

Text: 2 Timothy 4:1-5

Title: Preach!

Truth: The pastor must faithfully preach the truth despite antipathy from the culture.

Date/Location: Sunday September 25, 2016 at FBC

Introduction

The passage is structured like a sandwich, with the bread as Timothy's responsibilities in verses 1-2 and 5. The middle of the sandwich describes those who will reject sound teaching in verses 3-4. This is one sandwich with good bread but terrible contents!

I. A Solemn Charge to Preach the Word, verses 1-2

A. Solemn Charge. Paul issues Timothy a command—but this is no normal command. This is made consciously, openly, and fully before God the Father and God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. If there is any doubt about the One spoken of, Paul identifies Him as the judge of all people, alive and dead. His second coming and kingdom rule are further reasons for Timothy to obey this charge—because he will face the Lord as judge, in part as to whether he carried out his responsibilities properly.
2. The real point of verse 1 is to make sure Timothy knows this is a matter of extraordinary importance. It is a matter with an extreme danger attached to if it is not done. It is not just mildly necessary. It is at the highest level of responsibility for a minister of the gospel and for a church.

B. Preach the word!

1. The verb *preach* means to make a public declaration, to proclaim. It encompasses teaching, explaining, applying, rebuking, correcting, instructing, training, and persuading. It carries the ideas of authority from God, advocacy for the gospel message, and speaking to an assembled group of people. It is the God-ordained means of promulgating the gospel message, despite how this is seen by many as foolishness. The gospel is not a private matter, and its preaching is not either.
2. The content proclaimed is the word. For us, this means simply the Bible because the Bible is the complete and only inerrant record of the message we are to preach. For Timothy, who did not have a quite

completed Bible, it means the Scriptures he had plus the message that he had learned from Paul, who had learned it directly from Christ.

- C. All the time – we must stand at the ready to do this proclamation whether in season or out of season. I don't have to know what *season* means in order to know that whatever the circumstances, you are either in or out of season, so this means all the time. Whatever season it is; whether it is seasonable or not; whether it is fashionable or not; when it is a good time or a bad time; when it is timely or untimely: pastors are supposed to preach the Word. We should be looking for and making opportunities despite the season.
- D. Words that express how to preach
1. Convince. This word can mean to bring someone to recognize their wrongdoing (as in *convict*) and it can mean to express strong disapproval at wrongdoing (as in *reprove* or *correct*).
 2. Rebuke. This is quite close in meaning to the previous term. The idea is to rebuke so as to bring bad behavior to an end, or to prevent it from starting in the first place. It reminds me that as a pastor I cannot be shy about saying what is wrong in our lives, wrong in our hearts, wrong in our society, wrong anywhere. The Bible does that, and when we preach from it, we do the same.
 3. Exhort means to impress on someone the need for a certain course of action.
 4. With longsuffering. The pastor has to be "patient while awaiting an outcome" according to the Greek dictionary (BDAG). That is exactly what the pastor has to do. People do not, unfortunately, change overnight. Some do, and when godly change comes, it is worthy of rejoicing. But sometimes people are like sheep in that they often stray, or mules in that they are often stubborn.
 5. With instruction. Change doesn't happen without careful thought, without reasons, without a source that informs how and why change is needed. This is what Christian doctrine is about.
- E. **Application:** If the Bible tells the pastor to preach, then he must do so, and the church must support that mission.
1. Whether it is popular or not, it is what God wants, period. There is no debating that. No church should *ever* think about telling their pastor to cut back on the preaching to get it to say, under 30 minutes (or

even 15—so as to have more time for music and the worship team to lead the people...).

2. Some people will debate what style of preaching should be done, but it is pretty clear to me. Preaching has as a direct object “the word.” We don’t preach pop psychology or liberal claptrap about how Jesus didn’t really rise from the dead or God didn’t really create the world, or the latest book or fad, or politics. We do proclaim the Bible. You can try to get around that if you want—but just remember Jesus Christ will judge the living and the dead—including the pastor!
3. The church needs to come together regularly to be the audience for such preaching. The pastor cannot preach publicly unless there is a “public” to listen! What I’m saying is that if the Bible says, “Preach the Word,” then it is telling you to “Listen to preaching of the word”!

II. Reason for the Command: Preaching Will Not be Accepted, verses 3-4

- A. A coming time. We have already learned this truth from the previous chapter. It said, “in the last days, perilous times will come...these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds...” Paul repeats himself by saying a bad time is coming in which people will not listen to the truth (hear with a mind ready to obey).
- B. During this coming time, people will not “put up with” sound doctrine. There are people in every age and culture who are stubborn like this, but the latter days are especially notable for the mass turning away from sound teaching. By the way, what is sound teaching? It is free from error, and as a result it imparts spiritual health to the hearers.
- C. Rather, their ears will desire to hear other things and so will find teachers to satisfy those desires.
 1. The figure of speech of “ears with an itch” is picturesque. If you have an itch on your body, you almost automatically just scratch that spot to feel better, because it *wants* to be fixed. So with ears that itch, the idea is that they want something and the person does what feels good to fix the ears. The ears represent the mind and desires of the person, and those desires are fulfilled by their shopping around to find the kind of teaching that suits their fancy.
 2. The opposite of sound doctrine, unsound teaching, is like a diet of potato chips, pop, fast food, or a sweet brownie. Although such food feels good at the moment and is alluring, over the course of time exposure to it is not good. Maybe a better analogy of wrong teaching

is like radiation from a nuclear bomb. In the very short run, it may not hurt. But ultimately it is poison that slowly eats away at your life until there is nothing left.

D. They will turn away from truth and instead believe myths.

1. NKJV translates the last word as a *fable*, which in English is defined as a short story that teaches a moral. The word in Greek is translated as *myth* by most English versions, and could be rendered as a tale, story, or legend. It is not really a fable, *per se*. It is a story. Most of us probably know about Greek mythology—false gods that were made up by the Greeks to explain various aspects of the world. There are some ready-made examples in our culture today.
2. **Truth:** Special creation. **Myth:** evolution. People believe the made-up fairy tale of evolution on the basis that some birds' beaks are longer, and some are shorter! They play scientist by making sophisticated arrangements of simple to complex life forms and imagine that those life forms spontaneously generated themselves from earlier forms. It is all a cleverly fabricated story. They don't want to hear that God created everything, so they ban it from public education and the public square. As in all of these fables, they turn away from the truth and believe a lie.
3. **Truth:** Life begins at conception. **Myth:** abortion is OK. About 875 babies were killed in 2015 by abortion. In Washtenaw County. That is down, thankfully, from a high near 1325 dead babies in 2003 (source: September 2016 chart produced by 40 Days for Life Ann Arbor Team).

The infant mortality rate in 2014 in the United States was 582 infant deaths (less than 1 year old) per 100,000 live births.¹ That is awful, but it is only 0.58% of births. It pales in comparison to the 21% of all pregnancies (excluding miscarriage) that ended in abortion the same year: 954,000 babies were aborted in 2014. In reality, then, the true infant mortality rate is almost 22% in the United States. By comparison, in 1935, the infant mortality rate was 5.5%. (I have no data on abortions then.) Our mortality rate today is 4 times higher than it was in 1935! Almost all of it is murder.

Worldwide, 100,000 babies die every day because of abortion.
4. **Truth:** Marriage is between a born-man and a born-woman. **Myth:** anyone can be married to anyone they want. One of the big purposes

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infant_mortality#In_the_United_States

of marriage is to produce offspring. If a “marriage” cannot possibly² do that, then it is not a real marriage. By the way, if a married couple can have children but refuses to do so, then from a Biblical perspective we would have to ask why they are married at all?

5. **Truth:** God assigns your gender at birth. **Myth:** I can be whatever gender I feel like. Despite the fact that this false doctrine of anything-goes gender, attire, and sexual perversion leads to depression and suicide at alarming rates, its proponents push forward. I do not buy that *all* of the increase in suicide rate is due to bullying. Some undoubtedly is. But surgeries, chemical treatments, and the dissonance of behavior with God’s assigned reality all have consequences that are devastating on the psyche of a person who attempts to change genders. This is a major cause of suicide. It is a myth that a person can change their gender back and forth.
6. **Truth:** Citizens and authorities are to obey the laws. **Myth:** Law-breaking is not a big deal, from rioters, murderers getting light sentences, immigration scofflaws, or people in the highest offices in the land. This myth shows up in the immigration debate; or in a weak response to riots in our cities; or in failure to prosecute criminals firmly and, in some cases, permanently; or in failure to prosecute police or officials who have broken the law.
7. Each fable comes with a spirit and action of rebellion against God. People don’t want to be told what to do or not do in the law; people don’t want to be told what gender identity they are from birth; people don’t want to be constrained by man-woman marriage; people don’t want to have babies that they freely chose to make;³ and people don’t want to know that God exists because that will cramp their style too much.

III. Timothy's Responsibilities are Re-emphasized, verse 5

- A. Watchful. To be sober, well-balanced, self-controlled; in possession of your faculties at all times, even in the face of awful opposition. See 1 Thess. 5:6, 8; 1 Peter 1:13, 4:7, 5:8.

² I am *not* talking about mom and dad who cannot have children for some medical reasons.

³ Yes, I know about rape and incest where there was no free choice. Recognize these cases are very small percentage of the overall situation (1% or less of abortions). And if you are going to kill someone, don’t kill the innocent victims!

- B. Endure. Bear hardship in a patient way. As we know well, Paul suffered hardship (2 Timothy 2:9). Don't go bonkers when hard things happen to you!
- C. Do the work of an evangelist. See Acts 21:8 and Ephesians 4:11. There are people who are gifted at proclaiming the good news. There are others who are gifted teachers and leaders in the pastoral realm. But every pastor like Timothy must do some evangelistic work. It is just a basic part of any Christian minister's job. It is work. It can be difficult.
- D. Fulfill your ministry. This final instruction encompasses the prior three. Paul tells Timothy to keep at the work even though people will not accept his ministry. This reminds me of prophets of old like Isaiah (6:9-13) and Jeremiah (1:8) who had to persevere even though no one seemed to listen to them.
- E. **Application:** All of these have clear application to the life of every Christian. We are to be in possession of our faculties; we are to be patient even when things go wrong; we are to be evangelists; we must carry out the ministry to which God has called us.

Conclusion

We have seen some important applications for the pastor, the church, and the individual Christian. Do not deceive yourself into thinking that you have no role. You do—as listener sometimes, and as a proclaimer other times. You may be the only "preacher" that can touch some person's life with the Word. Take care of business—because you love the Lord and you love people!

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