

Preach the Good Word

In our passage, 2 Timothy 4:1-8, Paul offers a solemn charge to his beloved son Timothy to preach the word. As Paul is writing he understands that his death is imminent and he wants to encourage Timothy, known to be timid and fearful, to take the torch, continue to run the race, and not to lose heart. He argues that this word needs to be preached at all times, even in a godless culture. Paul clearly states that He has faithfully proclaimed the Gospel and fought the good fight of faith. He has now come to the end of his ministry and makes it clear that at the consummation of all things, which is at the appearance of Jesus Christ, there is a crown of righteousness laid up in heaven for all those who love Christ. This charge does not only apply to his beloved son Timothy, but to each of us. We are charged to be ambassadors of the Gospel, imitators of Christ, and to walk in a manner that is worthy of Christ.

2 Timothy 4:1-8

1 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.

6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. **7** I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. **8** Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

I. Preach Truth (vv.1-4)

Paul offers this solemn charge by the authority of God and of Christ Jesus — there is no question that this was a very serious charge to Timothy. The fact that this charge is presented before God and Christ the Judge reinforces its significance. The reason Paul gives such an earnest charge is because he wants Timothy to preach the word! In verse 2 he encourages him to preach this word at all times, whether convenient or not. But Paul provides him with three ways to do so: “reprove, rebuke, and exhort” with all patience and to teach the whole counsel of God. To “reprove” means to convict or convince someone of his or her sin. To “rebuke” means to honestly confront a believer with their sinfulness. To “exhort” is to encourage believers who are fearful and struggling in their faith. Timothy must do each of these with patience and not haste, and by teaching the rich doctrines of God’s word. All this is difficult to do when people with “itching ears” turn to teachers that are suitable to their liking and, in this way, turn away from sound teaching. We live in a culture that is hostile towards the Gospel truth, but we, like Timothy, must continue to preach the word of God at all times.

II. Personify Truth (v.5)

In verse 5 Paul is challenging Timothy to distinguish himself from those who resist the Gospel. He is to do this by being sober-minded, enduring suffering, doing the work of an evangelist, and fulfilling his ministry. Since this culture has resisted the Gospel they will completely ignore sound teaching and will attack Timothy for preaching it. In the midst of this, Timothy was to be sober-minded in the face of agitators and to endure suffering while being attacked for teaching the truth. Also, Timothy must be an evangelist, preaching the Gospel to a lost and hopeless people. Lastly, he must fulfill his ministry despite the opposition. It is tempting to give up on people who resist truth and seem hopeless, but we must do the work of an evangelist and persevere in proclaiming God’s word.

III. Believe Truth (vv.6-8)

Paul is locked away in a Roman prison awaiting his death. He gives Timothy some perspective on his personal ministry by using sacrificial language to describe his life in ministry. Paul has given his life to gain Christ and his desire was for Timothy to understand that. This is evident as he reflects on his years of ministry as one who has “fought the good fight, finished the race and kept the faith.” Paul has guarded the Gospel with his life and faithfully proclaimed it. Although Paul was facing death, he found comfort in the ultimate reward, which is Christ. He had been writing about the consummation of all things at the return of Christ, but he knew that he would be in the eternal presence of Christ sooner rather than later. Paul encourages Timothy and his readers to know that if they continue to love Christ, they will also have their reward in heaven.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Paul charge Timothy to preach the word?
2. In what three ways does Paul tell Timothy to preach the word? Describe each one.
3. What does it mean to “always be sober-minded, endure suffering and do the work of an evangelist”? How can you apply this to your own life?
4. What does Paul say is most comforting to him while in prison? (v.8)

Going Deeper

1. How can you, like Paul, use your influence for the sake of the Gospel?