

*Preach the Word, Paul's Dying Words (Ezekiel 33:30-33; 2 Timothy 4:1-22)*

We have been journeying through the Pastoral Epistles which includes 2 Timothy. We are now in the final chapter of 2 Timothy, which is chapter 4. In chapter 3 and part of 4 of 2 Timothy Paul wrote about the Scriptures. Last week we talked about the authority of the Scriptures. Today, I want to talk about the Scriptures in our worship service.

Every week at Bethel, and most other churches what happens? What happens that we all have in common? Most all churches have a sermon, right? We all have some form of *preaching*.

Did you know that some churches have just a 10 minute sermon? Now, I am volunteering that information to you, so do not go getting any idea.

Did you know that some churches have a 20 minute sermon? Some churches have a 30 minute sermon and some 45 minutes, but some preachers preach for over an hour. Some preach until they know that God has told them to stop.

I remember like it was yesterday, I was in a course at Indiana Wesleyan University. The course was New Testament Survey. The professor, Dr. David Smith, shared about a preaching tour he was on in Mexico. He went to a small village church. The church was in an area that was almost, if not, a garbage area, or at least what we would think of as a junk yard. He preached for 45 minutes or so, what he thought was a lengthy sermon. Then he went back to the pastor's house and they had coffee. They then went back to the church and the local church pastor preached for a significant time period. When I heard that story I was amazed at the different cultural views of a worship service's length and the preaching. I must admit that during the time period in which I heard that example I often was watching the time during the worship service.

Today we are going to look at 2 Timothy 4. This chapter includes Paul's dying words to his child in the faith. Paul gives Timothy a charge to preach the Word. In fact, Paul charges Timothy to preach the Word regardless of what the people might want instead.

Let's read 2 Timothy 4 verses 1-5 and then I have some ideas to talk about from this passage.

**Read 2 Timothy 4:1-5:**

*4 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: 2 Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. 3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*

- I. Paul's dying words: the context: First let's talk about the context of this passage for a moment.
  - a. Notice this is the final chapter of 2 Timothy. We will not be reading the rest of the chapter but if you were to read the rest of the chapter you would see that Paul is prepared to die a martyr's death. What does that mean? I wonder if you remember the last thing you may have heard from a loved one. I wonder if you cherish certain memories and certain

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conversation you had with someone as you both knew they were soon to pass away. If so, I am sure those words and those conversations are very important.

- b. These may be Paul's final words to Timothy.
  - c. Final words are very important. This case is no different.
- II. Now, let me take a moment and share some thoughts from the passage itself.
- a. Look, Paul says to Timothy that he is charging him. Paul is giving Timothy a special exhortation. He is giving him a charge and this charge actually happens to be so very important, so important that he is calling on God and Christ Jesus along with his own words. I read the following this past week:
    - b. "An oath sworn by a deity or deities was considered especially binding and dangerous to break; in the same way, a charge witnessed by a deity or deities was sacred and inviolable. A broken oath would be avenged by the god whose name was violated; for Jewish people and Christians, the ultimate judgment was in the coming day of the Lord." (IVP Bible backgrounds Commentary)
    - c. In this case the oath is especially binding as Jesus and God the Father, the true triune God is called into this charge or command.
    - d. Paul now writes "Preach the Word." In fact, Paul tells Timothy to be prepared "in season and out of season." This basically means to be ready all of the time. To preach means to proclaim. This is not simply the idea of talking about the Word, but more to proclaim the word. This carries the idea of a town crier going around proclaiming news.
      - 1. Now look what preaching includes:
        - a. Correction: some translations will say "reprove." This means a soft correction
        - b. Rebuke: this is a sharp correction. Do we want to go to the doctor and be told that everything is okay when it is not? No, we want the Truth.
        - c. Encouragement or exhortation.
        - d. Instruction: Teach: Did you know that a recent study shows that 87% of people (in the survey) want to hear the Bible taught in depth in church?
        - e. And all this is to be done with patience
          - i. Let's apply this.
          - ii. I must ask am I ready to be convicted and corrected through the Word of God proclaimed in preaching? Are you?
          - iii. Am I ready to be instructed, to learn?
          - iv. Am I ready to be encouraged? Many will say yes.
          - v. The first question is the hard one. We don't like to be corrected. Interesting that Paul uses two words, one for correction and one for a sharp correction.

- vi. When you are convicted during a sermon don't take it personal as an attack from the preacher. We preachers are not that good. It is God convicting you and that is a good thing. God is shaping you into who He wants you to be. I know you don't think you are perfect. Listen to this:

Heb 4:12-13

*For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

(from New International Version)

We preach God's Word and God's Word is convicting. Next, Paul gives an illustration of why we must preach God's Word with instruction.

**Read verses 3-4 with me:** *3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.*

- e. People will want what their itching ears want to hear.
- f. I remember I was at a seminar on preaching in English when multiple languages are present and people are present who don't speak English as their primary language. Another pastor and New Testament scholar shared that he was preaching through an interpreter in another country. He began to tell a joke and guess what? The interpreter stopped interpreting, why? The interpreter was trying to "save his face." The audience didn't want to hear a joke; they wanted to hear the Scriptures.
- g. Now, I have no problem with a few jokes in a sermon and I am sure that you don't mind that either, but it is interesting to think of the difference in cultures.
- h. But sometimes we do want to be entertained, right?
- i. Look with me at another passage:

- i. Ezekiel 33:30-33

<sup>30</sup> *"As for you, son of man, your people are talking together about you by the walls and at the doors of the houses, saying to each other, 'Come and hear the message that has come from the LORD.'* <sup>31</sup> *My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to hear your words, but they do not put them into practice. Their mouths speak of love, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. <sup>32</sup> Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice.*

<sup>33</sup> *"When all this comes true—and it surely will—then they will know that a prophet has been among them."*

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- j. It seems as though Ezekiel was preaching, but in reality they weren't even following his preaching. They just wanted the music. They didn't do what the preacher said. Jesus did say, "If you love me keep my commandments (John 14:15).
- III. So, I wonder, what do you do after the Word of God has been proclaimed? What do I do? This passage has an application for pastors and for the congregation.
- a. We can all see from this passage that pastors and church leaders are called to preach, we are called to proclaim. We are not called to proclaim the sports scores, we are not called to proclaim the political news, we are not called to proclaim a nice story, or even a nice joke. We are called to proclaim the Word of God, including the Gospel.
  - b. I am accountable to God for this, I will be judged according to how well I preach God's Word (James 3:1). I will be judged according to how seriously I take this task. I will be judged by God if I simply look for some video clips, stories and songs to fill up the time.
  - c. But you, as a Christian can encourage this. You know what else? It is very important that you analyze yourself to make sure that you are not simply looking for entertainment. It is important that you analyze yourself to make sure that you simply are not looking for some good music. It is important that you analyze yourself to make sure that you are not looking for what your itching ears want to hear.
  - d. Then, it is important that we are all eager to live by God's Word. We love God, do what His Word says.
  - e. Psalm 119:10-11: live like the Psalmist: I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. 11 I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

In College at Cedarville University my preaching professor shared that I prays that he will preach in this way:

Lord Help me to preach in a way that is 5 ingredients:

1. Word Filled:

2Tim 4:2: Preach the Word. Heb 4:12: The Word of God is sharper than a two edged sword, etc..... the Bible is alive and penetrating, more powerful than my arguments, training, etc. What I say must be drawn from Scripture.

Isaiah 55:10-11: God's Word doesn't return to Him void. Romans 10:17: Faith comes from hearing and hearing from the Word of God. Missionary said, "Let the Word of God, do the Work of God.". Donna (someone)

2. Christ centered: Luke 24:25-27

Christ began at Moses and all the prophets He explained to them Himself in the Scriptures. "The Bible is filled with Christ so should our sermons be."

2 Cor 4:5: We Preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord and Him crucified.

"Take a text and make a bee line for Christ." Charles Spurgeon

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You can't impress people with yourself and your Savior at the same time.

### 3. Need Meeting: John 2:24-25

Christ new people's needs. The end of Chapter 2. meet needs in preaching. 2Peter 1:3: Help meet people's needs. "Purpose of preaching is not just to inform but to change lives." God's beyond the classroom. Virtually every book in the Bible was to meet a need. Real people who had real needs.

### 4. Holy Spirit Empowered: Acts 4:31:

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God with Boldness.

1Cor 2:1-5: Paul dependent on the Holy Spirit when Preaching. The Holy Spirit gives a sense of clear recollection to recall study and planning and speak with boldness. Like a Spiritual High. Indescribable.

### 5. Self Effacing: Acts 12:21-23

2 Cor 4:5

1 Cor 2:1-5

John 3:30: "He must increase and I must decrease" In order for Him to increase I must decrease."

The less you say about yourself the better. Whether you are bragging about yourself or apologizing for your weaknesses. Don't always do this but not regularly, if so put yourself in a negative like. If people want to know more about you they can find out later. Even if you are a guest speaker, let the church introduce you. You really want people to be impressed with the Word of God and Jesus Christ. Whether they remember me is inconsequential.

Adapted and almost the same as Dr. Warren gave us in Homiletics Fall of 2005 Cedarville University. Cedarville, OH

**A major part of preaching God's Word is preaching the Gospel. The Word of God and the Gospel bring us God's peace. Did you notice the choir anthem:**

Remember Dr. David Smith, my professor from Indiana Wesleyan University. He was on that preaching tour in Mexico? He also shared with our class about his pastorate in Cleveland. He said that in Cleveland there are two religions and one of them is football. On his first Sunday at a church where he served as pastor, he was getting up to preach and one of the board chairs said, "Remember, kick offs at 1:00."

What a statement! But what are we here for? Are we here to be entertained? I think not. We are here to worship the Lord and to hear from the Lord. We are here to be drawn closer to God and God leads us closer to Him through the Biblical Preaching of His Word. This includes: correcting and sometimes that means conviction.

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**Prayer**