

## ***“Passing On The Torch”***

### **A Study of 2 Timothy**

#### **Sermon # 6**

### ***“The Responsibility to Proclaim the Word”***

#### **2 Timothy 4:1-5**

Paul’s focus as he writes is his own imminent departure from this life and his somewhat reticent protégé, Timothy.

“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom.” Verse one is a reminder to Timothy (and to us) that although he lived and was ministering in the pagan city of Ephesus, nevertheless, he is living and ministering in the full view of heaven, in the very presence of God the Father, and of Christ Jesus, the coming judge of living and the dead. There is nothing more needful than for us to in the middle of pressure to realize that what we are doing as Christians is a very important thing.

John Calvin said of this, “He makes special mention of the judgment of Christ because He will require of us, who are his representatives, a stricter account of our failures in His ministry.” James also issues this word of caution (James 3:1), My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.”

“A young preacher once complained to C. H. Spurgeon, the famous Baptist preacher, that he did not have as big a church as he deserved. ‘How many do you preach to?’ Spurgeon asked. ‘Oh, about a hundred,’ the man replied. Solemnly, Spurgeon said, ‘That will be enough to give account for on the day of judgment.’”

The Bible speaks of several distinct judgments, the judgment referred to in verse one is not the *Great White Throne Judgment* (Rev 20:11-15) of unbelievers but rather is the Bema Seat Judgment (1 Cor 3:12-15, 2 Cor. 5:10) commonly called the Judgment Seat of Christ at which believer’s will be judged for rewards.

Although the commission that is given (4:1-5) applied first of all to Timothy himself it also applies to every minister in every age, place and circumstance. Beyond it is also a necessity that congregations in every age understand the task that has been given to their pastors.

Before we move on I think that I need to establish a couple of things. First, the call to preach is just that a calling not just a profession. The call to preach is not a matter of preference or even our natural giftedness. It is simply a matter of obedience. Timothy was naturally shy and reserved, not at all what might expect for one called to preach. I can personally identify with Timothy’s plight, as a young boy I was painfully shy and I still am naturally reserved and

introvert. Yet it is the knowledge that I was called to the ministry rather than a profession I selected that keeps me going when things get rough.

Secondly, although the pastorate is often talked about in our day as the CEO of the church you will not find that in the New Testament. The Pastor was to be a shepherd and teacher first and foremost. The first priority of the pastor is to be the public ministry of the Word of God. In the early days of the church, in the book of Acts, a dispute arose among the Greek-speaking widows over the distribution of funds for the needy. The solution they came up with was a simple one. Acts 6:2-4, "Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. (3) Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; (4) but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." The principle is simple, *For the pastor the ministry of the Word has to take priority over everything else!*

There are two things that Paul wants Timothy to understand. ( Can a Baptist preacher really only have two points??)

*First, Understand That The Word Must Be Given Out(v. 2)*

"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching."

The charge given by Paul (v. 2) is a single statement made up of five imperatives (commands).

First, "preach the word" usually when we hear this phrase we think that this is addressed only to preachers. No, this word is not addressed to preachers only. It includes all the people of God, because the word translated "preach" (*kerusso*) literally means "proclaim." So anywhere human hearts are open, seeking or hurting there is an opportunity to "proclaim the word."

Secondly, "be Ready (in season and out of season)" (be urgent)

This is one scripture that as a young preacher that I grew to dislike having quoted. Because at some preacher's meetings it was used as the vindication of for the practice of calling on people to preach at a moment's notice. I think that is a misapplication of the verse.

The word translated "ready" carries the "complementary ideas of urgency. preparedness and readiness. It could be used of a soldier who is ready to go into battle on a moment's notice or of a guard who keeps continually alert for any threat of infiltration or attack by the enemy .... Such a sense of readiness and willingness to serve the Lord at any cost and at any time not only should characterize every faithful preacher but also every faithful Christian."

[John MacArthur. MacArthur New Testament Commentary – 2 Timothy. (Chicago: Moody, 1995) p. 176]

Likewise Peter exhorted believers in 1 Peter 3:15, “But 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, with meekness and fear.”

Third, “convince” carries the idea of setting forth God’s truth in a systemic and reasonable way, answering questions and removing obstacles to belief.

I often think of the story I heard about a young preacher that went in view of call to a new church. He preached on Sunday morning with power and conviction and the church was suitably impressed and called him as the new pastor. That night they returned and he preached the same message, the church was a little surprised by passed it off to “new preacher” jitters. Yet the next Sunday he brought the same sermon on Sunday morning and Sunday evening. He kept this up until finally the deacons got together and decided to speak to him about it. They approached the pastor and said, “*Preacher, we want you to know we think that is a fine message, but don’t you have other messages you can preach?*” The preacher replied, “*Yes, as a matter of fact I do. And as soon as you do as I have instructed you in the first message we will go on to them.*”

Fourth the command to “rebuke,” it is suggested by some that this has to do with the heart, with bringing a person under the conviction of sin.

The Fifth command to “exhort (with all long suffering)” literally means encourage. When I think of the word “exhort” I think of the need an application of the word of God to be made to the listener.

“I heard about a town many years ago that revolved around the lumber business. The town decided that they to hire a new pastor for the town church. One day, the new pastor saw some of his church members dragging logs which had floated down the river from another village upstream. Each log was marked with the owner’s stamp on the end of the log, much like a cattle brand. But to his dismay, this pastor saw his church members sawing off the ends of the logs where the owners stamp appeared. That Sunday the pastor preached a sermon on the commandment, “Thou shalt not steal.” After the sermon people said, “Great sermon pastor” and “mighty fine preaching.” But the next week they were back to stealing logs. So the next Sunday the pastor preached the same sermon, but he ended the sermon by saying, “And thou shalt not cut off the end of thy neighbor’s logs.” When he finished that sermon they ran him out of town. Now I don’t know if that’s a true story or not, but it does illustrate the need to communicate the Bible specifically. (Haddon Robinson, Making A Difference in Preaching p. 93).

*Secondly, Understand That The Word May Be Rejected (vv. 3-4)*

Timothy is told that he must be faithful to proclaim the Word precisely because people will have a natural inclination to drift away from the truth. Verse three says, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; (4) and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”

Paul says there is coming a “time,” and “time” here (*kairos*) means not chronological time, but an era of time when the truth will not be readily accepted. But rather individuals “*wanting to have their ears tickled*” with unbiblical notions that raise their comfort level and justify and overlook their sins will turn to myths.

People love to hear something sensational and different. One preacher told of how he visited in a couple’s home who told him how they were fans of Dr. Gene Scott from Southern California, and what a great preacher he was. When he arrived, Dr. Scott was on TV—they’d purchased a satellite dish in order to stay current with his teaching. “After some chit-chat, the husband turned ...and said, “You’re probably wondering why you haven’t seen us at church lately. Right then, Dr. Scott held up a book about the lost city of Atlantis and the pyramids, and the husband looked at me and said, “This is what we want in Bible teaching, and we haven’t ever heard this taught in any of the churches we’ve been in!” [John Underhill, Spokane, WA - [www.bible.org/illus/2Tim](http://www.bible.org/illus/2Tim)]

Today people often come to church with a personal agenda in mind:

*Make me happy.*

*Meet my needs.*

*Don’t talk about sin.*

*Tell me how to be successful.*

*Don’t be so negative.*

*Bible doctrine is boring.*

*Theology doesn’t matter.*

*Sermons are too long.*

*Make the gospel relevant.*

*Tell more stories.*

*Make me laugh.*

*Tell some jokes.*

*Help me feel good about myself.*

*Build up my self-esteem.*

*Don’t be divisive.*

*Don’t talk about hell.*

*Be positive.*

*I want a happy religion.*

We readily see this in our own day. Changing view on homosexuality is one of those prevailing myths. The Episcopal Church meeting in Minneapolis in 2003, elected its first ever openly homosexual bishop, the Rev. Gene Robinson. Even a world outside the Church

understands that this is wrong. Katherine Kersten in an editorial entitled "The Gospel of Incursion" in the August 8, 2003 edition of the *Wall Street Journal* stated that the Episcopal Church; "... has just tossed aside 2,000 years of bedrock Christian teaching about marriage, the family and sexuality. It has rejected beliefs fundamental not only to Christianity, but to Judaism and Islam. Episcopalians' inability to defend core doctrine suggests that mainline American churches are losing their theological moorings, and increasingly falling prey to the prevailing winds of secular culture."

She goes on to say, the church in doing so "... appeared to embrace a new gospel, .... Its message? Jesus came to make us feel good about ourselves.

She very insightfully says, "... the new gospel's disciples do not generally jettison Scripture outright. Instead, they radically reinterpret it." [Katherine Kersten. *Wall Street Journal*. [www.opinionjournal.com/taste/?id=110003859](http://www.opinionjournal.com/taste/?id=110003859)]

There is also the myth of reincarnation. This is a notion that is rising in acceptance even among people that claim to be Christians. According to George Barna, the church statistician, 10% of those who claim to be born again claim to believe in reincarnation. [George Barna. *The Barna Update*. "Americans Describe Their Views About Life After Death." October 21, 2003 - [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org)] I equate that with the man I met once who claimed to be a Christian Buddhist, that just cannot be. You are one or the other but you cannot be both.

But we need to understand this evening that it is impossible to believe in the biblical doctrine of resurrection and also believe in the myth of reincarnation. The two ideas are diametrically opposed.

There is the myth of evolution. Some Christians accept evolution without considering the theological implications of what evolution teaches. If our race is descended from apes then there never could have been a fall in the Garden of Eden. By denying the Fall of Mankind, evolution teaches there is no need for a Redeemer.

I believe that when people come to church they have the right to expect a couple of things.

First, they have the right to expect that they will hear a message in which the Bible will be presented as the final authority. Many are afraid that the Bible might be offensive to the unsaved. They are right. But the unchurched are at some level still interested in knowing what the Bible says about their situation. They may not agree but they still want someone who will tell them straight what the Bible says.

Secondly they have the right to expect that they will hear a message based on the Word of God. By that I don't mean as I have experienced a few times, a message in which a passage is read at the beginning and never referred to again.

This is the reason that I choose to preach expository sermons. Expository preaching is preaching that goes through a passage or a book from the Bible verse by verse to explain what it means and apply it to our lives today. You see, our tendency is to focus on those verses of the Bible we find most interesting or appealing, and to neglect those parts that are difficult to understand or hard to obey. So if you preach through books of the Bible, we not only cover those parts that are interesting and appealing, but we also cover parts of the Bible that are difficult.

I have been your pastor over 20 years. That means I've preached literally hundreds of sermons from this pulpit. That's a lot of sermons to preach, and that's a lot of sermons to listen to. The day is coming when I must give an account to God for everything I have said over the last 20 years. Nothing will be overlooked, everything will come to light, and my words and my motives will be examined by the Lord.

And just as I will give an account for the sermons I have preached, even so you will give an account for the sermons you have heard.

Verse five continues with "But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

Verse five encourages Timothy to never give up, until he has brought his ministry to full completion

I would have to agree with John MacArthur in his commentary when he states it worthy of notice that "Paul did not focus on the visible success of Timothy's ministry, but on the excellence of his service. He focused not on Timothy's opportunities but on his commitment, not on his personal prominence but on his character. He expressed no concern for the young pastor's acceptance or reputation but great concern for his faithfulness and godliness. He did not emphasize the size, wealth, or influence of the church at Ephesus but rather its spiritual life and health under Timothy's care. He did not concentrate even on Timothy's spiritual gifts, important as those were, but on his spiritual life and his spiritual service." [John MacArthur. MacArthur New Testament Commentary – 2 Timothy. (Chicago: Moody, 1995) p. 166]