

Preach the Word

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[0 : 00] So Paul's final word to Timothy reflects the very first mark that we saw of the early church in Jerusalem, an unwavering commitment to the word of God. So then last week, I noted that God's people are a gathering people. What I want to emphasize to you today is that God's people have the teaching of the Bible at the very core of everything that they do, and it structures and informs everything that they believe. If Acts 2 says they're a gathering people, 2 Timothy 4 says we are a bookish people. We are a biblical people. And of course, we understand the scriptures are the only path to a healthy church and to fruitful discipleship, and forsaking them for any other focus or cause will inevitably lead to the judgment of God. And why is that? Why is it that we should consider the Bible and the scriptures to be so important to us? Why is it that they must be at the core of all that we do and believe? Well, the scriptures carry God's power. God's word carries with it God's power. Psalm 33, 6, by the word of the Lord, the heavens were made. By the breath of his mouth, all of their hosts, even from the very beginning before man is ever created, we see that the word of God has a unique power of God that forms and creates all that we see and all that we enjoy today. And then he takes that power, and in his gracious love to us, he gives to us the written word that contains that very power. 2 Peter 1, no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. So then what we see in the power of God's word in creation, God then so graciously using human instruments gives us his word here, a same word that carries the same power, infused and carried along by the power of the Holy Spirit. Why wouldn't that be at the core of everything that we do and believe? We see that God's word is the means through which God's spirit does his work in and through us. In that passage of Ephesians 6 on the armor of God, remember when Paul gets to the very end, he says, and take the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. It's the only offensive weapon listed in the armor of God. It's the weapon of the spirit, the Bible, the scriptures, that God does his work in us, that God does his work through us. God's word is true. Proverbs 30, 5 and 6, every word of God proves true. He is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar. It's authoritative. Psalm 119, 9 through 11, how can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart, I seek you. Let me not wonder from your commandments.

[3 : 47] I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. God's word carries his power. He graciously gives it in the written word. It is the sword of the spirit that God does his work in us and then God does his word through us. And then we can have confidence that what we have is true.

It's the very words of God. And by nature of being God's word, it is authoritative for us. It is be the guide of all of our lives. We are not to come to it to discern what is good for us and what isn't good for us. No, we come to it and we take everything by faith that it says. It is our authority. And it's an eternal authority. Isaiah 40 and verse 8, the grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. It's God's plan for our salvation and for our sanctification.

Romans chapter 10, verse 17, faith comes by hearing. Hearing comes through the word of Christ. Jesus prayed in John 17, 17, sanctify them with thy truth. Your word is truth. It's only through the Bible that we can know the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation for all who will believe. David wrote in Psalm 19 that the scriptures are more to be desired than gold, even much fine gold, sweeter than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. So essential is the Bible to our spiritual health that Jesus himself says in Matthew 4, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. So what is to be at the very core of who we are? What is to be at the very core of all that we do? It must be the scriptures alone. It is only through the scriptures

that we can know God.

And it is only through the scriptures that we can know his son. And it is only through the scriptures that we can know the gospel. And it is through the scriptures that God accomplishes his purposes in and through our lives. And Jesus's own statement is bread will only get you physical life, but you'll find spiritual life in no other place than in the very words of God.

[6 : 26] Too many Christians are enslaved to their own thoughts and feelings when they should be feasting daily on the truth of God's word. Too many of us coming to the word saying, no, I don't like that very much. Or no, that doesn't make a lot of sense to me when we should be coming to the word humbly in submission to the fact that it is what God has given to us. Too many churches pressing forward in their own passions and causes, completely ignorant of the scriptures that make one wise unto salvation. There's a reason that Paul's final words to Timothy was a charge to preach the word of God.

Because Bible teaching is essential to a healthy church, but it's also the church's greatest temptation to abandon it. So let's examine this challenge to Timothy and consider the role that Bible teaching is to play in our church. The first thing I want you to see here is the solemn charge.

The solemn charge. Look again at verse one. 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 in his kingdom.

The solemnity of this charge is in the fact that it is divinely issued and will be divinely judged. It would be one thing if Paul was passing along his personal challenge to his young protege, but Paul does not invoke his own authority in Timothy's life here. He invokes the very presence of God in issuing this charge. Before ever even describing the task itself, Paul calls to Timothy's mind the reality of Christ's lordship over his life and over his ministry in Ephesus.

This wasn't just Paul's wish for his colleague. It was the divine commission of the almighty God and the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a charge that came directly from Christ, and it is to Jesus that Timothy and every other pastor since will give an account when he returns.

[9 : 00] That's Paul's point here in verse one. Timothy, before I even tell you what to do, you should know that this is coming from Christ himself, and Christ himself will judge you in the end at his appearing as to whether or not you fulfilled this calling that is not coming from me, Timothy. This is coming from the throne of God. Calvin said, he makes special mention of the judgment of Christ because he will require of us, who are his representatives, a stricter account of our failures in his ministry. It echoes James' words in James chapter three.

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. The writer of Hebrews says something similar in Hebrews 13. He speaks of spiritual leaders in the church that they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will have to give an account to God for that. And how is it that God has charged spiritual leaders to keep watch over your soul?

Not through their eloquence, not through their style, not through their money, not through their giftedness, but through the word of God.

Pastors will be judged for how they lead and whether or not God's word is the foundation of how they shepherd God's people.

But I think it's also true that congregations will be judged for how they follow and whether or not God's word is the foundation of how they live and function as a people.

[11 : 02] In this series, everything that we're going through right now is so important. I think it's actually more important to me today than it was even three weeks ago when we began. And I'm beginning to see the significance of why we need to be studying some of these things that we are right now.

Because we will stand before God one day as his church. This is not a game. This is not that any of you treat it that way.

This is not a thing that we do lightly. Our responsibility together as a people is a God-given responsibility.

There is a divine charge given to us to acknowledge who we are in Christ and to endeavor to please and honor him in the way that he has called us to do so.

This charge doesn't only belong to pastors. In one sense, it's issued to the entire church, which is to take responsibility for itself and its leadership.

[12 : 13] Jesus, our Lord, Paul says here in verse 1, he sees us now and he will judge us then. At his appearing in his kingdom, we will give an account for how we obeyed his command.

Therefore, let us together as a people for just a moment feel the weight of this charge. First, as it settles on me as your pastor.

And then the weight of responsibility, that that then settles on your shoulders and on your hearts as the people of this church. Look again at verse 2.

Here's the charge itself. Preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season.

The divine charge is straightforward. Timothy, Paul says, just preach the Bible. Do it when it's easy and do it when it's hard.

[13:24] Do it when it's convenient. Do it when it's not convenient. Preach the Bible when people love you for it. Preach the Bible when people hate you for it.

Preach the word, Timothy. In every season, in every circumstance, this is your charge. Preach the Bible. And I want you to understand the nature of this task that Paul is charging Timothy to fulfill. To preach. The Greek word underlying this is *keruso*. It means to proclaim aloud or to herald. This is not preaching about the Bible.

It is passionately proclaiming the very words of God as they are given in the Bible. Preach the word, Timothy. *Keruso*, proclaim it aloud.

Be a herald for your king. Timothy, herald the message. Not your message, Timothy. Your king's message. Go to the people that need to hear from the king.

[14:35] Sound the trumpet and cry with a loud voice. Preach the word, Timothy. The simple command brings into focus two potential errors.

One is a form of preaching that is ultimately disconnected from the Bible. It may be passionate and it may be motivating and it may even contain the occasional reference to a verse from the Bible. But when you really begin to discern its contents, it's clear that the individual is preaching their own message and using the Bible when it's convenient to hopefully give a little support to what they really want to say.

It's preaching in a sense. It's proclaiming something, but it's not actually proclaiming the Bible. It's at this point that David and Goliath becomes a story about how you can persevere against that arrogant boss and slay the giant of overeating that taunts you from the kitchen or whatever it may be.

But when we preach motivational and passionate sermons that are disconnected from the true meaning of the Scripture, that's not actual preaching. That's an error.

[15:51] It's preaching in a sense, but it's ultimately, it's kind of disconnected from the Bible. That's one potential error. But then there's another error here that's a little more subtle. The second is a lesson on the Bible that doesn't really involve preaching.

It may be a thoroughly stimulating discussion of the Scripture, but it's absent of any passionate plea for the hearer to respond to the message of God.

And in this case, the hearer learns everything there is to know about the Bible, but they never know or love the God of the Bible.

They can argue effectively their theological positions, but the truths of the Bible have never moved from their head to their heart. Or Paul says, Timothy, just preach the word.

Take the message. Because the preacher's task is not to engage with the text for intellectual stimulation or emotional motivation.

[17:03] Although both of these things may be true about preaching. That is not the aim or the goal. He is to be a messenger that declares the message of his king to the people to which he has been sent.

And this should affect the way you hear it as a church. And the way you seek it as a church and the way you crave it as a church.

What is it that you desire Sunday by Sunday when you come? Is it just that you want somebody to pump me up? Do you want somebody to just dig in and really get me questioned everything that I've ever believed because somehow that's stimulating?

Or do you want somebody to just tell you, just bring out the book and tell me what God has to say to me? Jared, I don't want to hear what you have to say. I want to hear what God has to say.

My job's not to be the chef in the kitchen in that sense. I'm the servant commissioned to take the message that God has prepared to a people that need to eat.

[18:13] And of course, preaching isn't always convenient. It's not always joyfully received. But the charge is to be fulfilled in all seasons, in all circumstances.

And if I'm ashamed of God's message or if I attempt to alter it before it ever gets to your ears, my preaching will be powerless and our church will fail.

It may grow, but it will ultimately fail because there's no power in what I have to say. The power is not carried through my words, but through God's words.

Preach the word. Look at the second part of verse two. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with complete patience and teaching. This is not a command for the pastor to drive his people with a heavy hand. It's not the idea of a spirit of lordship over people. That's not what Paul is commending here. In fact, the Bible tells us that that's not actually the way pastors are to lead.

[19 : 20] First Peter chapter five, elders are to exercise oversight not by domineering over those in your charge, but by being examples to the flock.

And how is it that a pastor is foremost an example to the flock? By delivering the message that God has given in his word. Kent Hughes said, if you enjoy reproof and rebuking, you're probably not fit for the ministry.

It requires that you have no interior joy in setting others straight. But if you don't do it, you are a shirker of the responsibility to which you've been given.

Reproof, rebuke, and exhortation is what the word of God does as it's preached. Hebrews chapter four, the word of God is living.

It's active. It's sharper than any two-edged sword. It pierces to the division of soul and spirit, the joints and marrow. And it discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

[20 : 34] And as we understand the scriptures, our hearts and our intentions by nature are for ourselves. And then when the word of God comes in, it's living and active because it is the sword of the Holy Spirit.

It's the way that God's Spirit does his work in us and does his work through us. This reproof and rebuke and exhortation, this is the action of the Spirit through the word. And the pastor's job is to take the word and proclaim it to the people so that the word does the rebuking and the word does the exhortation and the word does the reproof.

Second Timothy three, you can see it just a few verses ahead in verse 16. Paul says, all scripture is breathed out by God and it's profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and for training that the man of God may be complete and equipped for every good work.

This is the work of the word and when the message of God is delivered, it may come through as if it is rebuke from a man but the purpose of preaching is not for me to run your life.

It is to deliver the message and let the word do its work. it's not my job to control your life. It's my job to preach the word and I'm more than willing to counsel you and to help you in any way that I can possibly be of help to you but it is the scriptures not my preferences that must dictate your decisions in life.

[22 : 08] that's why Paul wrote to Timothy that his manner must be one of patience because as we all know people don't always listen and if you have no patience you won't make it very long but then he also said that his method must be teaching teaching.

teaching it's a reflection back to the charge. Preach the word Timothy be patient with people as you do this that should be your manner but then your method is just help them understand the word and then let the word do its work.

My call is to faithfully preach the Bible so that your life will be governed by the authority of Christ and if I do that the right way it will come with plenty of reproofs and rebuke and exhortation from God's spirit.

Now Dick Lucas I just want to show you this before we move on. Dick Lucas was a pastor for many years and he was the rector of St. Helens Bishopgate in London for many years and he used to teach these lessons on preaching and he would draw this diagram on the board for his students I think we have it up here you can see it.

He would just draw a straight line across the board and he'd say the straight line represents the scriptures. And then he'd draw an arrow pointing up above the line and then he'd draw an arrow pointing down below the line.

[23 : 39] The arrow going up represented legalism. It was when preachers would take the scriptures and then they would add something to it in order to burden the people with their own preferences or their own style or their own message or their own opinions.

It would take the scriptures and add to it and that would produce legalism in the church. And he said and then there's the opposite in where people will fall far short of the scriptures. They'll abandon the scriptures to only preach their opinions and that will ultimately descend into liberalism.

And then he would look at the preachers and he would say men our job is to hold the line. To hold the line. That's my job in this church. It's to hold the line.

That's your job as a people. To hold the line. It's not just a charge for me. The weight of this settles on each of us as we minister to one another and as we hold Jared accountable to holding the line. Preach the word. It's a solemn charge. Number two we see a prophetic warning. Prophetic warning. Look at verse three. For the time is coming Timothy when people will not endure sound teaching. [25 : 00] Now why do you think Paul used endure instead of enjoy? Because he could have very easily said Timothy there's coming a time when people are no longer going to enjoy sound teaching.

But that's not the word that he uses. He says no there is coming a time they're not going to endure this anymore. Why? Because when the message of God is delivered by the man of God inevitably what proceeds out of the mouth of the preacher will regularly be characterized by reproof and rebuke and exhortation.

And that's not the kind of thing that we naturally enjoy. That's the kind of thing that we must humbly endure. Remember Paul isn't talking about people outside the church right now.

He's talking about the people in the church. And he told Timothy that there would inevitably be people in the church at Ephesus who would no longer put up with the teaching that had a corrective element.

Now it would be one thing if they were tired of Timothy's corrective personality. If all he could do was find something wrong with them and he was always harping on all these little things.

[26 : 13] That would be one thing for them to be frustrated by. But the idea here is that professing Christians will sometimes reject the very word of God as it's preached.

This is not Timothy presenting himself in an inappropriate way. This is people getting tired of hearing the message that God has determined for them to hear. And they will no longer endure that.

Paul's warnings meant to encourage Timothy. Remain faithful to the task even when church members are tired of the Bible's message. Timothy, people won't always like it.

But whatever you do, preach the word. Just preach the word. Look again at verse 3. But having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions.

So Paul went on to say that when churches get tired of Bible preaching, they'll start looking for leaders who will tell them what they'd rather hear. And we may at first think, well, we would never do that.

[27 : 24] Of course we would never do that. We may do that more often than what we think we do. Think about when you're about to make a big decision for your life. If you're like me, you typically first go to the people that you know or at least think are going to be on your side, don't you?

Don't you? Don't you? Think about it in the lives of our children when we watch them. It doesn't take them very long to figure out which parent is better to ask in which situation.

If one's more lenient than the other typically or if they know that that dad gets really distracted during the baseball game, if I ask him during the baseball game, I'm probably going to get whatever I want or whatever and they know they know where to go.

We have those people in our lives or they know the parent that they can tell when they get in trouble with school. Because that's the parent that usually always finds an issue with the teacher before they find the issue with the student.

You know what I mean? We know how to work the system. And we do it all the time in our lives. And if we aren't careful, we'll start to only listen to pastors who will scratch our particular political, moral, and theological itches.

[28 : 39] Instead of seeking for someone to be faithful to the word, we'll prioritize our passions. We'll prioritize our opinions, secondary or tertiary issues.

And when a Christian or a church abandons a commitment to the Bible in this way, they will inevitably find someone who makes the Bible say what they're most comfortable with it saying. wasn't this the big issue in the real heat of the COVID season and the elections and all the things back a couple years ago, not to give you any trauma all of a sudden if you haven't thought about

that in a while.

Wasn't this a part of the issue in many churches who were dividing and fighting? I know people personally who left churches because they were so convinced during that time that all of this was pointing to an in-time type of situation.

They believed the vaccination was in some way equivalent to the mark of the beast. And because their pastor wouldn't push Donald Trump or wouldn't push anti-vaccination or whatever it was, they left the church and they found them a pastor who every Sunday stands up and talks about all of his political things on his soapboxes.

[29 : 59] Under the guise of Christianity and scriptural things, we actually end up abandoning the word to find someone who will suit our passions.

Even if our passions are in line with the word, we've left the word to actually pursue our own agenda. Itching ears. Verse 4, in doing this they will turn away from listening to the truth and will wander off into myths.

So the result of itching ears is that people abandon the truth. It won't be that they always abandon truthful things or truthful ideas, but they will turn away from the authority of the Bible in search for those truthful ideas and in support of those truthful things unless it happens to be convenient for their particular position.

people turn away from their focus. Their focus will turn from the word of God to sources with no divine authority. The equivalent of myths. Three ways I think these myths show up all the time.

One, I think people get caught up in sensational presentation. Sensational presentation. This is when people turn away from the supremacy of the scripture to ecstatic experiences.

[31 : 18] experiences. They don't really care what the preacher says so long as he says it in a way that is, quote, powerful. That's the word we hear all the time. Man, that service was so powerful.

Nobody preached the Bible, but man, was it powerful. Well, that's not the power of the spirit. That's the power of ecstatic experience, sensational presentation.

And let me tell you, we pastors with particular personalities know how to do this. We know we're, part of our gifting is to communicate.

And we know how to work a crowd. And we know how to build people up to a specific thing.

Musicians are just as good at it. We know how to work a crowd and give you an experience that you will enjoy.

And if we're not careful, we'll abandon the truth for the experience. And we can't do that. That's a myth. Some are blinded by moral degradation.

[32 : 16] More and more, people are turning away from the Bible because they don't appreciate God's position on marriage or on sex or on gender or on abortion or on whatever the issue is that you want to talk about.

Rather than to submit to God's truth, they turn away from it. Because there's always going to be churches that will accommodate immoral practice and immoral belief.

They are fraught with churches like that in our area. It wouldn't be hard to find. But then there's some that are distracted by useless speculation.

These are the people that just want to fiddle around with stuff that doesn't matter. A good preaching service to them would be when the pastor stands up and poses some kind of question.

Like, if God is our powerful, can he create a rock that is too heavy for him to lift? And let's think about that for a few minutes. It doesn't matter.

[33 : 26] It's senseless stuff. It's over-obsessing about end times thing and how you think it's all going to come out. I'm not saying that we don't need to study those things.

I'm just saying some people get so distracted by it that they end up actually leaving the word in the process. Wanting to suit their own passions, professing Christians will turn away from the Bible to find someone who will scratch their itch.

Let's not be a people that are just looking for someone to scratch our itch. Give me somebody that preaches the word. Finally, we'll be finished. A faithful minister.

A faithful minister. Verse 5. As for you, Timothy, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

So rounding out his final instruction, Paul lists four things that should be true of Timothy's pastoral leadership in the church. And all four of these things fall underneath the charge of preaching the Bible, and they confront the temptation to give in to those with itching ears.

[34 : 35] That's what these four things are really about. It's a summarization. First thing he says, always be sober-minded. Now don't be confused. Typically when we hear sober or sober-minded, in our day we immediately think to something having to do with substance abuse or alcohol.

That's not what Paul's getting at here. I actually like the NIV's rendering in this. It says keep your head. Keep your head in all situations. Be focused, Timothy.

We might say in our day, whatever happens, don't lose your mind. Don't give in to the anxieties. Don't give in to the fears.

Even in the face of criticism and persecution, Timothy, the pastor's task is to stay focused on preaching the Bible. Just preach the word. Stay focused.

Keep your head, Timothy. Then he says, endure suffering, which was a familiar instruction to the New Testament church because early Christians endured so much suffering and martyrdom for their faith.

[35 : 44] Even in the context of this letter, Paul is writing from a prison cell where he knows he's about to be killed. Certainly, Timothy would have faced the anxieties that come along with that.

But let's not too quickly leave the context of the text. Surely, part of this suffering that Paul is warning about includes the criticism of those in the church with itching ears, refusing to endure the sound teaching of the Bible.

Even when his own people turned on him, it was Timothy's task to remain faithful. Endure the suffering, Timothy. Do the work of an evangelist, Paul says.

He didn't intend for Timothy to begin an itinerant ministry or to set up a tent for a camp meeting in the middle of town. That's not what he meant by this. He just meant preach the gospel.

To preach the Bible in such a way that sinners are rebuked for their sins and called to believe and follow Jesus Christ. In fact, the gospel of Jesus is to infuse the entire meal of God's word.

[36 : 56] That's the reason we preach. It's the reason we gather. It is the gospel that has made us who we are. It is the gospel that calls us to be what God wants us to be.

Preach the gospel, Timothy. Finally, he summarizes it. Fulfill your ministry. In other words, Timothy, just do what you've been called to do.

And what was he called to do? Preach the word. Preach it in the pulpit. Preach it as you visit with people in their homes.

Preach it as you sit over coffee with someone. Preach it in your counseling sessions. Preach it on the golf course. Preach it at lunch. Preach it whenever you can.

Timothy, your job is to teach the word. Stay focused on the Bible wherever you are. That's how you'll shepherd your people. He wasn't called to fulfill superfluous expectations that are so often levied onto church staffs.

[38 : 01] That's not what he was called to do. He was called to preach the word in all circumstances. Now, a healthy church will pray for and seek leaders who will be committed to the task of preaching the word.

and then it will encourage those leaders in their task and hold them accountable to that task.

I know you may be thinking, you know, this is supposed to be a series on what we're supposed to be doing as a church and this seems like a message that probably should be directed toward pastors. But I already told you this charge is more than just to Timothy.

This would have been read to the whole church. If the pastor is to be a preacher of the word, doesn't that mean that the church is to be a people of the word?

If Lakeside Bible Church is going to mature in God's grace and grow in spiritual health, mustn't we remain unwaveringly committed to the word of God?

[39 : 11] And when I say growth, I hope you understand what I mean. I mean growth in the spirit, growth in our call, growth in spiritual health.

And if God sees fit to build that in some other way, that's God's business. But if we're going to be what God has called us to be, whether we're 20 people or whether we're 200 people, it's going to have to come through an unwavering commitment to the word of God.

It needs to be at the very core of all that we do. It needs to be the very foundation of everything that we teach and say we believe.

And we need to ensure that those who lead us remain faithful to their call. We don't need to be a people with itching ears who turn away from God's truth even to truthful things, but find their authority in the Bible.

And then we must stand fast. Stand fast on these things. Study them faithfully. Talk of them. Teach our children.

[40 : 21] And then let them be our guide. Thank you.