

church programs. None of those tasks are authorized in God's Word. Those are cultural expectations.

But here's what happens. Men go into the ministry for the wrong reasons. And people have been taught to expect the wrong things.

Tran: What's involved in the Public Ministry of the minister of the gospel? The task, the target, and...

### C. The Test (3-4)

What test? Listen to 3 things Paul guaranteed would happen:

V 3 "For the time will come..."

Guarantee #1--People will not endure sound doctrine (3).

Most of you are here today because you have a love for the truth. You hunger to hear and know and live the truth of God's Word. But not everybody finds the gospel palatable. People have a tendency to be fascinated with the sensational. Satan whispers in the ear, "The Bible is boring. That S.S. teacher is dry and outdated. You need something else..."

NASB "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in according with their own desires."

Guar#2--People will get teachers to tell them what they want to hear (3).

Watch carefully. Paul didn't say the time would come when people would quit going to church. Rather he said that people would quit going to church to hear the Word of God.

There are 2 types of people in great danger this morning. First, there's the couch potato who right now is at home, slouching in front of his TV, with his can of Bud in one hand, and the newspaper in the other. No doubt he's in great danger spiritually. Then there's second type of person. Right now he's sitting in a "church" somewhere, but not a biblical church. He's not hearing God's Word taught. Instead his ears are being tickled by a polite, cute sermonette. Instead of hearing, "Thus saith the Lord," he's hearing a moral discoureae on "Helpful Hints for Hurtful Habits." But he doesn't mind.

Q: Which person is in greater danger this morning?

You say, "Well at least the second fellow is in church!" Yes. But he's lost and in eternal danger, but is being told week after week he's OK.

Illust: In John Bunyon's classic "Pilgrim's Progress," Evangelist warns Christian of Mr. Morality. He's dangerous, and subtly so. Why? Because he sounds good at first. His behavior is impressive. But he leaves out God.

Guarantee #3--People will turn from the truth to novelty (4).

This is the 6th time in this letter that Paul has referred to the "truth" (2:15, 18, 25; 3:7, 8). The characteristic of people living in the last days is that they are "ever learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth" (3:7).

I'm learning that people don't always want to hear the truth. The truth may be painful. It may disturb them. They'd rather hear something that would make them "feel good."

Paul warned that people would be attracted by "fables" (=myths; man-made legends). The tragedy is this. They don't even realize they've lost the truth. The verb "turned unto" means "to deviate from the true course."

Illust: Ship blown slightly off course

Warning: There is a new movement spreading rapidly in American Christianity these days. It has come to the forefront in the past decade. It's called the "Signs and Wonders Movement." The "3rd Wave Theology." The Vineyard Church (one in Cincinnati, Dayton). The controversy has to do with the gift of prophecy (not tongues).

Quotes: Bib Sac (Jl 1992, p. 278-9)

1. By Ryrie--Cessationists
2. By Non-Cessationist, J. Rodman Williams, "In prophecy God speaks...God continues to speak..."

Listen. This is not isolated to Charismatic groups. This "Signs and Wonders" movement is impacting mainline churches as well.

Be very careful when anyone says, "You can receive a new word from God." The key question is this: Is God's written revelation complete and sufficient?

Paul's counsel to Tim was clear. God's Word is sufficient. Preach it. Devote your life and ministry to heralding it. Don't seek new messages Tim. Preach the Word.

Illust:

Tran: What does God expect of a minister of the gospel? We've seen what He expects in the first area, his public ministry. But there's another side to ministry.

## **II. What God expects in our Personal Ambition (5)**

Are you involved in a ministry in this church? If so, great!

But why do you minister? What's your motive, your personal ambition? Paul spelled out 4 responsibilities for Tim regarding his personal ambition...

1. Watch in all things.

V 5 lit. "You be sober"

Tim was not to be intoxicated with craving for whatever is sensational or sentimental in ministry. Like a trained athlete, he must keep his emotions and passions and nerves in check.

Listen. If you've got an ego problem, don't get involved in ministry. It's too easy to use the ministry to feed your ego, to bolster your personal ambition.

Paul spoke frankly to Tim, "You watch yourself in all things."

Key: The goal in preaching is not to get a crowd. You can get a crowd by preaching novel, emotion-manipulating, ear-tickling messages (eg--"5 Steps to Being Instantly Wealthy"). Remember our task?! Preach the Word.

## 2. Endure afflictions.

Bible preaching is not popular with the world. It reminds them that they're building their mansion on a sand bar. That's not what they want to hear. So like a cornered mother bear, they attack against the preacher.

When that happens we have a choice. Change our message, or endure the attack. Illust:

## 3. Do the work of an evangelist.

It's tough for a church to keep a balance when it comes to evangelistic preaching. Our problem is rooted in history. Centuries ago pastors focused on careful Bible teaching in church. Then in frontier America, evangelists came to town and were used of God in a mighty way. The pastors liked what they say the evangelists do, and decided to do likewise. They too began to evangelize in their pulpits, week after week. It became the task of the people in the pew to bring in unsaved people so the pastor could evangelize them. But fewer and fewer came. So guess what happened, and still happens in churches today? The pastor evangelized the evangelized week after week! He preached evangelistic messages TO CHRISTIANS Sunday after Sunday. And the sheep stifled. Why? They were starving for food which they never received.

Notice the balance in 4:1-5. Tim was to preach the Word--that's careful Bible teaching. He was also to do the work of an evangelist.

Illust:

## 4. Make full proof of thy ministry.

NASB "Fulfill your ministry."

NIV "Discharge all the duties of your ministry."

What's Paul telling Tim? This--Tim, put your hand to the plough and never look back until your ministry is finished.

Challenge: We need people with that fortitude in ministry today.

Illust: A young preacher once complained to Charles Spurgeon, the famous British preacher of the 1800's, that he did not have as big a church as he deserved. "How many do you preach to?" Spurgeon asked. "Oh, about 100," the man replied. Solemnly Spurgeon said, "That will be enough to give account for on the day of judgment." (Wiersbe, 254)

Q: Why did you come to church today?

Lots of people in our day come to church, not to get a message from God, but to get a prescription for stress, to feel good about themselves, to get counseling from the pulpit. Though we wouldn't say it this frankly, if we could put our ambition into words it would sound like this, "I'm here so you can meet my needs. And if your preaching doesn't meet my needs, I'll go somewhere else."

Listen. I'm convinced that the careful teaching of God's Word meets needs. But the issue for testing preaching is not: Did I enjoy it? Did it make me feel good? But rather: Did I hear the truth? Do I now know God better and His will more fully?