



“TO WHOM WILL WE BOW?”

2 Timothy 4:1-5

Theme: *The church must remain committed to the preaching of God’s Word.*

Introduction: When my wife went to nursing school, she was motivated to serve the Lord by seeking to assist suffering, ill people in recovery and healing. Her heart was fixed on serving. The school had her write her “Philosophy of Nursing.” They collected her statement and held it throughout her program. As she was graduating, she was tasked with the writing of her “Philosophy of Nursing.” The two papers were then returned to her, and she noted how it had been denigrated from seeking to serve others to one of self-protection and personal ambition. She had been “corrupted” in her perspectives and motives through what she had been taught – despite a resolute desire not to be “conformed.”

What we are exposed to will impact us. If we seek the “truth” of human wisdom, self-affirmation, and feel-good teaching, will be “spiritual” only to the levels of human achievement. But, if we seek the “wisdom from above” through the Word of God, we will find a transforming power that will bring us into conformity to Christ Jesus Himself. Yet, the journey from “here” to “there” is fraught with difficulty, challenge, inconvenience, and even imposition. It requires that we recognize the Lordship of Christ and simultaneous abdication of self-rule. Many find this too arduous, inconvenient, and intrusive. If this is your response to the truths of God’s Word, you will likely tire of this preaching and either begin to resist what is taught or seek a church that has a “menu” more palatable to your appetite.

Our text today warns that this tension will find eras in every church. [Read Text]. As we work through these verses, we will see that *“The church must remain committed to the preaching of God’s Word.”* We have four points to consider: 1) **It Is a Solemn Charge**, 2) **It Is a Stringent Charge**, 3) **It Is a Scorned Charge**, and 4) **It Is a Sweeping Charge**. Let’s begin with ...

I. **IT IS A SOLEMN CHARGE – 4:1-2A**

A. **It Is Solemn because of the Accountability - v. 1**

1. Paul desires to impress upon Timothy and every pastor and congregation to follow the importance of seeing the Scriptures as the focus of our ministries.
2. He provides an earnest exhortation of the utmost significance – *“I solemnly charge you ...”*
3. As Paul approaches his promotion to glory, he is greatly burdened about preserving the church, knowing that the only way this will happen is through the grace of God and the cooperation of preachers and

congregations to come.

4. **“solemnly charge”** [διαμαρτύρομαι] – means to exhort with authority in matters of extraordinary importance, with an attending warning of severe consequences if he fails to comply with the “charge.”
5. These consequences are because the charge is given **“... 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 ...”**
 - a) **The Intensity of the Accountability** – **“... in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus ...”** – emphasizes *“even Christ Jesus”* to whom all judgment has been granted – cp. **John 5:22-23**.
 - b) **The Inescapability of Accountability** – **“... who is to judge the living and the dead ...”** – a reference to both those currently alive and those who have already died **and** to those who are believers (living) and unbelievers (dead) – cp. **Acts 17:31; 1 Peter 4:5**.
 - c) **The Imminency of Accountability** – **“... and by His appearing and His kingdom”** – cp. **2 Timothy 4:8**.
 - (1) **“by His appearing”** [ἐπιφάνειαν] – refers to the deliverance of the righteous through the Rapture – cp. **2 Corinthians 5:10-11**
 - (2) **“... and His kingdom”** – refers to the condemnation of the wicked who He judges when He comes the 2nd time – **2 Thessalonians 1:6-10**

B. It Is Solemn because of the Announcement – v.2a

1. Paul provides the 1st in a series of nine imperatives, and it is foundational – **“Preach the Word.”**
2. **“preach”** [κηρύσσω] – is a word that means to herald something publicly – it refers to an official responsibility to deliver a message in a public setting.
3. Many are hesitant to deliver the message we have been charged to deliver because of intimidation, disagreement, or preference.
4. However, Paul tells Timothy – *“In light of the observation by the Father – even of Christ and given that no one will escape the judgment by Christ, and the day of accountability is imminent, do not mess with the message – deliver it with public proclamation!”*
5. **“the Word”** [λόγος] – refers to the revealed truths in the Scriptures that have been inspired – cp. **2 Timothy 1:13-14; 2:2, 15; 3:14-17**; cp. **Acts 20:23**.
6. This is the message that people desire to hear – not the opinions of a man, but the very testimony of God – cp. **1 Corinthians 2:1-5**.

Part 2

Introduction: The church is inundated with teachers who see themselves as “influencers,” providing assembled Christians with inspirational affirmations and encouragement. They are similar to the presenters of TED Talks. TED stands for Technology, Entertainment, Design – a conference that provides “talks” – typically lasting about 18 minutes or less and engagingly cover various topics. TED Talks aim to spread ideas through powerful storytelling and expert insights, often delivered by influential speakers, researchers, and leaders in their fields. The main goal of TED Talks is to inspire, inform, and engage audiences by sharing “ideas worth spreading.”

Although the Truth of God’s Word is “worth spreading,” it cannot be primarily based on the celebrity, personality, or experiences of the speaker who tells stories, elaborate illustrations, or suggestions for how we can have a better life. Preaching is an announcement of God’s inviolable, authoritative message designed to confront sin and transform people from alienation and condemnation to a state of worthiness and compatibility with God through transforming one’s soul to Christlikeness. It is not achievable through any means other than the power of God’s Spirit using the Word of God to transform us. Hence, when we gather, it is not to be entertained, amused, or affirmed but to be confronted with the propositional truths of God’s Word that encourage, exhort, and edify to the end that we leave knowing the power of God, not merely the magnetism and charm of the speaker. Yet, this is what thousands of Christians know each week as “preachers” fail to proclaim God’s Word. They bow to the allure of affirmations and endorsements going in both directions. As we continue in our text, we see how *the church must remain committed to the preaching of God’s Word.*

[Read Text] - We have already seen the first characteristic of Paul’s Charge to Timothy:

I. **It is Solemn Charge** – we saw how it was solemn because of the *Accountability to God* and because of the *Announcement from God*. We now see that ...

II. IT IS A STRINGENT CHARGE – **4:2B**

A. **The Requires Commitment** – “... *be ready in season and out of season* ...”

1. The responsibility to focus ministry on God’s Word is challenging.
2. There are times when delivering God’s Word will cause reactions—as you declare what God tells people they ought to do or not do, reproving them for veering away from God’s standards, telling them how to change to comply with God’s standards, and informing them what must be done to conduct themselves righteously... all of which is an intrusion into their autonomy and personal sovereignty.
3. Hence, there will be times when it is popular and others when it will be

disdained.

4. Paul provides the 2nd command – **“be ready”** [ἐφίστημι] – literally to stand attentive to the opportunity.
5. These opportunities will come **“in season and out of season.”**
 - a) **“in season”** [εὐκαιρως] – when it is convenient – cp. **Mark 14:11.**
 - b) **“out of season”** [ἀκαιρως] – when it is untimely or undesirable.
6. Preaching must never cave to the pressures, desires, priorities, perspectives, or standards of any community other than the one around God’s throne – which stands in observation.
7. Men of God who stand before the assembled saints as ambassadors with the message from God must readily, willingly, and preparedly deliver the message without alteration, emendation, or hesitation despite the reaction such a man may face.
8. “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.”¹

B. The Requires Confrontations – “... reprove, rebuke, exhort ...”

1. Several additional commands are now provided in a staccato-like fashion.
2. **“reprove”** [ἐλέγχω] – to bring a person to the point of recognizing wrongdoing, particularly concerning false doctrine; it is a form of constructive criticism designed to help someone change their ways – cp. **Proverbs 12:1.**
3. **“rebuke”** [ἐπιτιμάω] – Is a stronger term to express stern disapproval or to warn of one’s errors using the truth of Scripture with a view to them stopping what they are doing immediately – **Luke 17:3.**
4. **“exhort”** [παρακαλέω] – to call to one’s side – to strongly appeal for someone to join you; to entreat or to instill someone with courage.
5. Hence, preaching, although at times affirming, encouraging, and cheering, must also include the awareness of how deeply the flesh is set and the desire to help the saints overcome it and be transformed through the power of God’s Word.

C. The Requires Compassion – “... with patience and instruction.”

1. Paul is concerned that one's approach to confronting sin and false doctrine must be as consistent with God's heart as God's Word.
2. He states: **“with patience and instruction.”**

¹ MacArthur, p. 176

- a) *“patience” [μακροθυμία]* – describes the state of remaining tranquil while awaiting a response – not displaying anger, disgust, or frustration – understanding that growth takes time. cp. **2 Timothy 2:24-25; Romans 2:3-4.**
 - b) *“instruction” [διδασχῆ]* – describes our reliance on God’s Word, not our own ideas, perspectives, or opinions – cp. **Acts 20:32.**
3. The spirit with which the Word is delivered can be passionate and direct, but it must also be compassionate and measured by God’s heart.
 4. We are to instruct those in opposition with a view to the repentance that the patience of God is designed to produce.
 5. We must care about not only the integrity of the message but also the integrity of our own souls and the rescue of those caught in error.

III. **IT IS A SCORNE** CHARGE – **4:3-4**

A. **The Intolerance of Truth – v. 3a**

1. God desires us to realize that this compassionate, truthful, patient, and straightforward ministry of teaching God’s Word will not always be appreciated.
2. He explains why it is necessary to be vigilant and faithful: *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine ...”* - there will come a time in the church when professing Christians, who are nominal only, whose hearts are “stony” - will change their minds and begin to oppose the truth – cp. **Matthew 13:5-6.**
3. *“time” [καιρός]* – here refers to the same era as described in **3:1.**
4. *“endur[ing]” [ἀνέχω]* *“sound doctrine”* refers to the ability to tolerate the truth or “put up with” the powerful impact and transforming work that the Word of God accomplishes – cp. **Hebrews 4:12.**
5. They will instead resist it, opposing the Spirit’s work and the teacher’s ministry – cp. **Acts 7:51.**

B. **The Indulgence by Teachers – vv. 3b-4**

1. Instead, they don’t merely “leave,” they seek to replace faithful ministers who preach the truth with men who seek to affirm them in their natural, unsanctified, sinful state – *“... but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires ...”*
2. Plenty of men seek self-promotion instead of the glory of Christ, personal wealth instead of the Lord’s award, and the construction of personal kingdoms instead of the Kingdom of God.
3. As a result, many *“will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.”*

4. There is here a dual action being described:
 - a) *“will turn away their ears” [ἀποστρέφω]* – they actively choose to deny and reject *“the truth,”* becoming intolerant.
 - b) *“will turn aside” [ἐκτρέπω]* – describes a passive action – they will be caused to “turn ... to myths” – a term that means “dislocated.”
5. Satan will surely have plenty of options for people who do not want to hear the truth—they will be indulged by “ear-tickling” teachers who lick their fingers and then indulge the prevailing winds of people’s desires.

IV. IT IS A SWEEPING CHARGE – 4:5

A. The Personal Exhortation

1. Paul exhorts Timothy not to be such a “tickler” – *“But you ...”* – cp. 2:1, 16, 3:14.
2. Again, this is a contrasting reference insisting that Timothy and any future teacher of God’s Word (or any proponent of the truth) be faithful to the truth of God’s Word regardless of the cost.
3. It falls to each of us who know Christ to preserve through grace, the hunger for the truth, the yearning of the soul to be conformed to Christ, and the commitment to the Scriptures that will enable its transforming work to continue.

B. The Particular Exhortations

1. *Exercise Balance* – *“Be sober in all things” [νήφω]* – it refers to being “level-headed” in light of the imminent return of Christ, or not intoxicated with some extraneous “intoxicant” – cp. **1 Peter 4:7**.
2. *Endure Hardship* – *“... endure hardship ...” [κακοπαθέω]* – lit. = “to suffer evil” – ministry can bring heartache, spiritual discouragements, and even physical pain at the hands of those opposed to the truth.
3. *Evangelize the Lost* – *“... do the work of an evangelist” [ἔργον ποιήσον εὐαγγελιστοῦ]* – he is calling Timothy to avoid myopathy in only caring about the saints in the church without a burden to see the lost saved – cp **Ephesians 4:11**.
4. *Execute your Ministry* – *“... fulfill your ministry” [πληροφορέω]* – to *fully satisfy the demands ...* of caring for God’s people as an under-shepherd – protecting and providing
 - a) *Tenacity* – *sticking to the task.*
 - b) *Totality* – *giving oneself to the task until it is completed* – Paul’s testimony – cp. vv. 6-7.
5. The impact of God’s Word on God’s people through the agency of God’s Spirit is designed to bring God’s glory through our conformity to God’s Son – is the point of our focus on the proclamation of God’s Word.

So What?

1. What difference ought it make in my life to know that Jesus Christ witnesses everything I do or say?
2. Do I ever find God's Word to be "*out of season*" in my life?
3. How do I prepare to hear God's Word when it is preached?
4. How can I avoid being turned aside to myths?
5. What ministry must I be determined to fulfill?

The church must remain committed to the preaching of God's Word.