

2nd Timothy Ch 4:2-4

“Preach The Word!”

As we continue in keeping the context concerning this passage of scripture, Timothy is being given some final exhortations regarding the matters of the ministry. and As we’ll see in a moment this book in general places an emphasis on the teaching and study and application of God’s Word that’s overwhelming. But just in case we manage to slip through the cracks and not really get it, by the time Paul is coming to the conclusion of this his final letter prior to his departure from this world; he begins to draw our attention once again to the importance of our giving priority to the Word of God in our lives. and As Paul is penning these closing remarks he says, “Timothy, all scripture is inspired of God, every letter, of every word, of every chapter in every book. It’s profitable for shaping us and molding us, chipping away at us, showing us what’s wrong, how to get right and how to *stay* right with God. It’s able to instruct us on every level of life, that we might be complete, lacking nothing in order to fulfill the call that God has placed on our lives. In short God’s Word, and only God’s Word has the power to change lives.” and So in vs 2 of Ch 4 we read,

Vs2-4

Here in vs 2 we have this “Exhortation” that we just began to scratch the surface of last week as we spent our time then focusing on, and considering this “charge” before God and the Lord Jesus Christ who’s going to judge the living and the dead that sort of “ramps up” to this essential exhortation to “Preach the Word!”

We find that in vs 2-4 Paul gives us both the *responsibility* that’s given before God the Father and God the Son, and the *reason* for the responsibility. He doesn’t do like so many of us as parents have a tendency to do when we subject our children to a certain responsibility and they’re all, “But why?” and We say, “Because I said so!” and We really don’t give an adequate reason, we just give them the responsibility, and with Paul he doesn’t do that. He gives both the responsibility and the reason. The *exhortation* stems from the *inclination* of man towards the ungodly, and the desires of the flesh. Because man has a natural tendency to gravitate, or sort of drift towards the things of the flesh, you have a responsibility to exhort them regarding the things of the Spirit, or the Word of God. Jesus said, “*The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.*” John 6:63 So the Word of God, we’re both to *hear* it, and to *herald* it, and today we’re going to consider these portions that we labeled last time, “Exhortation” in vs 2, and “Inclination” in vs 3-4.

Vs2

This word “Preach” means to “Herald” or to “Proclaim in a public manner” and it’s the 1st in a bundle of 9 imperatives that are found in this portion of scripture, 5 of which are found in this very vs, and the other 4 are in vs 5 which we’ll see next time (God willing). and As I’m sure you’re well acquainted with by now if something is an imperative that simply means it’s a command. It means when it comes to this particular aspect of the ministry and my Christian walk, there is no option.

You remember last week we observed the fact that with many things in ministry, they're optional. There are certain things that we have the option of doing or not doing based upon our convictions as we believe God lead's us. But then there are other things that if we desire to be a ministry in line with God's heart and God's Word that there are no other choices, it's not open for debate, we can't reason the thing through, we're simply to follow orders. When a commanding officer gives you a charge, or an order, it's not up for question; or open to other perspectives, you follow his instructions to the letter.

If we're willing to give man's orders such respect, how much more when it comes to the orders, or the charges, the commands of the Word of God? and Here the command is given to "Preach" or to "Publicize", but it's important that we don't stop there, because there's detailed instructions as to *what* we're to preach. So many are busy about the business of preaching, but what they preach has nothing to do with the mandate. We're not to preach psychology, or philosophy; we're not to preach sociology, or our opinions or perspectives. We're to preach the Word, that is, the Word of God. and We want to spend just a little bit of time here this morning because this is such an important principal to grasp in the society and culture in which we live whereby it seems that so many are preaching just about everything but the Word of God.

Now I don't know the current statistics, but as of a few years ago do you realize that only 3% of evangelical fundamental churches in America hold mid-week bible studies. Only 3%, now that's not to say that people aren't meeting in a church building during the mid-week, but of those that do only 3% were occupying the building to study God's Word. The rest were occupied with Topical ideas, things like recovery programs, relational matters, marriage and financial management, and things of such nature.

But the command is clear and it's not to preach programs, but the Word of God. In this letter alone there's at least 36 references to the pure word of God and some 17 or so references to false teaching. We read things like, "*Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord.*" 2 Tim 1:8 "*Hold fast the pattern of sound words*" 2 Tim 1:13, "*Rightly dividing the word of truth.*" 2 Tim 2:15 "*A servant of the Lord must ... be able to teach*" 2 Tim 2:24 and "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.*" 2 Tim 3:16

Just in case we've somehow missed the point and have fallen through the cracks regarding the overwhelming emphasis on prioritizing the Word of God, in vs 2 of Ch 4 he just comes right out and says it, "*Preach the Word!*" 2 Tim 4:2 The command isn't to *know* the Word, or *enjoy* the Word, to be *entertained* by the Word, or even to *approve* of the Word. How many times people seek to judge the Word, when in reality it's the Word that judges us, it doesn't matter if we approve of what it says or not, we're not the judge of the Word, the Word is the judge of us. So the command to Timothy and any other pastor or for that matter anyone else who loves the Lord Jesus Christ isn't to be *ashamed* of the Word but to *share* the Word. This is what we're to do, now we'll get into the why we're to do it in a moment.

But there are some important things to point out here, especially in regards to the Pastorate that we all need to understand when it comes to fulfilling this mandate. Because believe me when I tell you that it takes more than standing behind a pulpit and opening this book and beginning to speak to fulfill this command. Not everyone who opens a bible and starts talking is preaching the Word. We've already mentioned that we're not to be preaching politics, or opinions, psychology etc., but many a well-intentioned men fall into this snare of preaching *themselves* rather than Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The focus becomes these funny little stories, or personal and touching life experiences of the preacher rather than keeping the focus the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and His personal sacrifice for the sin of the world. and A lot of times people love it when the preacher preaches himself. Because it seems intimate, it's revealing as he makes himself transparent, and it can be interesting and entertaining. I had an individual come to me one time and ask me, "Why don't you tell more stories, or talk about your own life experiences." and They weren't being condescending in any way, but the point was, why don't you seek to spice up the study a bit, and make it more personable through your own life experiences. and I just told them, "Because my life experience and cute little stories won't save anybodies soul, or lead anyone to Jesus Christ but the Word of God will and so I choose to stick to it."

It's not that it's wrong to share a story, or tell a joke, anyone who knows me knows that any chance I get to throw in a cheesy one-liner I'll take it. But the focus has to be there, and it can become real easy to start getting off balance and adding too much of yourself. Yet what does the bible say, "*He must increase, but I must decrease.*" John 3:30 Pastor's need to be careful to keep the focus on Jesus Christ and the Word of God, to the Corinthians Paul said, "*We do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.*" 2 Cor 4:5

You see we often think we need to spice the bible up by adding some of our own influence and experiences into it to sort of make it relevant for everyone so as to help God's Word out a bit. But the fact is, the spiritual power and effectiveness of preaching doesn't rest in the skill of the speaker, but in the simple truth of God's pure Word. It doesn't need any additives to make it better, if anything we dilute it when we speak on other things. and When Paul says, "Preach the Word" what's he speaking about? He's speaking about the whole counsel of the Word of God from the beginning to the end. Line upon line, precept upon precept, ch-by-ch, book by book. He didn't say, "Preach *about* the Word!" He didn't say, "Preach *from* the Word!" He said, "Preach *the* Word!" So many people will pull a topic out of the air, look for a portion of scripture that deals with that, read those 2 or 3 vs and spend the rest of the time sharing related stories or different aspects of that topic. Then the next week it's on to a different topic from a different portion of scripture altogether, and there's never any consistency, the people are always guessing where you're going to go the next week, and so far from being encouraged to study ahead and see how God will speak to them, they don't even bother because we never know where he's going to be!

Others use the bible like a springboard, they'll read one vs and then they shoot off like a rocket never to even return with any relevance to the scripture they just read. and You leave going, "They read the bible, but I'm not sure what it had to do with anything?" But Paul didn't say, Preach, from, or about the Word, but rather preach the Word itself, and you guys that's a hair worth splitting. Because it's the only adequate way to thoroughly equip you for every good work that God wants to do in and through your life. We're just to stick to the bible itself, study a vs, try a squeeze out all the nutrients we can, and then go on to the next one and do likewise, seeking the mind of the Holy Spirit in that passage, and how it applies to us in a practical way, and allow the Word of God to build upon itself in a succession, 1 vs after the next in order that it might nourish us, and wash us, and give us the mind of Christ that we might lead our lives in a Christ like manner. The other day I was speaking with a man (who doesn't fellowship here) and he was asking me about our mid-week services and where I was teaching, and I said, "I'm nearly finished with 1st Samuel." and He said, "Do you know where you're going next, have you got that figured out?" and I said, "Yeah, 2nd Samuel." and He said, "Man, it's been so long since I've been to a church that just teaches the word that I've forgotten what it's like to just go through the bible." and I thought, "How sad." Because the charge is to preach the word, because as we mentioned last time it's only the word of God that can *convict* the human heart, and *convert* the soul. It slices down into the inmost recess of our being and exposes us before God, and leaves us isolated in our sin, and in need of a Savior. But it doesn't abandon us, because God's Word reveals to us that God has made a way where there was no way, by providing Jesus Christ as the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the World.

It exposes our need, whatever that may be and provides the solution in Jesus Christ It informs us that there's no one beyond God's reach but that, "*Whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.*" Rom 10:13 and God's not willing that anyone should perish but that all should come to repentance and so the command is given, Preach the Word!

But again it's not only about *sin* and *salvation*, but it equips the believer to lead a now *sanctified* life. A life that's set apart to Jesus Christ from the lust of the world, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, but in humble servitude to the one who gave everything for the likes of me. But if we're to be adequately equipped, and find the balance, we need it all, not just topics, not sermonettes, but the whole thing, cover to cover. "Preach the Word" you see I need to let God speak rather than waste your time with what I have to say. and There's so many advantages spiritually for everyone if we simply go through the bible rather than pick and choose for ourselves. But I'm sure I've lingered long enough on this point, but I want you to learn it well, we're to hear, and we're to herald the Word of God.

When? At any given opportunity, you're to be ready, and when God opens that window, you should be prepared to jump through it. This is our 2nd imperative, "Be ready" or maybe your bible says, "Be instant" which quite frankly means that we should be prepared at any given moment to share the Word of God. A soldier doesn't always have the privilege of knowing a few hours in advance when the battle's going to come, but he's to be ready to fight at any given instance. They're to be alert, and prepared, you never know when God's going to have that person cross your path that He wants you to share Jesus Christ with. I can't tell you the times I've been sitting in that coffee house, with out any intention other than just hanging out, and the next thing I know I'm sharing the gospel with someone who doesn't know the Lord. and When someone has a question for you, or for me, we can't be all, "Wait, let me go prepare for a couple hours and I'll be back, I think I've got some notes on this somewhere." No, we're to be prepared to engage, believe me you guys, this call to readiness is not simply an exhortation to Pastor's, it should characterize every believer who loves the Lord and desires to be used of Him, which should be everyone who knows Him. We all desire that God would somehow use our lives to His glory, so what does the bible say? "*Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.*" 1 Peter 3:15 The point here is that it's sometimes convenient, and sometimes it's not, sometimes you feel great, other times you're ill and just want to be in bed, but none of that matters, we're to be ready when called upon.

Not just in a believer to non-believer type situation, often times it's our brothers and sisters that may need a word from the Lord, a scripture to be spoken into their lives, to help either recalibrate them where they've gotten off kilter a little bit, or to encourage them to keep going when they feel like throwing in the towel. and We need to be ready and equipped in the Word, that God might draw it out of us in that time of need, so whether it's convenient or not, or seems to be a favorable situation or not, we're not to make excuses, but opportunities to speak God's Word into a given situation. Whatever the need may call for, be it convincing, rebuking, or exhorting. Which are our next 3 imperatives, "Convince, rebuke, and exhort" these are the 3 elements that are to be woven into our preaching.

This word "Convince" or maybe your bible says, "Reproof", but I like "Convince" because this word speaks of convincing a person primarily of a wrong position they've taken. It speaks of exposing a certain position, or mindset as false and convincing them of the truth. Now in order to convince someone of something it's necessary that you be convinced yourself 1st. The reason people have such difficulty trusting politicians is because it's obvious that they know that ½ of the things they promise they'll never be able to fulfill. and So if they're not convinced in what they say, why should I be? But when it comes to the Word of God we can speak it with the full authority of Heaven behind us, because believe me, I'm convinced it's true.

So I'm not here to lobby for your vote or try and prove my point, I'm just speaking the truth of the Word of God from a convinced perspective and what you do with it is between you and the Lord. Now having said that, don't think I'm not seeking with everything that's within me to persuade you so as to see the truth of what I'm saying, especially considering that often times all eternity lies in the balance. and So with this word "Convince" we're speaking here of how what we say has an affect on the mind, and through the word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, this convincing is to help a person and understand how that what they may believe or are doing is wrong. Next comes the rebuke, or the conviction, so that as the convincing takes place in the mind, the conviction takes place in the heart. John MacArthur makes this comment, "To **reprove** is to refute error and misconduct with careful biblical argument; to **rebuke** is to bring the erring person to repentance. The first discloses the sinfulness of sin, whereas the second discloses the sinfulness of the sinner."

So as to where one deals with the issues of the *peripheral* and the need to see them for what they are, the other deals with the *person*, and the need to be made right with God on a personal level so as to set in order the peripheral matters. and These 2-elements deal with the negative, and the preachers responsibility is to not only expose sin, but to rebuke the sinner as well, in order that repentance might take place. Paul told the Eph, "*Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.*" Eph 5:11 Now this 3rd element deals with the positive, this word "exhort" here really carries the idea of "to comfort and encourage." So these 3 words could be rendered, "Convince, Convict, and Comfort" and we see all 3 of these elements working together beautifully in harmony in Peters sermon on the Day of Pentecost. Let's look at Acts Ch 2 (Vs 22-41)

He convinces them that Jesus is God's Messiah, convict them for their wrongful dealings with Him, and when they're stirred to repentance, he comforts them with the promise of forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit for any of them who will receive Jesus Christ He preached the word, and what was the response? "They were cut to the heart", and they're lives were changed.

But it's not always that sudden of a response, most generally when a seed is planted it doesn't immediately yield its fruit, many times God is gracious and an immediate change and growth takes place. But often it's a process of planting, and watering, and cultivating, and pulling weeds, and one day it buds forth, and we keep nurturing it, watering it, that it might send it's roots deep into the soil and abide healthily its atmosphere. and So to with our administering of the Word of God, we have to be patient, sometimes people are converted the 1st time they hear the gospel, other times it takes a season or 3 of cultivating those seeds you're planting. with believers some readily take in instruction. Others rebel and are stubborn, they don't really have a teachable and yielded spirit, and so we have to understand these things and as patient and understanding as God is with us, so we have to be with others, and we just continue to teach them the statutes, and the precepts and principals of God's Word and then one day, by God's Grace, and His Spirit in their lives, the lights just come on, and they respond, they grow, they're maturing.

I love the balance of this vs in that it speaks to us of both preaching, and teaching, one for the non-believer, and the other for the believer, we need to share the gospel with the lost, but we don't need to evangelize the saved. We need to teach them the principals not of salvation, but of sanctification, and so when we come together, we get a little of both. The promise of eternal given through faith in Jesus Christ is offered to any who've not yet surrendered to Christ, and then the practical application of the Word of God in the believer's life is illustrated through the teaching of God's Word. and It's so important that we be busy about this responsibility of preaching and teaching the Word with out compromise, why?

Vs 3-4

Because the inclination of man is toward the flesh. and So much more as the Day of the Lord approaches, and the more, and more people act out in the flesh, the more vehemently we need to proclaim the Word of God. and This is the 2nd time in this letter that the apostle prophesies of the declining disposition of man in the last days. and Even in the "Church community" people will be acting more and more in the flesh, than flowing in the Spirit. and Rather than desiring the solid teaching of the Word of God which promotes spiritual health and good spiritual hygiene, they'll look for people who'll tell them what they want to hear. Somehow draw attention to these words "Their own desires" not desiring what God has for them, but rather wanting what they want, which says what? Human nature doesn't desire sound teaching, but rather to have the flesh catered to, to hear, "Hey, God understands, He knows we're not perfect and as long as you tithe and pay your dues it's all good." "Show up for church for your weekly conscience cleansing and you've done your duty and God's going to let you in." They want spiritual ear candy that's non-confrontational, but fully accepting to whatever sin they desire to indulge themselves in. "It's ok to lead the homosexual lifestyle" "As a matter of fact we'll marry you and your buddy, and you can have marriage benefits and adopt children" "and Beyond that we'll even give you the pulpit so that you can endorse the sin in other people's lives." It's the, "I'm ok, you're ok" user-friendly church mentality that's deceiving people all the way down to hell. and Demand makes the supply, because they have itching ears, they'll "heap up" for themselves teachers and turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables. Notice the emphasis on self in those 2 vs, 7 reference to themselves, not one reference to the Lord accept to say they won't endure sound doctrine, or accept the truth of His Word. and I believe we're there today, there are pulpits all across America as we speak with individuals who are appointed by man rather that anointed by God, and the people love it that way. Because they get there ears scratched, the offer of God's blessing with out forgiveness, salvation with out repentance, His acceptance as their Savior, yet not as their Lord. It's a parallel time to Jer 5:30-31 where we read, "*An astonishing and horrible thing Has been committed in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule by their own power; And My people love to have it so.*"

People want to feel good with out being made good, but feeling good does nothing for the eternal well being of your soul. We need the truth of the Word of God, we're to preach the Word at any chance we get, *"In humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will."* 2 Tim 2:25-26

In season and out of season we're to be ready, to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified for the sin of the world, and the hope of eternal that's found for all who will call upon His name. It's not a difficult thing, so many people want to complicate salvation, they consider it a big rulebook of do's and don'ts. But the fact is, it's a free gift, there's no strings attached God loves you so much that He gave His only begotten Son, so that if you would simply believe on Him, you'd never perish but have everlasting life. God's not asking you to take care of all the peripheral matters in your life before you come to Him. He's just asking you to see them for what they are, call it for what it is, and let Him take care of it for you. If any man be in Christ he's a new creation, God can make you brand new today before you walk out that door, old things can pass away, and you can be washed white as snow and walk away from here today, forgiven. But it's your choice to accept or reject Jesus Christ, He's willing to accept you, but how can He do that if you're not willing to accept Him. If He's at the door of your heart and knocking, Let me encourage you to open up and Let Him in.