

2 Timothy 4:1-8 **“Preach the Word”**

Introduction: Please open your Bible’s to *2 Timothy 4:1-8*.

Let’s pray and ask God to help us understand His Word. Amen!

- A. It has been great, as part of what we have been doing together at this synod assembly, to give thanks to God for the reformation. To thank God that Luther uncovered the Biblical gospel of grace, and that he longed to make it known that salvation is a gift of God’s grace alone, found in Jesus Christ alone, received by simple faith alone, and we know that for certain through Scripture alone, all to the glory of God alone. Thank God for Luther’s immovable affirmation “Here I stand, for I can do no other”.
- B. And thank God that Zwingli stopped preaching through set readings and lectionaries and started to preach his way through whole books of the Bible beginning with the Gospel According to Matthew and then carrying on from there. And thank God for Calvin’s dedication to unleash the Word of God, and to trust the Word of God to do the Work of God by the Spirit of God. With great Bible confidence he trusted God’s Word to do its work.
- C. These men all understood that God brings life and new life into being only through His Word. Preaching the Word was at the heart of the reformation. By the grace of God all of these men wanted to be faithful to the charge that Paul gives to Timothy here in *2 Timothy 4:2* to “*Preach the Word*”. So we are going to spend the next little while focusing on WHAT Paul commissioned Timothy to do, and WHY he commissioned him to do it. Let’s tuck in together.

1. What the Charge Is: (vv. 1-2)

- A. These are some of the very last words that Paul writes, and so these are his parting words to young Timothy. Paul is writing to the church leader, to the shepherd of the flock, to the pastor. He is talking to the minister about completing the task, and he has made it clear all the way through the letter that the situation is one of crisis. There is DANGER all around, Paul himself is writing from prison for the sake of the gospel; there are DIVISIONS everywhere because people are swerving from the truth; and those who have tuned away from the truth have DESERTED Paul. Those who are faithful in their Word Work will have enemies on every side, the bullets will fly, the hardships will come, and the hurdles will be formidable. So what do you do in the situation of crisis? You preach! *2 Timothy 4:1-2* says “*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: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.*”
- B. The charge is to “*Preach the Word*”, it is a call to bold endurance, to preach God’s Word, to speak what God has spoken! To pass on to others the Good Deposit, the Sound Teaching, the Truth, the Faith, the Word of God. Paul is writing to Timothy the young minister and is telling him that in his context the

ministry is the ministry of the Word. So brother pastors, the ministry is the ministry of the word as David Jackman says, and as David Jackman says, the Bible must be in the drivers seat. Paul gives Timothy some great comfort in (v. 1) assuring him that he is not alone, *“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus”*, preach the Word; and he also calls Timothy to faithfulness, reminding him that this is what God wants him to do. By God’s grace, he is to keep on doing it! Just keep telling people the gospel, remember Who you are serving and preach the Word. Jesus is coming again and when He does He is going to *“Judge the living and the dead”* and consummate *“His Kingdom”*, and the only people that He is going to give *“the crown of righteousness”* to are those who *“loved his appearing”* (v. 8). Only those who by faith have received everything that Jesus purchased for us on the cross, trusting Him and His finished work in our place, and only those who are looking forward to His coming again and have their hearts set on it, will receive the crown of life. All those, but only those. Since the only people who are saved from the wrath and judgment of God and have their sins forgiven and are restored to right relationship with Him now and forever are those who receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior and really look forward to His coming again: *“preach the word”*!

- C. The only way that people are rescued from death and judgment and hell is through Jesus, so preach the gospel. Be alert and eager; be constant and earnest (v. 2). Preach the Word when all is well and when everyone is happy for you to do it and when it is convenient, and preach the Word when you are the last man standing. Do all of the stuff that *2 Timothy 3:16-17* say that you are equipped to do when it says that *“All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.”* Don’t panic, God is in control, His Word is true, His gospel is the power for salvation to all who believe. Don’t chase after the latest techniques, the silver bullet that will make it all work. Just patiently, persistently, gently, and faithfully keep on preaching the Word. Make it clear, stay after it, and keep preaching the Word. My daughter made me a great poster a couple of years ago that is hanging on my study wall; it says *“KEEP CALM AND PREACH ON”*. That’s it isn’t it brother pastors, that is what we are to do, keep calm and preach on! Paul goes on to give Timothy two reasons for this awesome charge, and they are signaled in the text by the *“For”* in verse 3 and the *“For”* in verse 6, and they lead us to our final heading.

2. Why the Charge is Given: (vv. 3-8)

- A. Paul gives Timothy two reasons to press on in his Word Work. The first is because people will be turning away from the truth, and the second is because Paul is going to heaven. Let’s have a look at them both together.
- B. Remember, the situation is one of crisis, there will be dark and difficult days and people who don’t like the gospel will go and find teachers to teach them other things. That is what verses 3-5 are all about which say *“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, and will turn away*

from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”

People are going to dislike and despise and even hate the gospel, they cannot endure the gospel, they cannot stand the gospel, they cannot listen to the gospel. How do you respond to that? You KEEP ON PREACHING THE GOSPEL! As for you, you just keep on preaching what accords with sound doctrine (cf. Titus 2:1). These people who wander away from the truth will try to replace it with something else, they will ‘heap up’ a vast multitude of false teachers who will tell them what they want to hear. They will do a swap; they will swap the revelation of God for myths that scratch their tickling ears. First of all, they will decide what they want to hear, and then they will get a bunch of people to tell them what they want to hear. How do you respond to that? You keep on preaching the gospel, preach all the more, be steady, be sober, be persistent. As J.B. Phillips paraphrases it, “Make the preaching of the Good News your life’s work.” I remember my dad telling me when I began full time preaching ministry, “Michael, just put your head down and preach the Word. Look up ever so briefly every once in a while to see what God’s Word is doing, and then get your head down and keep on preaching”. Timothy is to fulfill his ministry; he is to keep on preaching even in the face of people turning away.

- C. And he is to keep on preaching secondly because Paul is going to heaven. Paul is passing on the baton of faithful preaching to Timothy. Paul has given him a good example of gospel endurance and is telling Timothy to take it on. That is what he says in verses 6-8, “*For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.*” Paul is already on the point of death, his life’s work is about to close. By the grace of God, he has been a faithful soldier and he has faithfully guarded the Good Deposit, and now all that remains for him is that great prize that Jesus will give him. Not, of course, that Paul is suggesting some kind of salvation by works here. No, not at all, salvation is by the free sovereign grace given to us through faith in Jesus. Salvation is a free gift of God’s grace, but an evidence of salvation is constant trust in the Lord Jesus and a delightful longing for His appearing. Paul has lived like that, and now he is telling Timothy to live like that. In Westminster Abbey in London there is a marble memorial to John and Charles Wesley that has on the bottom of it the words “God buries his workman, but carries on his work.” Paul is passing on the proclamation of the gospel to Timothy who is to pass it on to others who are to pass it on to others and so on and so on, with the solemn charge “*preach the word*” (cf. 2 Timothy 2:2).

Conclusion:

- A. What if you are listening to all of this and you are not a preaching pastor? What is the application for you? It is to realize what your preaching pastors are meant to be doing and to be praying for them as they do it. As David Helm would say, it is

- to exhort them that this work MUST be done and to encourage them this this work CAN be done. It is to be patient with them as they make progress in it (cf. 1 Timothy 4:15), and to give them room to devote themselves to it.
- B. Brother pastors, what about us? Please stay spiritually fit, please remember that the ministry is the ministry of the Word, and please give yourselves to it. Jesus is coming again and His gospel is the power of God to the salvation of all who believe; people will turn away from the truth and faithful preaching is needed; those who have faithfully preached the Word before us are going to heaven. By the grace of God, we need to carry on the work.
 - C. The Lord is with us. His grace is sufficient. No wonder Paul ends the letter in 4:22 by saying “*The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.*” Let’s pray. Amen!