

Shepherds & Servants 13

Persist In Preaching

1 Timothy 4:13-16

Memory Verses: 1 Timothy 4:16

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Over the course of the last few weeks we've looked at the church's responsibility to reject legalism, follow the example of our youth, and to have an intentional play of discipleship! To train in godliness.

While the last few weeks have been primarily for the congregation and not especially for the Elders and Deacons, this week's topic is most definitely geared towards our Elders. This week we are going to look at the responsibility of our Elders to persist in preaching. Look with me at **1 Timothy 4:13-16**. Elders, like Timothy and Paul, are to devote themselves to the public reading of the Bible, to preaching the application of the scriptures as well as to the teaching of the finer points of the doctrines in scripture. They are to practice and perfect their craft of preaching all the while keeping a close check on their spiritual condition.

Why? Why is it so important that Elders and Pastors teach the truth of scripture, and preach the application to the people in such a dynamic way that the people can see that they take it serious? Why should they be ordained by the elders and by the laying of hands? Why must they keep a close watch on their own lives as they focus on their teaching? Look at **verse 16** again. For by doing so they will save themselves and their hearers. In essence lives are at stake! Lives hang in the balance and the first responders for the souls of men on this earth are those who preach the word of God!

For an Elder, for a pastor, nothing can be more important than teaching and preaching the word of God. They must take it serious. They must, what's the word? PERSIST in it! For if they don't, people will perish. If they don't they may indeed perish as well. The bottom line today is simple; **Those Who Preach Casually And Without Much Care, Have Spiritual Blood On Their Hands!**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we need to see is that... **A Worthy Preacher Devotes Himself To Scripture**. Look again at **vs13a**. The first thing we notice is that Timothy is supposed to devote himself to scripture. Devotion is something we know very little of in our culture today. We are not devoted to our wives or husbands and that is why we have an epidemic of either divorce or non-marriage. We are not devoted to the church which is why we have redefined average church goers as those

who attend once a month. We are not devoted to our jobs which is why, if you can find someone who is willing to work, they will most likely not be there longer than a few months.

Devotion demands a commitment. A sold out persistence for something that will cost us time, money, fun, and possibly relationships. Devotion means we are willing to give something up for something else because it takes priority! The Word of God should take priority in the life of every believer and it must take priority in the life of an Elder. They must be in the book day in and day out. They must memorize it, study it, meditate upon it, and long for it in the short times between readings.

It was said of Hudson Taylor, that he loved reading his Bible so much, even after being a believer for 50 years, that he would often wake up in the middle of the night at 2am just to read a few more passages before getting back up at 4am to again read the word! He would long for the word so much that he would miss it if he had to be away from it for an hour or two! I would imagine that the writer of Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible, felt the same way. Look at **Psalm 119:19-20, 92-93, 146-148, 161-163**.

The point is clear, **we must have a sold out, uncompromising desire for the Word of God!** We must be devoted to it without question! And for those who preach the word, they can only persist in preaching through this devotion! Without it they will no good! They will preach heartless, careless, passionless, and pointless messages that convict no one, change nothing, and leave lost souls in their wake. Fall in love with the word and you will be able to preach the word! **Those Who Preach Casually And Without Much Care, Have Spiritual Blood On Their Hands.**

The second thing we need to see here is that... **A Worthwhile Preacher Rightly Handles the Word**. **2 Timothy 2:15** tells us that a worthwhile preacher presents himself to God as one who has been approved, and can rightly handle the word of truth. He is approved through the process of ordination as an elder into the local church. He is qualified. He need not be ashamed because he is devoted to the word of God and lives his life according to its precepts. But how does he handle it correctly? Look again at **vs13**. **Good preachers read the word, explain the word, apply the word, and teach the word of God!**

Notice that he is to be devoted to the public reading of the scripture. This means that he is not depending upon his oratory skills to bring conviction or life change. Rather, the words of life are sufficient and must take center stage. Every message, every lesson, every time we gather to learn of Christ or grow in Christ, the scriptures should take center stage. So first he reads the words of the Word! Anyone who neglects to read the Word and put it at the center of the message is mis-handling the word of truth.

Secondly, he explains the passage. In the early church, it was common for the reading of the scriptures, the Old Testament scrolls, to be immediately accompanied by a thorough explanation of what the scriptures meant in context. If any words or passages deserved a closer examination with supplemental scripture this was also done. We call this expository preaching, because it exposes and exhausts the text of it's meaning. Just as I did in the first point, I took one word, "devote" and exposed it, exhausted it, and expanded upon its meaning!

Thirdly, the preacher must apply the words to the current affairs of the hearers so they can be disciplined by them. We call this exhortation. Reading the word isn't really preaching. Explaining the word is more like teaching it. But Exhortation is what separates preachers from teachers. Exhortation is where one says, this is what it says and this is what it means for you personally! This is where the preacher challenges the hearers to take a step towards Christ and away from the world. This is where the conviction of the word is combined with the conviction of the Holy Spirit and transformation happens.

And lastly he must teach. I believe that Elders are called to teach while they preach, but here I think the word teaching implies a separate time. Preaching is more of a declaration from the Word, wrapped in the anointing of God, purposefully meant for conviction of sin and transformation of lifestyle. Teaching is more of a journey together while explaining unknown things or correcting misunderstood things. Teachers must be able to show and bring out things that others have missed or were confused about! There is a clear difference between when Jim preaches and when Jim teaches on Wednesday nights! Elders should be proficient at both! The bottom line is this; Elders must be able to handle the word of truth correctly. Meaning they read it and give it center stage. They explain it through expository exhaustive teaching. They exhort it and show clear application for life transformation and conviction of the spirit. And they teach it in other formats such as Bible studies, growth electives, small groups, or one on one opportunities! If they don't... the lost will not be saved. **Those Who Preach Casually And Without Much Care, Have Spiritual Blood On Their Hands.**

The next thing we need to address is that... **A Hard Working Preacher Never Stops Practicing.** Let's look again at **vs14**. The Elder is told to not neglect his gift. How would he do that? How does an athlete neglect their gift. I think of Jamarus Russell. Picked number one over all in the NFL draft the man could throw a football from one end of the field to the other. Scouts said he had the strongest arm to ever throw a pass in the NFL. He also had a frame so large that no one could tackle him. He looked like a defensive lineman. He was strong, big, and gifted. But after he was drafted and given the biggest rookie contract of all time

he simply quit working out. He ate all that he could eat, he didn't exercise, he didn't train, he didn't care... and within two years he was out of the league and is to this day considered the biggest bust in NFL history! He neglected his gift!

I think many elders / pastors do the same thing. I think they get a big church, make a nice pay check, feel comfortable that they've made a name for themselves and simply quit honing their skills. They slump into a lazy, retirement attitude where they feel all they need to do is crank out a simple sermon or devotional and that's it. They just reread old sermons over and over again so they don't even need to sit down and write any new material or study any new revelation from the word. It's pathetic. They aren't devoted to the word. They are counterfeit preachers, wolves in sheep's clothing. A real preacher, a hard working preacher doesn't neglect his gift. Instead he does as **vs15** says, practices these things. He immerses himself in them day in and day out. He reads other books on how to be a better communicator. He goes to classes to learn how to better exposit and exhort the word of God. He cares because he knows lives hang in the balance. He wants to progress and he wants others to see his progression, not for his glory, but so that Christ is glorified! **Jesus is glorified through hard work and hard working preachers!** If he doesn't work hard, the lost may not be saved. He cannot allow that. **Those Who Preach Casually And Without Much Care, Have Spiritual Blood On Their Hands.**

The last thing we need to see here is that... **A Righteous Preacher Abides According To The Bible.** Let's look again at **vs16**. The Elder must keep a close watch on himself as he studies the word. He isn't just to preach or teach to others. He must preach to himself first! This means he prays over what he is reading, applies it to himself first, and asks the Holy Spirit to work in his life as he is hoping he will work in the lives of others. **The first person the preacher preaches to is himself.** If he isn't changed how can he expect others to be changed.

This is what it means to save himself through his persistence in the word. He isn't earning salvation through his devotion to the word. Rather he is making the salvation that he already has all the more worthwhile because if he allows it, it will sanctify him and make him righteous. The pastor needs to be sanctified just like the hearers in the congregation. If he isn't being molded by it, the people will not either and that is a tragedy. He will be held accountable for how he allows the word to change him and others. Look at **Hebrews 13:17. Those Who Preach Casually And Without Much Care, Have Spiritual Blood On Their Hands.**

Application

Church, make sure you always have the right men in the pulpit preaching the word of God. Make sure you have men who are devoted to

the word with their whole hearts. Make sure you have men who handle the word correctly giving it priority in the church. Make sure you have men who practice their gift with care and are hard workers. Make sure you have men who hold themselves to the word just as much as those they preach to. Make sure you have men preaching the word who do not have spiritual blood on their hands.

Conclusion

If you do, you will see people saved through the preaching of the word. You will see people changed through the preaching of the word. You will see transformation, conviction, and chains broken. You will see God do the work that only he can do! **Vs.16** – Keep a close watch on yourselves and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourselves and your hearers. Amen.