

# Old Paths Preaching

**Text:** 2 Timothy 4:1-4

## **Introduction:**

1. The Epistle now reaches its climax in Paul's final recorded charge to Timothy, his son in the faith (Vs. 1-8). These are the last words the Spirit of God lead Paul to write and are therefore of great importance and significance. They are full of feeling, urgency and passion.
2. Paul's death is drawing near. Paul has already appeared once before Nero. He anticipates one final meeting and then certain death (Vs. 6). What weighs heavily upon the heart of the Apostle as he stares death in the face? As he stands on the threshold of eternity, what is the most important thing for him to communicate to Timothy, his son in the faith? It is to charge Timothy to be a faithful preacher of the Word of God.
3. It is significant to note that this passage is sandwiched between warnings about apostasy (2. Tim. 3:1-13; 4:3-4). The faithful, uncompromised preaching and teaching of God's Word helps hold back the tide of corruption that threatens to sweep over any church. The pulpit is the first main line of defence for a Bible believing church.

## **I. The Mindset for Preaching (Vs. 1)**

In this verse the Apostle Paul impresses on Timothy his solemn duty. As preachers we are to live and minister with a sense of our responsibility in two directions:

### **A. We are Responsible to the Scriptures (1a)**

1. 'therefore' = on the basis of the inspiration and sufficiency of Scripture (3:16-17).
2. 'charge' means "I am solemnly witnessing, testifying". It means "I solemnly order & adjure you." It was used in secular Greek to call the gods and men to witness.
3. 'before' = in the presence of, in the sight of. He summons him, as it were, into the presence of God the Father and of the glorified Son of God to receive the charge. "Paul brings before Timothy the great realities of the future world." (Fairbairn) "All service should be carried out with the realization that it is watched by God's all-seeing eye." (Macdonald)

### **B. We are Responsible to the Saviour (1b)**

1. God the Father
2. The Lord Jesus Christ
  - a. The imminent return of Christ as judge is central to Apostle's thinking. Paul was living in the expectation of the imminent return of Christ.

- b. Harold J. Berry: “At this point, Paul did not seem to be so concerned about distinguishing between the time of these judgments as he was concerned about stressing the fact that everyone will eventually stand before Him and give account.”
- 3. Challenge: What we need in this age are men who are more concerned about their standing in the sight of God than in the sight of men. Men who love the praise and approval of the Saviour above all else. Men who have a deep sense of awe and reverence for God. Men who fear God more than they fear man. Men who preach for the Lord rather than for man. Men who love Christ and His Word more than people and more than themselves.
- 4. The solemn remembrance of the watchful eye of God Almighty and the approaching day when we will give an account at the judgment seat of Christ will help the preacher to lay aside the fear of man, stay faithful to the truth and the old paths.
- 5. Illustration: C.H. Spurgeon’s attitude towards preaching
  - a. In 1861 Spurgeon remarked, “My deacons know well enough how, when I first preached in Exeter Hall, there was scarcely ever an occasion, in which they left me alone for ten minutes before the service, but they would find me in a most fearful state of sickness, produced by that tremendous thought of my solemn responsibility.”
  - b. In 1883 he said, “I have preached the gospel now these thirty years and more, and...often, in coming down to this pulpit, have I felt my knees knock together, not that I am afraid of any one of my hearers, but I am thinking of that account which I must render to God, whether I speak his Word faithfully or not.”

## II. **The Mandate for Preaching (Vs. 2a)**

“In this verse there are five aorist imperatives, the aorist giving a serious tone appropriate for the pronouncements.” (Mounce)

### **A. The Technique to be Embraced – ‘preach’**

- 1. ‘preach’ = to herald, proclaim.
- 2. A Herald in Paul’s Day: “In Paul’s day, a ruler had a special herald who made announcements to the people. He was commissioned by the ruler to make his announcements in a loud, clear voice so everyone could hear. He was not an ambassador with the privilege of negotiating; he was a messenger with a proclamation to be heard and heeded. Not to heed the ruler’s messenger was serious; to abuse the messenger was even worse.” (Wiersbe) The word has the idea of “formality, gravity and an authority which must be listened to and obeyed.” (Cloud) **The Preacher is under Divine Orders! (Vs. 1)**

3. Isaiah 58:1 ***“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.”***
4. Note: We do not want a carnal display of angry yelling that originates from the flesh. But we do desire Holy Ghost courage and boldness to fearlessly proclaim the truth with passion and conviction.
5. Illustration: The preaching of John Knox of Scotland as described by an eyewitness named James Melville: “I heard him teach the prophecies of Daniel that summer and the winter following. In the opening of his text he was moderate for the space of half an hour; but when he entered on the application he made me to quere (shiver) and tremble that I could not hold my pen to write...before he had done with his sermon he was so active and vigorous that it seemed as if he would ding the pulpit in blads (knock the pulpit in pieces) and fly out of it.”
6. The word implies authority. The preacher is not a salesman there to negotiate and find middle ground, he is a Herald, there to proclaim an absolute message from Almighty God. Titus 2:15 “These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with **all authority**. Let no man despise thee.” The preacher is not there to make suggestions or share opinions but to declare “Thus saith the Lord.”
7. **The Preacher Vs. the Politician:** The politician does what’s popular, the preacher does what’s right; the politician moves with the current of popular opinion, the preacher stands firm on the unmoveable rock of truth; the politician is concerned with what works, the preacher with what’s Scriptural; the politician is consumed with numbers, the preacher is consumed with God; the politician is a man of pragmatism, the preacher a man of conviction; the politician is focused on popular opinion, the preacher is focused on the truth; the politician thinks in terms of what is left and right, the preacher about what is right and wrong; the politician lives in the land of misty grey, the preacher in the land of black and white; the politician tailors his message to fit the culture, the preacher declares God’s mind on an evil culture; the politician sees truth in terms of an individual’s personal preference, the preacher sees truth in terms of Divine absolutes; the politician cares about himself, a preacher cares about his flock; the politician is as flexible as a rubber band, the genuine preacher as unbendable as a piece of steel.

#### **B. The Theme to be Expounded – “the Word”**

1. To preach the Word is to **preach the Bible**. The Bible alone is the preacher’s textbook. The writings of other men may prove helpful but they must always be held as un-inspired and under the Word of God as the supreme rule of faith and practice. Give the people the

- Word of God, not your opinions. Avoid excessive humour, hot air, froth and bubble. You are a preacher with a Divine Message to proclaim, not a stand-up comedian! Avoid excessive story telling.
2. To preach the Word is to **preach expositively**. We do not go to the Bible with our pre-conceived ideas and then try and find isolated texts to bolster those ideas. We preach sentence by sentence, verse by verse, chapter by chapter and Book by Book.
  3. To preach the Word is to **preach the Gospel and the great doctrines of the faith**.
  4. To preach the Word is to **preach the whole counsel of God**.
    - a. "the Word" Paul is referring to is detailed back in 3:16-17. It is a reference to the entire sacred volume. The Bible contains 66 books – 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New. There are 31,173 verses, 774,746 words and 3,566,480 letters in the entire Bible. The longest chapter is Psalm 119, and the shortest, and middle is Psalm 117. The longest verse is Esther 8:9 and the shortest is John 11:35.
    - b. *"For I have not shunned to declare unto you **all the counsel of God**."* Acts 20:27 'shunned' = to draw back, keep back.
    - c. Jeremiah 26:2 "Thus saith the LORD; Stand in the court of the LORD'S house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD'S house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; **diminish not a word:**"
    - d. Ezekiel 3:1-11 – "And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, **Thus saith the Lord GOD**; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." (Vs. 11)
  5. To preach the Word is to only **preach from the King James Bible**.
  8. A word to the Pew (listener) – if the preaching of God's Word is such a solemn and sacred act, it is also vital that the listener adopt a biblical attitude towards preaching. "Despise not prophesyings." (1 Thess. 5:20)
    - a. Prepare your heart, mind and body for the preaching of God's Word. Get to bed early on a Sat night so you can come rested up and prayed up for the Lord's Day services.
    - b. Be respectful in your conduct during the preaching. Honour the preaching time.
    - c. Be receptive and enthusiastic about the preaching. Drink it in. Take notes if that helps you. Show interest.
    - d. Get yourself under the preaching of God's Word from God's man and don't miss unless you are seriously ill or it's an emergency.

**C. The Time to be Employed – "be instant in season, out of season"**

1. “be instant” = means to take one’s stand, to stand by, to be ready. It speaks of constant readiness. It is a military word meaning “to stay at one’s post”. It means “**to stand up to it**” (A.T. Robertson). It not only implies faithfulness but also confrontation as the same word is used of the Jewish leaders’ confrontation with Jesus in Lk. 20:1 (“came upon him”).
2. “in season, out of season” = The phrase “in season” is translated ‘conveniently’ in Mk. 14:11. The Word it is to be preached in good times and in difficult times, when it is convenient and inconvenient. Be ready to preach at all times! Preach when there is little visible fruit and when there is much fruit. Preach when the circumstances are favourable and when they are unfavourable. The Word of God is always in season even if the circumstances are not!
  - a. Illustration: Adoniram Judson preached for 6 years before he saw his first Burmese convert and ten years before he had 18 converts.
  - b. Note: The 21<sup>st</sup> century church generally ignores this principle. The church growth movement defines success in terms of numerical growth. This requires constant adaption to the ideas and philosophies of the age.
3. **PREACH THE WORD:** When things are going well, preach the Word! When things are going dull, preach the Word! When some turn away their ears not to hear, preach on to those who have ears to hear. When people join the church, preach the Word. When people leave the church, preach the Word. When you come under fire for preaching on hell fire, fire up and preach it again! When you belt the booze bottle with those verses in the Bible and lots of feathers you do ruffle, just preach the Word till Christ’s arrival! When preaching on immodesty, provokes vehement hostility, resolve to stand uncompromisingly and preach the Word! When times are good, preach the Word! When times are hard, preach the Word! When you are full of energy, preach the Word! When you are flat and exhausted, preach the Word! When you feel like preaching, preach the Word! When you don’t feel like preaching, preach the Word! Preach on preaching the Word Preacher!

### III. The Method for Preaching (2c)

There is to be...

#### A. A Three-pronged Approach – “reprove, rebuke, exhort”

1. Reprove (convincing/convicting) = to bring to light, to convince, to convict. It is translated ‘convict’ (John 8:9), ‘convince’ (John 8:46) and “tell a fault” (Matt. 18:15). “It means to show people their wrong ways and to convince them of the right way of God’s Word.” (Cloud)

2. Rebuke (correcting/warning) = to censure sharply, to warn, to bring a charge. “He must reprimand the sinner and not tone down his sin.” (Hiebert)
  - a. Psalm 141:5 “Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him **reprove** me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.”
  - b. Prov. 27:5-6 “Open **rebuke** is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”
  - c. Titus 2:15 “These things speak and exhort, and **rebuke** with **all authority**. Let no man despise thee.”
  - d. Rev. 3:19 “As many as I **love**, I **rebuke** and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”
  - e. Today, most have developed a hostile intolerance to any form of rebuke and correction. Take Robert Schuller as an example of the “positive only, judge not” philosophy. He said, “I have no right to ever preach a sermon or write an article that would offend the self-respect and violate the self-dignity of a listener or reader.”
3. Exhort (comforting/encouraging) = to urge & encourage.
  - a. Means “one called alongside to help.” It is from the Greek word ‘parakaleo’ which means “to call near, to invite, to implore or console.”
  - b. The Holy Spirit is called the ‘Comforter’ (Jn. 14:16) and Christ is referred to as our ‘advocate’ (1 Jn. 2:1)

**B. A Two-fold Accompaniment – “longsuffering and doctrine”**

1. ‘with’ = reproof, rebuke and exhortation are all to be done in connection with these two principles.
2. Longsuffering = patience & endurance. A fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Consider some of the prophets with long ministries with little change in the people. Psalm 86:15 “But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.”
3. Doctrine = sound Biblical content as our basis, not human opinion. The preacher must be a teacher.

**IV. The Motivation for Preaching (Vs. 3-4)**

Paul reminds Timothy of the coming apostasy to motivate him to seize the opportunity to proclaim the truth. The word ‘for’ connects these verses to the command of Vs. 1-2. Paul is saying “preach the Word because apostasy is coming.” The time would come where there would be:

**A. A Resistance to Truth (3a)**

1. “the time will come” = this began to be fulfilled even in the days of the Apostles (1 Jn. 2:18). The apostasy will continue throughout the church age (2 Tim. 3:13) and will culminate in the one-world false religious harlot of Revelation 17-18 in the tribulation period.
2. “not endure” = to bear with, put up with, tolerate.
3. “sound doctrine” = wholesome, healthy teaching.

#### **B. A Regard for False Teachers (3b)**

What is it that drives these individuals to the false teachers?

1. They are driven by their sinful lusts: “after their own lusts” = the word ‘after’ is the word ‘kata’ in the Greek meaning according to. They seek out a certain type of teacher and ministry that is in line with their lusts. They do not want their sinful nature confronted by a genuine man of God preaching from the Word of God.
  - a. “heap to themselves teachers” = the word ‘heap’ means to heap up, to accumulate in piles. They search out multiple teachers who will indulge their sinful lusts and make them feel good. These sorts of teachers are in abundant supply. The airwaves are dominated by these kinds of ministries. **A faithful preacher of the truth is a rarity and not to be taken for granted.**
  - b. Illustration: Micaiah the son of Imlah Vs. the 400 prophets who told Ahab what he wanted to hear (1 Kings 22).
  - c. Note: This is what is so wrong with the church growth movement espoused by men like Rick Warren where the “felt needs” of the people are placed at the front and centre of the church’s priorities.
2. They are driven by their carnal appetites – they want something spine tingling and tantalizing to hear. We live in a day where people have a constant itch for change, for something new. This appetite is fuelled by the digital world and social media.
  - a. Isaiah 30:8-10 “Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever: That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD: Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, **Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits:**”
  - b. Jeremiah 5:31 “The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; **and my people love to have it so:**”
  - c. Illustration: When asked by a newspaper reporter in 2003 about the success of Hillsong, Brian Houston said, “We are scratching people where they are itching.” (SMH article, Jan. 30, 2003)

#### **C. A Rejection of Truth (4)**

1. They refuse truth – “turn away their ears from the truth”
2. They replace it with fiction – fables. “turned aside” is a medical term used of wrenching a limb out of joint. The phrase “shall be turned”

indicates they are begin acted upon as the word is “to cause to turn aside” and “is used in the passive voice.” (Vine) Those who “turn” from the truth “shall be turned” unto fables. To reject the truth is a very serious and dangerous thing. To set your sails in an anti-biblical direction is perilous. Once your sails are filled with the winds of apostasy, there is no telling how far away from the truth you will end up.

### **Conclusion:**

1. What is your attitude to the preaching of the Word as a church member? Are you thankful for a preacher who is faithful to God’s Word?
2. What is your attitude to preaching as a preacher? What is it that’s motivating you? Who are you preaching for? Do you have an eternal perspective or a temporal perspective?
3. Is God calling you to be a preacher? How this world needs faithful preachers!