

Preaching the Gospel:

A Gospel View

Scripture: *2 Timothy 4:1-8.*

Summary of Sermon: This passage reminds us about the Lord's **charge** for us to preach the gospel, the **challenges** we will face as we do so, and the **crown** of righteousness that should encourage us to continue to do so.

Introduction

Of all the many roles, duties, and responsibilities that a pastor has, none is as important as the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The NT makes it clear that, at the heart of the Lord's calling of a pastor into ministry, is the charge to preach the gospel because, without Christ, men and women are spiritually lost and they are perishing.

A good example of this charge in the NT is found in **2 Timothy 4:1-8**. In this passage, first, Paul reminds Timothy, and us, about the Lord's **charge** to us to preach the gospel. Second, the Apostle reminds us about the **challenges** we will face as we do so. Third, he reminds us about the **crown** of righteousness that should encourage us to continue to do so.

Read Passage.

I. The Charge (Verses 1-2)

- 1) In **verse 1** Paul begins the passage by telling Timothy that he is giving him the charge to preach the gospel in the presence of God the Father, and in the presence of Christ Jesus, who will one day return to establish God's Kingdom in this world and to judge the living and the dead.

So, in this first verse, Paul is saying to Timothy, and to us, that we must preach the gospel because we live and we minister in the daily presence of the trinitarian God to whom we will one day give an account when Christ returns to this world.

- 2) In **verse 2**, Paul writes these words: *Preach the word!* In the original Greek text, the word *preach* in this verse is a verb in the imperative tense. This makes Paul's words a very strong command to us from the Lord!
- 3) We know that for Paul, preaching the *word* means preaching the *gospel*. We know this because, throughout his epistles, Paul equates the *word* with the *gospel*. For example, in **1 Cor. 9:16**, Paul makes this declaration: "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!"

- 4) The Greek word translated in **verse 2** as *preach* is used more than sixty times in various places in the NT to refer to preaching the gospel.

This Greek word means to accurately declare or proclaim the message of a king without changing it in any way. This tells us that a faithful gospel preacher only announces, as best as he or she can, the gospel message that he or she has received from God's Word.

- 5) Still in **verse 2**, Paul goes on to write: *Be prepared in season and out of season*. Being prepared in season and out of season means that we share the gospel in two ways.

First, we share the gospel with our *words*, by what we *say* to people. Second, we share the gospel with our *works*, by how we *live* out the gospel before people.

So, when Paul writes here, *be prepared in season and out of season*, he is saying, let what you say to people about the gospel match how you live out the gospel before them.

These words remind me of a very gifted preacher I know who constantly struggles with moral failure in the form of sexual immorality. Because his works so clearly contradict his words, as gifted a preacher as he is, sadly, his preaching is not taken seriously by those who know him.

- 6) So, I will summarize **our first C** by saying that, in this passage, the Apostle Paul reminds us that God has given us the **charge** to preach the gospel with both our *words* and our *works* because God will one day hold us accountable for doing so.

II. The Challenges (Verses 3-5)

- 1) In **verses 3 to 5**, Paul reminds us of some of the challenges we will face as we faithfully preach the gospel with our words and our works.
- 2) In these verses, Paul writes that the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine, and that, instead, people will turn away from the truth to myths to suit their own desires, and they will gather around them false teachers who will tell them what their itching ears want to hear.

Paul is reminding us here that one of the challenges we will face as we preach the gospel is what we call today the prosperity doctrine. This doctrine falsely promises church-goers that if they give their church money to the church, God will reward them with health and wealth. This doctrine also tells church goers that if they have faith in themselves, they will fulfill their potential, whatever that means.

Many preachers have chosen to preach such false doctrine because this is what people want to hear as a result of what Paul describes as their itching ears.

Think of what happens when your ears itch. You seek quick relief from this itch, no matter what you use to end the itch. In this same way, many people seek quick relief from their material struggles by turning to such false teaching which offers them false hope, which is no hope at all.

Paul describes false teaching as myths that turn people away from the truth of the gospel. Paul is reminding us that all false teaching is a challenge to our faithful preaching of the gospel because the gospel message may seem too simple and lacking in the excitement that these false doctrines offer.

- 3) This is why, here in **verse 5**, Paul went on to write this: *But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*

When Paul writes, *but you*, he means, *you, in contrast to, or you, unlike these false teachers*. The phrase, *keep your head* is translated from a Greek word that means to be sober and self-controlled.

- 4) In this verse, when Paul also urges us to *endure hardship*. Here, Paul is reminding us that another challenge we will face as we preach the gospel is that, in addition to facing all the usual pain of living in this fallen world, as we daily confront our three enemies in the form of the world, the flesh, and the devil, we should also expect to face rejection and opposition from those who have turned away from the gospel.

When Paul counsels us in this verse to do the work of an *evangelist*, he is encouraging us to continue to faithfully preach the gospel. I say this because the word *evangelist* in this verse, comes from a Greek word which means to announce the good news of the gospel.

- 5) In **verse 2**, Paul uses three verbs to remind us about what the Lord will accomplish in the lives of people as we continue to faithfully preach the gospel.

The first verb that Paul uses in **verse 2** is *correct*. This verb reminds us that, as we faithfully preach the gospel, the Lord will use the gospel to bring correction to those who are easily drawn to false teaching.

The second verb that Paul uses in **verse 2** is *rebuke*. This verb reminds us that, as we faithfully preach the gospel, the Lord will use the gospel to rebuke false teaching.

The third verb that Paul uses in **verse 2** is *encourage*. This third verb reminds us that, as we faithfully preach the gospel, the Lord will use the gospel to bring support, confidence, and hope to those who, like us, are faithfully preaching the gospel, and to those who are following Christ as their Savior and Lord.

By using these three verbs in **verse 2**, Paul was reminding us that it is only the preaching of the gospel that the Lord will use to bring redemption and transformation to the lives of people.

- 6) This is why, in **Rom. 1:16**, Paul declared: *I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.*

The truth is that the Lord will simply not use the false prosperity doctrine, nor motivational or moralistic speeches, to bring redemption and lasting transformation in the lives of people. He will only use the gospel.

Between the salvation of God and the lost world stands the preacher and his or her gospel preaching as a bridge between the two extremes. I'm sure you can testify that you became a Christian not through listening to a motivational or moralistic speech, but from hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ faithfully preached, or explained, to you.

- 7) So, I will summarize **our second C** by saying that, in this passage, the Apostle Paul reminds us that as we obey the Lord's charge to preach the gospel, the Lord will use the gospel powerfully in the lives of people, despite all the **challenges** we will face as we do so.

III. The Crown (Verses 6-8)

- 1) In **verse 6**, Paul writes, *the time has come for my departure*. Paul was writing this letter from prison, so here in this verse, he was declaring that he was nearing the end of his life.
- 2) But in **verses 7 and 8**, Paul then goes on to write these triumphant words: *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*
- 3) In Paul's day, in the Greek Olympic games, a winning athlete was rewarded with an elaborate wreath made of the leaves of the oak tree.

Here in **verse 8**, is writing that as he looked forward to triumphantly finishing the Christian race that he had run so courageously, he was expecting, not a fading crown of leaves, but instead, a crown of righteousness that would never fade.

- 4) The human judges who had put Paul in prison, even though he was innocent, were not righteous.

Here in this verse, Paul contrasts these unrighteous human judges with Christ, who Paul refers to as the ultimate righteous Judge who would reward him with eternal life which Paul refers to in this verse as *the crown of righteousness*.

- 5) As Paul explains in this verse, this crown, or reward, of righteousness is reserved for everyone who has placed their faith in Christ. This is because, as Paul explains in **2 Cor. 5:21**, when we placed our faith in Christ, we received from God, His gift of the righteousness of Christ.
- 6) This is why, here in **verse 8**, Paul reminds us that the crown of righteousness will be given not only to him, but also to all those who have longed for the second coming of Christ.

Paul obviously wrote this to remind us that the crown of righteousness had encouraged him to fulfill the charge to preach the gospel in the face of all the challenges he faced.

Paul is therefore saying that we too should allow the crown of righteousness to encourage us to continue to preach the gospel despite all the challenges we face as we do so.

- 7) So, I will summarize **our third C** by saying that, in this passage, the Apostle Paul reminds us that, as Pastors, we should allow the **crown** of righteousness to encourage us to fulfill the Lord's charge to us to preach the gospel despite all the challenges we will face as we do so.

Conclusion

So, this is how these **3C's** from **2 Timothy 4:1-8** remind us about the Lord's **charge** to us to preach the gospel, the **challenges** we will face as we do so, and the **crown** of righteousness that should encourage us to continue to do so.

What Paul writes in **verses 3 to 7** about people not putting up with sound doctrine, and gathering around them teachers who say what their itching ears want to hear, is exactly what we see all around us today, no matter where we live.

For example, earlier this year in Kenya, we had a graphic and extreme example of such false teaching by a so-called pastor who has deceived almost 500 people to starve themselves to death because he told them this is how they will get to see Jesus. Can you imagine that?!

This widespread departure from the gospel, with its attendant pandemic of false teaching everywhere, motivated me to take very seriously Jude's powerful response to false teaching in his brief epistle when I realized that Jude's message about false teaching is as relevant to us today as it was when he first wrote his letter in the first century. For this reason, I studied the original Greek text of the epistle of Jude for my PhD dissertation.

When I completed by doctoral studies, Oasis International, the Christian book publishers, invited me to have them work with me to turn my PhD dissertation into this popular level book that would be easy reading for every Christian.

The title of the book is, *Stand Up for the Gospel: Getting the Church Back on Track*. You can get a copy on Amazon. As you read my book, you will discover practical applications of what Paul has written in this passage about the Lord's **charge** to us to preach the gospel, the **challenges** we face as we do so, and how the **crown** of righteousness promised to us by the Lord should encourage us to continue to do so.

So, let me end by encouraging you to commit yourself to faithfully keep the Lord's **charge** to preach the gospel wherever He has placed you, even in the face of all the **challenges** you face, as you look ahead expectantly to one day receiving the **crown** of righteousness the Lord has promised to His faithful people.

Let us pray!

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