

**Title: Lesson 14: What Every Shepherd Must Do!**

**Text: 2 Timothy 4:1–5**

Let me give you a sobering reality.

There are pastors today who are not filling churches with the Word of God.

They are filling seats with whatever works.

Some replace preaching with performance — but very little Scripture.

Some soften the message, so no one feels uncomfortable.

No talk of sin.

No call to repentance.

No warnings about judgment.

Some avoid hard doctrines altogether.

Hell disappears.

Holiness fades.

The gospel gets reduced to self-improvement.

Others shape their ministries around preferences.

Messages built from surveys.

Sermons crafted around what people want to hear instead of what God has already said.

And this is not new.

In the late 1800s, Charles Spurgeon faced this in his own generation.

Many churches in England were beginning to question the authority of Scripture.

Some denied biblical inspiration.

Others redefined the atonement.

Many wanted Christianity to feel more intellectual, more modern, more acceptable to the culture.

*Spurgeon saw it happening and sounded the alarm.*

*He called it the “Down-Grade.”*

*Because once a church begins sliding away from biblical truth, it rarely stops.*

*And here is what made it so painful.*

*This wasn’t happening outside the church.*

*It was happening inside the church.*

*Spurgeon eventually withdrew from his own Baptist association because he believed truth was being traded for respectability.*

*And he warned that when churches trade truth for popularity,  
They may gain crowds —  
But they lose power.*

And that is exactly the kind of world Paul was warning Timothy about.

Paul is at the end of his life and we are getting close to the end of this letter.

And one of the most important pieces of advice Paul gives pastor Timothy is this...

### **Main Idea: Always Preach the Word.**

**Why?** Because God's Word isn't always what we want to hear, but it is certainly what we need to hear.

Let's follow Paul's logic as we move through this passage...

#### **1. Preach the Word (vs. 1-2)**

##### **2 Timothy 4:1 ESV**

*I charge you...*

In light of the God-breathed nature of the holy Scriptures and how profitable/valuable they are, Paul charges or exhorts Timothy to boldly communicate them whenever and wherever possible.

Paul's exhortation isn't some little half-hearted suggestion; it is a charge with the fullest weight Paul can give.

Look again at verse 1.

##### **2 Timothy 4:1 ESV**

*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:*

Do you feel the weight of Paul's charge?

*"in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus"*

He is appealing to the omnipresence of two of the three persons of the trinity.

Paul is pointing to the reality that our God is always watching. Always present. Always listening. And in light of this reality Timothy, I want you to faithfully preach His Word, that He wrote! Get it right, because the author is present every time you preach it.

Paul emphasizes one of the roles and responsibilities of God...

*“who is to judge the living and the dead”*

Why would Paul add this phrase to his exhortation?

To remind Timothy that Jesus Christ is not only our Savior, but also the judge of the world.

How is He the judge of the living?

To be clear, believers have already been judged and found to be righteous, not because of their own righteousness, but because Christ’s righteousness has been imputed or given to them through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

This is clearly stated in Paul’s letter to the Romans.

**Romans 8:1–4 ESV**

*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup> For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

There are three additional ways Christ Jesus will judge the living (believers in Christ) and the dead (those who reject Christ).

For the living or believers, we will all be judged, after we are caught up into Heaven with Jesus at what Paul calls the Judgement Seat of Christ

**2 Corinthians 5:10 ESV**

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.*

This is not a condemnatory judgment for Believers. That judgment was taken care of at the cross!

This is an evaluative judgment based on how you live your life as a Christian.

For the unbelievers there are the 2nd and 3rd judgments.

The sheep and goats’ judgment that separates believers (sheep) from unbelievers (goats). This is found in Matt 25:31-33

**Matthew 25:31–33 ESV**

*“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.*

This judgement is for entrance into the millennial kingdom.

The third judgement is the final judgment for unbelievers. This judgment is called “The Great White Throne judgment.

**Revelation 20:11–15 ESV**

*Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. <sup>13</sup> And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. <sup>14</sup> Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. <sup>15</sup> And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

So, Christ as judge is a real, sobering, and biblical reality that Christians and non christians must be made aware!

What is God’s tool for raising such awareness? Verse 2.

**2 Timothy 4:2 ESV**

*preach the word...*

God, in His infinite wisdom, has decided to use the foolishness of preaching to communicate not only God’s profound love available through faith in Christ, but also His impending judgment for all this who refuse to obey the gospel of peace.

**Preach - to announce, to herald.**

Paul solemnly exhorted Timothy to proclaim a message.

A profound message.

A life-giving message.

A message of rescue from eternal doom for all those that would respond to it by faith.

Paul tell Timothy not to simply preach any message, but to preach the WORD!

This is significant. Why preach the WORD? Because there is inherent power in the WORD because the WORD comes from an ALL-POWERFUL God!

When is Timothy to preach the word?

**2 Timothy 4:2 ESV**

*preach the word; be ready in season and out of season...*

In other words. Preach God's word when people want to hear it and when they do not want to hear it.

Why? Because hearing the Word of God preached enflames the heart of faith.

**Romans 10:14–17 ESV**

*How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? <sup>15</sup> And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" <sup>16</sup> But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" <sup>17</sup> So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

And our faith continues to grow as believers when we hear the word of God preached!

Paul does not want Timothy to quit preaching. He wants him to be faithful in this tool from God to reach people and disciple them in Christ.

What are the aspects of preaching that Timothy is to focus on?

He is to...

**Reprove** - To convict, to show to be wrong

**Rebuke** - to admonish strongly, with urgency, authority

**Exhort** - To aid, help, comfort, encourage.

And Timothy is to do this, not just with patience, but complete patience.

The word complete means "entire."

Timothy, don't allow the difficulties and frustrations of ministry cause you to give up on what God has called you to do!

Friends - It is even more urgent that we follow Paul's charge to Timothy today than when Paul first gave it.

Pulpits across this nation have exchanged expository preaching (pulling meaning from the text of Scripture and explaining it to the congregation) for a 20-minute TED Talk addressing felt needs or whatever else tickles the ears of those listening.

My holy responsibility is to communicate what God has communicated. He has communicated to us in His Holy Word. My job is to read His Word to you. Explain His Word to you, and help apply God's Word for you.

You are not saved and you do not grow because of my thoughts or opinions. I do not matter. No preacher of God's message does. We just convey the message - that's it.

*Imagine that you go to your mailbox and you grab the mail. You go inside and start reading your mail. Bill, bill, bill. But then you see a letter that you open up. It is from a lawyer informing you that a long lost relative has bequeathed you 50 million dollars from their estate. Wow!*

*Do you run to the post office and demand to see the mail delivery person who put that letter in your mailbox? NOPE!*

*They were just doing their job.*

And the job of the preacher is not to come up with a new message, but to preach a very old message and to do it faithfully, communicating the sense of the passage as accurately and clearly as possible.

They must preach the word! In season and out of season. They must be accurate.

Demand faithful preaching from this pulpit.

Demand faithful preaching from yourself.

As Paul tells Timothy to preach the Word in season and out of season, He must be prepared for life, out of season!

## **2. Even When They Don't Want the Word ! (vs. 3-4)**

### **2 Timothy 4:3-4 ESV**

*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, <sup>4</sup> and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.*

Isn't it interesting to think about the fact that humanity has been contacted by their Creator throughout history.

It may surprise you, but I have 15 ways in which God has taken the initiative to communicate with His creation.

**Creation** (general revelation) — Genesis 1:1; Psalm 19:1-4; Romans 1:19-20

**Conscience** (general revelation) — Romans 2:14-15

**Direct audible voice** — Genesis 3:8-10; Exodus 3:4; Deuteronomy 5:4

**Theophanies** (visible manifestations of God) — Genesis 18:1-2; Exodus 33:11

**The Angel of the LORD** — Genesis 16:7-13; Exodus 3:2-6; Judges 2:1-4

**Angelic messengers** — Genesis 19:1; Judges 6:11–12; Luke 1:26–28

**Dreams** — Genesis 20:3; Genesis 28:12; Matthew 1:20

**Visions** — Isaiah 6:1; Ezekiel 1:1; Daniel 7:1; Acts 9:10

**Prophets speaking God's words** — 2 Samuel 23:2; Jeremiah 1:9; Hebrews 1:1

**The Urim and Thummim** — Exodus 28:30; Numbers 27:21; 1 Samuel 28:6

**Casting lots** — Joshua 18:10; 1 Samuel 14:41–42; Acts 1:24–26

**Symbolic signs and miracles** — Exodus 4:1–5; 1 Kings 18:36–39; John 20:30–31

**The incarnation** (God speaking through the Son) — John 1:1, 14; Hebrews 1:1–2

**The Holy Spirit's revelation and guidance** — John 14:26; John 16:13; Acts 13:2

**Written Scripture** — Exodus 31:18; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20–21

Of course, God holy Word is His vehicle for the revelation of His mind to us in this age. All other means are obsolete. Peter tells us that in the Bible we have everything we need for life and godliness.

So God has painstakingly put together his Word over a 1500-year period. It speaks to every issue we face emotionally and spiritually. It has been proven to be true over and over.

And in light of this amazing communication gift from God there are people, MANY people, the MAJORITY of people who question it, dismiss it, and outright reject it.

Listen, you cannot separate Jesus from His Word.

Some people want a version of Jesus that affirms them but never confronts them, comforts them but never corrects them.

They speak warmly about Jesus while quietly dismissing the Bible, but that is not the Jesus of Scripture.

**Jesus said, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples” (John 8:31).**

You cannot love the living Word while rejecting the written Word, because the Bible is the faithful revelation of His heart, His mind, and His will. To follow Christ is to submit to His Word.

Nonetheless Paul promises Timothy that the time will come when people will not endure sound teaching.

In other words, they will not tolerate it. They will not permit it. They will not tolerate it.

Can you imagine the audacity of the creation telling the Creator - “Nah, we will not listen to you. We know better than you!”

The creation has no right to tell the Creator what to do! God has graciously given us His Word so we can be protected and so we can grow in godliness. Humanity should receive God Word with joyful and thankful hearts.

But instead, because of sin, humanity’s pride outranks God’s truth and so we opt for spiritual pabulum instead of life-giving, spiritual sustenance.

Sound teaching is a theme throughout the pastoral letters. Paul understood that many would become intolerant of teaching that is considered confrontative or demanding.

For example...

**2 Timothy 1:13–14 ESV**

*Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. <sup>14</sup> By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.*

**1 Timothy 1:9–10 ESV**

*understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, <sup>10</sup> the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine,*

**1 Timothy 6:3–5 ESV**

*If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, <sup>4</sup> he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, <sup>5</sup> and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.*

Notice what it says in verse 3?

**2 Timothy 4:3 ESV**

*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,*

What a phrase! They become in charge of what they hear.

They are not humble and submissive to the Word of God, but instead the only messages they will tolerate are humble and submissive to them.

Paul says a time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, and we are living in that time.

Instead of submitting to the Word, many now shop for voices that will submit to them.

If a church preaches repentance, they move on.

If a sermon confronts sin, they scroll past it.

With endless podcasts, livestreams, and reels, people can curate their own Christianity, choosing teachers who say what feels good and avoiding truth that calls them to change.

They are not asking, ***“What does God say?”***

They are asking, ***“Who agrees with me?”***

That is the danger of itching ears.

It replaces humble submission with personal preference, and when preference becomes the authority, truth is always the casualty.

And what is the result?

**2 Timothy 4:4 ESV**

*and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.  
Turn away means to outright reject. They reject listening to the truth.*

The LSB says

**2 Timothy 4:4 LSB**

*and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.*

Notice who is responsible here? They will turn their ears off. They will plug their ears to what God is saying. This sounds a lot like Romans 1:18ff

**Romans 1:18 ESV**

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.*

Paul goes even further in verse 4. Because of their unrighteous desires, they don't just ignore the truth, they suppress it.

They plug their ears so they do not have to hear it. This is willful ignorance.

The guilt of rejection rests squarely on their shoulders.

And when people turn away from the truth, they do not land in neutrality.

They turn to myths.

The myths they turned to in Paul and Timothy's day was already mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:3-4

**1 Timothy 1:3-4 ESV**

*As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, <sup>4</sup> nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.*

Don't teach "different doctrine" - doctrine means teachings. Don't teach anything that varies from the Word of God as revealed in the 66 books that make up the canon of God's Holy Scripture.

Here is a summary of what the ESV Study Bible says about "myths"...

*In the New Testament, "myths" refers to false, fanciful teachings that are untrue and often used to justify sinful behavior. Paul likely has in mind speculative interpretations of Old Testament stories and genealogies that led people away from truth. Instead of promoting God's saving plan or faithful stewardship of it, these false teachings produced empty speculation that distracted from advancing God's kingdom through faith in Christ.*

Today, we see this kind of practice specifically in progressive Christianity. Changing the Word of to accommodate my lifestyle and desires.

One modern example is how some progressive Christians handle biblical teaching on sexuality.

Instead of letting Scripture define God's design, they begin with cultural assumptions, like "love is love" or personal identity, and then reinterpret the Bible to fit that conclusion.

Clear passages such as Romans 1:26-27 or 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 are reframed as mistranslated, culturally outdated, or not really about what they plainly say.

In other words, instead of submitting their lives to the authority of God's Word, they reshape the meaning of God's Word to accommodate their lives.

This isn't just about sexuality.

It happens whenever we start with our preferences and then reshape Scripture to match.

Whether it's the authority of the Bible, the exclusivity of Christ, the reality of judgment, or the definition of sin, the pattern is the same: instead of letting the Word of God confront us, we edit the Word of God to comfort us.

If you reject the truth, everything else becomes a story you invent to explain life apart from the God of the Bible.

When truth is abandoned, fiction rushes in to take its place.

*“We do not sit in judgment over the Bible. The Bible sits in judgment over us.”*

— Kevin DeYoung, *Taking God at His Word* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014), p. 19

Make sure your pulpit and the teaching of your church preaches the Word even when there is a swell of opposition.

And, do the same in your life as well. You are a herald of the precious Gospel of Christ.

Paul is clear with Timothy - Always preach the Word, even when they don't want the Word.

Why?

### **3. Because Your Ministry is Rooted in the Word! (v. 5)**

#### **2 Timothy 4:5 ESV**

*<sup>5</sup> As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*

Paul brings everything back to Timothy: “As for you.”

Timothy, if you are going to stand on the Word, you must minister in a way that reflects the weight of the Word.

First, be sober-minded. Be self-controlled.

Ministry is a serious endeavor. It requires a clear-minded shepherd who understands where God is leading His church.

This is Jesus' church, and we must understand His **will** through His **Word**.

The last thing the church needs is a pastor who is out of control.

That doesn't mean joyless. It means he is faithful and focused.

But not only be sober-minded, you must **endure** suffering.

Faithful ministry always invites opposition. Why? Because truth creates a reaction.

Our culture has shifted.

Truth is labeled harmful.

Faithful voices are shamed or cancelled.

This is one way we suffer here.

But around the world, many believers are not **cancelled**, they are **killed**.

Remember this! Suffering for Christ is not a mark of failure. It is the most Christ-like thing you can do!

Our Savior suffered. So when we suffer for Him, we are walking in His footsteps.

**John 15:20 ESV**

*<sup>20</sup> Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.*

But Paul is not finished.

Faithful ministry is not only guarded and endured — it is proclaimed.

**“Do the work of an evangelist...”**

That raises the question: What is the work of an evangelist?

It is the intentional proclamation of the gospel for the purpose of planting and building of churches.

Paul is not telling Timothy to leave pastoral ministry and become a traveling evangelist.

He is telling a pastor to keep evangelism central.

Do the WORK of an evangelist!

In other words:

Yes, we preach and teach the Word to believers.

But we also proclaim the gospel to unbelievers.

A pastor rooted in the Word cannot ignore lost people.

Why? Because the Word he preaches is a saving Word.

**Romans 1:16 ESV**

*<sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

The gospel is power!

The gospel raises the dead!

The gospel converts the soul!

The gospel makes all things new!

And Paul is telling Timothy,

Don't just **GUARD** the truth.

You must **GIVE** the truth.

Don't just **DEFEND** the gospel.

**DECLARE** the gospel.

A **Word-rooted** ministry is always a **gospel-speaking** ministry.

And this is important.

Churches can slowly lose their way.

We can become Bible people who love **doctrine**, love **theology**, love **depth**, and slowly forget about lost people.

We can become **protectors** of truth who stop **proclaiming** truth.

But Paul will not let Timothy do that.

And he will not let us do that.

If we are **ROOTED** in the Word, we must be **REACHING** the lost.

Listen, church family.

Evangelism is not an option.

Evangelism is a biblical responsibility.

Certainly some are gifted **evangelists**.

But we all are called **witnesses**.

**Acts 1:8 ESV**

*...you will be my witnesses...*

Now Paul gives the final charge.

Fulfill your ministry.

That word fulfill means:

Carry it out fully.

Complete it.

Finish it well.

Timothy, don't start strong and fade.

Don't drift.

Don't coast.

Don't quit.

Finish what God called you to do.

This is deeply personal.

Paul knows he is about to die, and he is passing the baton.

Just a few verses later he will say:

*"I have fought the good fight... I have finished the race..."*

Paul is soon finished.

Now Timothy must finish and finish well.

And one day, so must we.

A Word-saturated church must be a gospel-speaking church.

If we love this Book, we must love the **souls** this Book came to save.

Every one of us has a ministry.

You may not stand behind a pulpit, but if you belong to Christ, you have an assignment.

And the call of this verse is simple:

Fulfill your ministry!

Finish well, Timothy!

If your life and ministry are rooted in the Word, this verse calls you to three things:

Be steady in your character - Stay clear-minded.

Be strong in suffering - Endure hardship.

Be faithful in your mission - Proclaim the gospel.

Finish your race.

## **Conclusion**

Paul wanted Timothy to be a faithful communicator of the the Word of God in season and out of season. When it was accepted and when it was rejected.

Regardless of the people's response, the Word of God **MUST** be preached!

Why does faithful, Spirit-filled, Word saturated preaching matter? Why is this so important a task? Well, first and foremost it is commanded by God. And if it is a command of God, God must have a reason for having us preach his truth.

And it is this...

**Romans 10:17 ESV**

*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

God uses the foolishness of preaching to open hearts of faith.

My job, my joy is to preach the Word. What a privilege I have been given.

My challenge for you this week is the same that Paul gave Timothy...

Preach the Word to someone.

Do the work of an evangelist and share the gospel with someone this week.

They may want to hear it, they may not. Your job is to herald. Your job is to communicate.

Your job is not to save. God will handle that. You cannot be responsible for their response, all you are responsible for is your faithfulness to the task.