

Marks of the Faithful Preacher, Part 2

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:2

Code: 55-21

INTRODUCTION

In 2 Timothy 4:1-5 Paul summarizes the requirements of a faithful preacher: "I solemnly 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, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 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 accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. "

The faithful teacher and preacher will pay attention to whatever undergirds the quality of his spiritual life. Although those qualities may never become public knowledge, they are under the watchful eye of God, who will evaluate all things. Paul ministered in light of that coming evaluation and wanted Timothy, his son in the faith, to do the same. We too are to manifest spiritual excellence before God and others. That comes by adhering to the marks of a faithful teacher.

REVIEW

I. THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PREACHER'S COMMISSION (v. 1)

A. His Compelling Responsibility (v. 1a)

B. His Coming Evaluation (v. 1b)

LESSON

II. THE ESSENCE OF THE PREACHER'S COMMISSION (v. 2a)

"Preach the word. "

Although that command is brief, it states the essence of the teacher's task.

A Father's Wise Advice to His Son

When I was a young boy, I told my father that I believed God had called me to preach. He gave me a Bible and wrote these words inside it: "Dear Johnny, Preach the Word! 2 Timothy 4:2. " It was a simple statement, but it became the compelling charge of my heart. Ever since that day, his biblical advice has remained with me.

The Greek verb translated "preach" (kerusso means "to herald" or "proclaim publicly. " Back in the days before radio and television an emperor made a public proclamation or announcement through a messenger. In its biblical sense kerusso refers to one who publicly proclaims God's Word. In saying he "was appointed a preacher" (1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11) , the apostle Paul identified himself as a public herald of Scripture.

A. Timothy's Character

Publicly proclaiming God's Word isn't an easy task. Perhaps that was especially true for Timothy. It seems he was timid and lacked Paul's strength and courage. His young age apparently caused

some believers to be suspicious of him (1 Tim. 4:12). Furthermore, Timothy might have felt inadequate in proclaiming Scripture for fear he would have to debate sophisticated false teachers and counter their well-developed polemic. Timothy knew that proclaiming God's Word meant facing hostility and persecution. In those days opposition came from both the Jewish people, who as a whole were antagonistic to the gospel, as well as from the Romans, who held Paul prisoner. Although proclaiming God's Word is not an easy task, Timothy was to do what others before him had done:

1. 2 Peter 2:5--Noah was "a preacher of righteousness" in a wicked society.
2. Jonah 3:4--"Jonah . . . cried out and said, 'Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.' " His message of doom resulted in that great city's repentance (v. 5).
3. Matthew 3:1-2--"John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' " The forerunner of Christ boldly proclaimed a message of repentance and lost his life for condemning a king's infidelity (14:1-4).
4. Matthew 4:17--"Jesus began to preach and say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' " Christ, the prince of all preachers, proclaimed a message of repentance.

B. Timothy's Message

Timothy was to preach "the word" (2 Tim. 4:2) : God's Word. This was not the only time Paul mentioned God's Word to Timothy: In the previous chapter he stated, "From childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness" (3:15-16). Timothy was also told to "retain the standard of sound words" he received from Paul (1:13). Paul also said, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth" (2:15).

Timothy was to guard the truth (1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:14) as well as proclaim it. That two-fold responsibility is so basic, yet many preachers teach something other than God's Word. In Romans 10 Paul carefully explains the importance of emphasizing Scripture: "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!' . . . So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (vv. 13-15, 17).

Paul clearly was committed to proclaiming the Scriptures:

1. Colossians 1:25-27--"Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations; but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. " The "mystery" Paul preached was the New Testament revelation.
2. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5--"When I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. "
3. 2 Corinthians 4:5--"We do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. "

By applying human reason, logic, and wisdom, gifted orators can move audiences by the power of their persuasive speech. But no man can be a faithful preacher without preaching the Word.

The Only Way to Preach

Let me tell you why preaching the Word is the only way to preach.

1. It allows God to speak rather than man

When we preach the Word of God, we aren't preaching the word of man. Men can say things that are entertaining, interesting, informative, or even helpful. But it's imperative that you and I allow God to speak through His Word. One way God gives voice to His Word is through the preacher.

2. It brings the preacher into direct contact with the mind of the Holy Spirit

Since the Holy Spirit is the divine author of Scripture, digging deeply into the Word is like delving into the Holy Spirit's mind. For that reason, studying Scripture is even more exhilarating to me than preaching. Interacting with the Holy Spirit's reasoning, logic, and truth provides a tremendous time of communion with God. Expository preaching--a verse-by-verse explanation of Scripture--allows both the preacher and the listener to interact with the Holy Spirit's thoughts.

3. It forces the preacher to proclaim all the revelation of God

Expository preaching allows the preacher to declare "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27, KJV). He will preach passages that convict him as well as his hearers. That produces integrity in his ministry.

4. It promotes biblical literacy

If the preacher told only interesting stories, you would know the stories, but not God's Word.

However, the most important thing for you to hear is God's Word! I want to study and proclaim God's Word so others can know it better. That should be your desire too.

5. It carries ultimate authority

The preacher's wisdom, voice, or demeanor might carry a certain amount of human authority, but it's no match for the divine authority of Scripture. If you want the Spirit to use you to compel people toward obedience, proclaim God's Word because it's the ultimate authority.

6. It transforms the preacher

The power of the Word is what the Holy Spirit uses to transform lives. If I only preached sermonettes, book reviews, entertaining stories, or simply rehashed the same message, God's Word wouldn't have an opportunity to interact with my life and transform me. And transformed preachers lead to transformed congregations.

Preaching the Word is what accomplishes God's work. In the 1800s William Taylor, pastor of the Broadway Tabernacle in New York City, wrote, "Let it never be forgotten, then, that he who would rise to eminence and usefulness in the pulpit, and become 'wise in winning souls,' must say of the work of the ministry, 'This one thing I do.' He must focus his whole heart and life upon the pulpit. He must give his days and his nights to the production of those addresses by which he seeks to convince the judgments, and move the hearts, and elevate the lives of his hearers" (The Ministry of the Word [N. Y. : Anson D. F. Randolph, 1876], p. 7). That convicts me because life offers so many distractions. And I believe those distractions are the main reason there aren't many powerful preachers today. The contemporary English preacher John Stott was right in saying we have many popular preachers, but not many powerful ones.

III. THE SCOPE OF THE PREACHER'S COMMISSION (v. 2b-d)

"Be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. "

A. He Is Always Ready to Minister (v. 2b)

"Be ready in season and out of season. "

Some translate the command "be urgent" or "be watchful. " It pictures a military guard who is always at his post. It speaks of eagerness and describes someone who goes beyond his expected duty. The preacher has no set office hours, but is always at his post ready to seize opportunities to preach the

Word. That kind of compulsion to preach is evident throughout Scripture:

1. Jeremiah 20:8-9--The prophet said, "For me the word of the Lord has resulted in reproach and derision all day long. But if I say, 'I will not remember Him or speak anymore in His name,' then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire shut up in my bones; and I am weary of holding it in, and I cannot endure it. " Jeremiah's reluctance to proclaim God's Word was overruled by a stronger inner compulsion to preach.

2. Romans 1:15--Paul said, "I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. " He wanted Timothy to have that same eagerness.

3. Acts 21:11-13--The prophet Agabus "took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, 'This is what the Holy Spirit says: "In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. ""' When the church heard this, they begged Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. But Paul replied, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. " Not even the threat of death prevented Paul from preaching the Scriptures.

4. 1 Peter 3:15--Peter said, "Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence. " We should always be ready to tell others about Christ.

Since there is no closed season on proclaiming Christ, we must make the most of every opportunity to tell others about Christ (cf. Eph. 5:16). Charles Spurgeon, a great preacher in London in the 1800s, said, "If I were asked--What in a Christian minister is the most essential quality for securing success in winning souls for Christ? I should reply, 'earnestness': and if I were asked a second or a third time, I should not vary the answer. . . . Success is proportionate to the preacher's earnestness" (Lectures to My Students rev. ed. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978], p. 305). To preach you must have an earnestness and zeal that never dies.

But earnestness isn't a quality that comes naturally for the preacher or his listeners. After years of being exposed to sound preaching the novelty of hearing God's Word can wear off, and the fire in the believer's heart can die out. It's exhilarating when both the teacher and the listener keep discovering what God's Word says. But we must not take preaching for granted and allow our hearts to become hard or apathetic.

Likewise the godly preacher must rely on the Holy Spirit's enabling when he preaches. In his Journals and Letters preacher John Wesley wrote, "I know that, were I myself to preach one whole year in one place, I should preach both myself and most of my congregation asleep" (emphasis added; cited in Spurgeon's Lectures to My Students, p. 309, emphasis added). Spurgeon said, "He, who at the end of twenty years' ministry among the same people is more alive than ever, is a great debtor to the quickening Spirit" (Lectures to My Students, p. 309). The believer's boldness and zeal will come through prayer and a diligent study of Scripture. As one Bible teacher said, "Study yourself to death and then pray yourself alive again. " If you're communing with the Holy Spirit through prayer and the study of Scripture, you'll be zealous for God.

The pastor is to be ready to preach "in season and out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2). He is to preach when it's convenient and when it's not. His eagerness to preach must not depend on the receptivity of the audience to his message. Nothing is to constrain or silence his preaching of the Word.

Standing for the Lord--Even at a Funerall heard of a funeral where Christians were instructed not to preach about Christ because many unbelievers would be present. Unfortunately, the Christians heeded that wrong advice out of fear. We, however, are to be faithful to God and tell others of His Word, not altering our message for the sake of social acceptance or the esteem of one's community. We aren't to be abusive or abrasive in what we say, but we are to be zealous in speaking the truth.

B. He Exposes Sin (v. 2c)

"Reprove, rebuke. "

The preacher is not only to be ready to preach, but also to reprove and rebuke sin. As 2 Timothy

3:16 says, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable . . . for reproof, for correction. " In 2 Timothy 4:2 "reprove" speaks of being made aware of sin, while "rebuke" refers to the guilt that results from that awareness. Reproof uses God's Word to unveil sin. Rebuke is the Holy Spirit's convicting work through His Word.

Christ forcefully preached against sin (e. g. , Matt. 15:1-9). John the Baptist was thrown in prison for doing so (Luke 3:19-20). We are to follow in their steps by exposing sin through the proclamation of God's Word. Ephesians 5:11 says not to "participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them. " Titus 1:13 says to "reprove [rebels] severely that they may be sound in the faith. "

C. He Encourages Right Behavior (v. 2d)

"Exhort. "

The Greek term translated "exhort" (parakaleo) means "to encourage" and speaks of restoration. After confronting someone you know about sin, come alongside that individual and encourage positive steps toward change. That is what Paul did: "We were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. 2:11-12). And that's what we're to do.

D. He Is Patient (v. 2e)

"With great patience. "

Paul said to reprove, rebuke, and exhort "with great patience" (2 Tim. 4:2). Here "patience" (Gk. , makrothumia) is used in connection with people, not events or circumstances. It's necessary to be patient with people because spiritual change usually takes time. If the recovery process takes longer than we like, it's tempting to be hard on the person, give up on him or her entirely, or pray that God might speedily send an unpleasant circumstance for chastisement. But the believer characterized by makrothumia isn't easily annoyed or irritated. He or she won't give way to bitterness or despair. Patience is a spiritual grace--a gift from God that reflects His very nature. Paul asked, "Do you think lightly of the riches of [God's] kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? (Rom. 2:4). Since God is patient with us, we must learn to be patient with each other (cf. Eph. 4:32).

E. He Teaches Sound Doctrine (v. 2f)

"Instruction."

Paul said to expose sin and encourage others "with great patience and instruction" (Gk. , didache). We will help the unbeliever not only by pointing out his sin, but also by pointing him toward faith in God's Word. We will help another Christian not only by reproofing his sin, but also by instructing him in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16). Rebuke without instruction leaves people in the dark about what spiritual direction to take. Rebuke tells people where they shouldn't be, while instruction in doctrinal truth tells them where they should be.

CONCLUSION

Not all believers are called to preach vocationally, but we all are called to give out the gospel (Matt. 28:18-20). Therefore we too are responsible to preach the Word eagerly whether in season or out. We also are to reprove and rebuke sin and then patiently instruct people toward righteousness. The preacher serves as a model of what you are to be. What he does in his unique way you are to do in your unique way. We all are responsible to the Judge, who will evaluate our faithfulness, so together let's fulfill our glorious privilege of preaching the Word!

Focusing on the Facts

1. In writing 2 Timothy 4:1-5 what did Paul want us to manifest before God and others?
2. Explain the secular and biblical usage of the word translated "preach" in 2 Timothy 4:2.

3. Explain why proclaiming God Word might not have been an easy task for Timothy.
4. What specific error does Romans 10 refute (vv. 13-15, 17)?
5. No man can be a preacher without preaching the Word.
6. What kind of interaction does expository preaching promote?
7. What will mark the preacher's ministry with integrity?
8. What is the preacher's ultimate authority?
9. What is one reason for the lack of power in the pulpit today?
10. What picture does "be ready" portray in 2 Timothy 4:2? How does that apply to the preacher?
11. What overruled the prophet Jeremiah's reluctance to preach (Jer. 20:8-9)?
12. What specific lesson does 1 Peter 3:15 teach?
13. How does "in season and out of season" apply to proclaiming God's Word (2 Tim. 4:2)?
14. What do "reprove," "rebuke," and "exhort" mean in 2 Timothy 4:2?
15. Why is it necessary to exercise patience when reproofing and exhorting someone?
16. How do "rebuke" and "instruction" relate to each other (2 Tim. 4:2)?

Pondering the Principles

1. God's Word is the only message you are to proclaim. Look up the following verses to see what they say about God's Word. Meditate on the truths they teach and ask the Lord to give you a deeper appreciation for His Word.

Jeremiah 15:16; 1 Peter 2:2

Isaiah 40:8; 1 Peter 1:23-25

Psalm 12:6; 19:8

Jeremiah 23:29; Hebrews 4:12

Psalm 119:9; John 15:3

Proverbs 6:23; 2 Peter 1:19

2. The commands to reprove, rebuke, and exhort are a call for you to be involved in other people's lives. Accept your responsibility to confront sin and teach sound doctrine in love. Doing so will help others stand strong in the Lord. Conversely, be open to reproof and instruction from other believers. If what they say agrees with Scripture, gratefully accept their counsel. Proverbs 25:12 says, "Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise reproof to a listening ear." Proverbs 9:8-9 says, "Reprove a wise man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser, teach a righteous man, and he will increase his learning." Let the truth of those verses be reflected in your life.

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