

# Preach the Word

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[ 0 : 00 ] I wonder what your famous last words would be. If you knew you were about to die, what would your parting message be!

Lawrence Oates, he sacrificed himself. He knew he was going to die, and he sacrificed himself by walking out into a blizzard to spare his fellow explorers from having to care for him.

And his famous last words as he walked out of that tent to a certain death were these, I'm just going outside, and maybe some time. Or in 1863, it has been reported that surgeon Joseph Henry Green he was checking his own pulse as he lay dying, and apparently his last word was stopped.

Well, the letter of 2 Timothy contains the Apostle Paul's last recorded words, and these are written to his son in the faith and his successor, Timothy.

This is the man who would continue to build up the early church. And in chapter 4 that we've just read, we have Paul's famous last words, and they may be summed up with these three words.

[ 1 : 33 ] Verse 2, Preach the word. Preach the word. This command is the crux of the whole letter. If Timothy was to take anything away from this letter, it was this one single thing.

This was the thing that he had to commit himself to for the rest of his life. It would be to obey these famous last words. Preach the word. Now, Paul could have left behind his top ten ministry tips, but instead he wants to leave these three words ringing in Timothy's ears.

So Paul has reached the end of his life. It's the end of his ministry as well. His life of faith and his ministry that Jesus tasked him with, these two things are closely intertwined.

And as Paul senses the executioner's block, he finds himself at the crucial Baton Pass. This is the moment that he hands on the task of leading and building up the church, and he wants to make sure the Baton is firmly in Timothy's hand as he dies.

Paul's reached the end of his leg of the relay race, and now it's time for Timothy to take on the gospel path, Baton forwards into the next generation. So we're going to go through verses 1 to 8, this famous passage, and we're going to consider why preaching the word specifically was supposed to be Timothy's central task.

[ 3 : 05 ] Then we're going to look at two things which await Timothy in his ministry. So there's a day coming when people are going to reject the truth, but then there's another day coming when faithful word ministers and all faithful followers of Jesus will be rewarded for sticking with Jesus.

So we're going to look at the first two verses now. So a central task. A central task. So in the first couple of verses of chapter 4, it is crystal clear what Timothy must commit himself to as he leads the church.

He must preach the word. But did you notice how strongly Paul instructs him to do this? If you look at verse 1 again, it says, In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge.

Preach the word. God the Father and Jesus the Son are my witnesses, Paul says, Paul reminds Timothy that Jesus is coming again and he's going to judge the living and the dead and Jesus will weigh all of Timothy's works in the balance.

Therefore, Timothy must take this command very seriously. He must preach the word. Now, preaching the whole counsel of God, it's not a preference for Timothy or for anyone who teaches the Bible, but it's a serious injunction from the apostle Paul.

[ 4 : 48 ] It bears apostolic weight, but it's also an injunction that Jesus made, that, sorry, was made with Jesus as witness. We saw that. Jesus is my witness.

So, also bears divine weight as well. This is no throwaway ministry tip. It is a command as weighty as the commands written in stone. So, let's pause briefly and let's just ask ourselves, what does it actually mean to preach the word?

That might be a silly question to ask, maybe an obvious question to ask, but put simply, preaching the word, it means saying what the Bible says in the way that it says it.

Saying what the Bible says in the way that the Bible says it. So, it's not to be taken out of context. It's not with our hobby horses plastered all over it.

The Bible is God's breathed out authoritative word and the Bible unveils God's plan for the world and it's the Bible that sets the agenda when we open it up.

[ 5 : 57 ] So, preaching the word, it means saying what the Bible says in the way that it says it.

Thinking about it in a bigger way, preaching the word is when God's people are gathered, just like this, or on a Sunday morning, and the Bible is carefully read and unpacked so that unbelievers might come to faith as they hear about Jesus and so that believers will be made wise so that believers might be taught what the Bible says, challenged to live God's way, corrected of sinful ways, brought in line with God's good desires for them, trained in righteousness so that they will resemble Jesus more and more, strengthened so that they might stand firm in the storms of life, and thoroughly equipped so that they might serve him faithfully in all the good works that God has given them to do.

So this is what happens when God's word is preached. preached. So Timothy is not to preach philosophy, he's not to preach politics, or good morals, or to put on a good show, he's to teach what the Bible says and the way that it says it.

But why does Paul say that preaching the word has to be the central task? Why does that thing come above everything else that we busy ourselves with in church?

Well, preaching the word must be the priority because Jesus is coming back and he will judge the world and there are countless people who are perishing without knowing him.

Preaching the word must be the priority because it is God's plan to fill the earth with people who resemble his son Jesus and these people will resemble Jesus more and more as they live in obedience to his word.

[ 7 : 53 ] Preaching the word must be the priority because if the baton isn't passed to the next generation there will be catastrophic effects for the church. If the good news of Jesus isn't proclaimed then people won't be saved.

If the Bible isn't faithfully taught then God's people will become malnourished. And if people aren't trained for ministry people like Timothy then there will be nobody to lead the church when our current leaders step aside.

Paul gives Timothy this strict command to preach the word because if he doesn't preach the word the fledgling church will not outlive Timothy it will fizzle out as quickly as it began.

So this is crucial. But we mustn't miss how Timothy used to preach the word so we stopped at preach the word but the next bit in verse 2 how is Timothy to preach the word?

Well Timothy must be prepared at all times to preach and teach the truth and he must preach the word in the ways that God has always intended his word to be used.

[ 9 : 04 ] So we see that he's to correct he's to rebuke and he's to encourage the people of God with the word and he's to preach the word with great patience and with careful instruction because sheep do not change their ways quickly.

He needs to preach with patience. At this point we must ask ourselves where do we hold word ministry in our list of priorities?

Do we hold it in the same regard as the apostle Paul? Is it a priority for us? Opening God's word and letting it speak must be the priority in every ministry of church life and maybe you're involved in teaching the Bible in some way so maybe that's up the front preaching or maybe it's teaching our children here or young people or maybe it's leading a Bible study or maybe it's giving a talk at Christian union or a scripture union at school or maybe it's sharing a word at coffee at Brunfield do we believe that God's word has power when we open it?

Will we get in the way by sharing entertaining stories or will we let God's word do the speaking? So a central task.

Now a reality check so we're going to look at verses three to five now. So we've seen how Paul strongly commanded Timothy to commit himself to preaching the word but in the next few verses Paul gives Timothy a reality check.

[ 10 : 47 ] Paul points forward to a day that is coming when people are going to reject the preaching of the word. We see that in verse three. They won't be able to stand what the Bible has to say.

This day is coming Paul says. Verse four they will turn their ears away from the truth and they'll turn aside to myths. Now I if you know me you know I love dogs and I particularly love spaniels but I also love terriers.

The first family dog that we had was a Jack Russell and I love terriers because they have great ears and the great thing about a terrier's ears is that you can tell what they're listening to by looking at the direction that their ears are tilted.

In the same way there is a time coming when people will not tilt their ears towards the truth but they will turn their ears away from the truth. And tilt them towards things of no value.

Things like empty myths. And these people they won't just reject the preaching of the words they won't just turn their ears away but they will surround themselves with teachers who will say the things that they are itching to hear.

[12:14] Things that appeal to their sinful desires. So what might those sorts of teachers say today? Well they might say something like this. you can think whatever you want only your actions count.

You can look at whatever you like. You can do whatever you like. Don't worry about sinning because God's forgiven it all hasn't he? Follow your desires.

God has given you your desires right? Or how about this morning why don't we focus on all the ways that this controversial speaker is wrong? Wouldn't it be fun to take a pop at that guy and see all the ways that he's got it wrong?

Or actually we're not going to look at the Bible this morning because we can't actually be sure if it's reliable. There's a constant temptation for preachers to avoid preaching what God's word says. A constant temptation to dumb down the uncomfortable parts or to avoid them altogether. things that God says about sin or about hell or when God says things that go against the grain of our culture.

[13:28] A constant temptation. But if we dumb down or if we dodge these things what we're actually doing is that we're communicating that not all of scripture is actually for us.

Only the bits that affirm us and make us feel good. So I and anybody else involved in teaching what the Bible says at Bruntsfield we must be careful not to become people pleasers avoiding what the Bible says but we must make sure we say what the Bible says in the way that it says it.

So Paul's warning is clear. People are going to reject the truth and they will appoint yes men to lead them and who will say what they want to hear and there will be many teachers who will tell God's people all sorts of things that they want to hear.

These days are coming says Paul but notice the contrast in verse five. But you Timothy when you preach the word you must keep your head especially when people reject the teaching.

You must endure the hardship that preaching the word will always bring. you must do the work of an evangelist so you must make sure that you keep preaching the gospel to unbelievers as well as feeding the flock with the meat of the Bible and you need to make sure that you fulfill all your duties.

[15:00] Don't skip the hard bits. Do all of it. As Timothy commits himself to preaching the word Paul has pointed to a future day when people are going to reject it and hardship will definitely come.

We've seen that all the way through the letter but in verses 6 to 8 which we're going to look at next Paul wants to point Timothy to another day a day that's coming that's going to be truly wonderful and it's going to dwarf all the suffering and rejection that Timothy might face for preaching the word. So let's look at verses 6 to 8 and think about a future reward. A future reward. So in these verses 6 to 8 Paul is shining the spotlight now on his own life and he wants to show us what it means to finish well.

So in verse 6 Paul tells Timothy that he's reached the end of his life. He says the time of his death is near. Now Paul is holed up in a Roman prison at this point and he knows he's going to be executed soon but he views his death as being like a final act of worship.

Every last drop of his life is going to be poured out in worship to God. What an interesting way to view your own death.

[16:24] An act of worship. This is triumphant not a sad whimper. Paul certainly doesn't view the end of his life as something to be feared or to be sad about.

Not at all. Paul speaks about his demise very positively. Now he looks back over the course of his life as many people do at the end of their life.

He thinks about the highs and the lows and he can say with confidence that he has fought the good fight. He says that. Paul has fought so that the good news of Jesus might be heard everywhere. Paul never drew a fist but he had to keep striving against evil opposition by preaching the words everywhere he went even when threatened with death.

Paul looks back over his life and he can say with confidence that he has finished the race. He's kept the faith. Just like the image of the athlete back in chapter 2.

[ 17 : 30 ] Paul has not cut any corners. He's never given up. He has faithfully run the racetrack of faith which God has set out for him.

Now Bogdan took us back to Antioch and Iconium and Lystra last week. This is when Paul was badly persecuted and stoned to death.

Remember those times Paul says to Timothy think of all the suffering that I endured because I chose to keep preaching the word.

Paul could have so easily thrown the towel in at any moment but he didn't. Maybe another thing you might know about me other than that I like dogs.

I used to do a lot of running. That was my sport. And in my 16 years of running I competed in many races. But there were many times when I was tempted to pull out of a race.

[ 18 : 36 ] Three kilometers into a five kilometer race. Man, that is where it really hits. The pain begins to mount in your body and the psychological battle begins.

Oh, I can't possibly keep going at this pace. Goodness me, I am suffering. People are going past me. I've got to slow down.

This is really rubbish. I'm hating this right now. Maybe I should pull out and stop. People would understand, wouldn't they? I was often tempted to quit the race when it got painful or when the race wasn't going very well.

I wonder if we've ever thought this way in our race of faith. Have we ever been tempted to give it up? When it's gotten painful? Or when it's not been going well?

Or if we're involved in teaching God's word, have we ever been tempted to throw the towel in because it's really hard going? Or it's costly? Or maybe it's not going well?

[ 19 : 44 ] Paul tells Timothy, you've got to keep going because there is a magnificent reward for all those who fight the good fight, who finish the race, and who keep the faith.

And we read about that in verse 8. So let's read that again. Verse 8. Now, there is in store 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 longed for his appearing.

there is a crown of righteousness stored up for Paul and for everyone who perseveres in their faith to the end.

And Jesus himself will reward us with that crown on that day, the day when he returns and he establishes his kingdom on earth.

And we will see Jesus face to face in that moment, and he will tell us, well done. I wonder if you've ever seen a medal presentation, if you've ever watched the Olympics, you've probably seen a medal presentation.

[ 21 : 00 ] And when you watch a medal presentation, as they stand up on the podium, the thing you notice about the athletes is the joy beaming from their faces as the person comes up and presents the medal to them and says to them, well done.

Paul says, all Christians who persevere to the end will receive a crown, but even better than that, our greatest reward will be seeing Jesus himself when he comes up and he awards us with that crown, and the joy that will beam from our faces when he says to us, well done.

That is the reward that is waiting for us if we stick to the end. So as we draw things to a close, we're going to think about two sticks, not literal sticks.

Paul had reached the end of his life, and he not only chose to stick with Jesus to the end, but as a minister of the gospel, he also chose to stick to the central task of preaching the word.

word. And now the glorious crown of righteousness awaited him, and at this key moment in history, the death of the great apostle and the handing of the baton on to the next generation, Timothy must now do the same.

[ 22 : 26 ] Timothy must stick with Jesus to the end, and Timothy must stick to the central task of preaching the word. So for us today, will we stick with Jesus till the end of our lives, following him wherever he leads us, even into pain, even into suffering?

I wonder where is he leading you today? Maybe into a costly decision, perhaps, maybe into sharing the word with that friend at work.

Will we finish the race and keep the faith knowing that Jesus himself, awaits us with the crown? And secondly, will we stick to the central task of preaching the word?

Will we get behind leaders who commit to this task? Will we prioritize opening the Bible, even when it says difficult things? Are we convinced that God has the power to transform people through his word?

Let's pray. our heavenly father, we thank you so, so much for giving us this passage, this clear command from Paul to Timothy to preach the word.

[ 23 : 47 ] We thank you that you've left us your word, you've preserved it for us, and that we can learn from it today. And the same command is true for us today, to keep the opening and the unfolding and the explaining and the teaching of your word as a central thing that we do as your gathered people.

And Lord, we are sorry for the times that we've put that to one side, we've not prioritized it, we've gone for the things that are flashy, or we've wanted to avoid what the Bible has to say, whether that's preaching it or even conversations with our friends, we've wanted to avoid saying the things that the Bible actually says.

But help us to be bold like Paul and to commit to saying what the Bible says in the way that it says it, help us to commit to that task in all the ways that we share the word with others.

And I pray that you would help us to keep going to the end of our lives, sticking faithfully to you, running well, fighting the good fight, contending for the gospel, keeping the faith, knowing that Jesus himself awaits us at the end of our lives with the crown and he will say well done to us and award us if we stick faithfully to him.

And if there's anyone here that is here tonight who hasn't made the Lord Jesus their own personal saviour, who doesn't know the salvation and the forgiveness that he offers, I just pray that you would convince those folks by your spirit to trust in the Lord Jesus who is our only rescue, our only way of salvation.

[ 25 : 21 ] And we pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.