
The Priority of the Preacher

2 Timothy 4:1-5

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Well, today is my eighth anniversary here at Eastport Baptist Church. And eight years ago today...

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February 28, 2016, I stood right here in this pulpit and I asked this question.

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What is the priority of the preacher?

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And for eight years I have sought to unfold the priority of the preacher. Yes, there is ministering to the saints, training, teaching, modeling. But there is something here in 2 Timothy chapter 4 that I shared with you eight years ago that I want to remind you of today. So if you will take your Bible and turn to 2 Timothy chapter 4.

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That question, what is the priority of the preacher, is the question that I want to take an opportunity once again to answer.

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Paul is instructing his young protege in the ministry, Timothy.

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These were the final days for the Apostle Paul. This is the final letter that he wrote before he was martyred for his testimony of Christ. The church was suffering severe persecution under Roman rule, under Nero. And therefore, Timothy would have an incredible sense of intimidation.

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In fact, in 2 Timothy chapter 1, Paul has to tell him that God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and of love and discipline. And he calls for him not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, of me, his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.

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And so as he wrote this letter to Timothy, like I said, this is the second letter to Timothy. Basically, there are four things that he says. In chapter one, he calls for Timothy to be bold. In chapter two, he calls for him to be strong. In chapter three, he calls for him to be wise. In chapter four, he calls for him to be diligent.

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I shared with you those years ago was found in chapter four and it was the first five verses.

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Notice what it says, I solemnly 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 preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine but wanting to have their ears tickled.

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They will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things. Endure hardship. Do the work of an evangelist. Fulfill your ministry.

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This is the duty of the preacher.

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He is to preach the Word. And how he is to do that in verse two is to be ready in season and out of season. He is to reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction.

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And then you'll see down in verse 5, He is to be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, and fulfill your ministry.

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The time is coming when it'll look worse than this.

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people will put their hands over their ears, and they will say, I will not hear this anymore. We are already seeing persecution pick up on the church. We see it in various forms. We see it more under this administration than we've seen under previous administrations. This administration is against Christians. This administration is against the Bible.

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against living it.

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If you try to live the word of God in this world today, you will be cited with a hate crime.

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because that's what's taken place with various people who've sought to live by the convictions of the Word of God. They have been challenged in the courts and some have lost and have had to pay hefty fines.

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We're seeing things in our day that we've never seen.

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But let me preface to say we will see more things that we will have never seen as these last days continue to unfold.

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And as we talk about the priority of the preacher, we're not saying that this is a program, because it's not. We're not saying that this is a fad, because it's not. This is the central ministry of the church.

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And when the people don't want it anymore, basically what you have is an empty church.

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is sad.

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When I began ministry more than 35 years ago,

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People were stepping all over each other wanting to minister. Just wanting to be used by the Lord. Wanting to see people saved. You didn't have to have people beg you to come to an outreach program. You were there anyway and you were there early.

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And if someone asked you during that outreach time, hey, would you mind hanging back and we can pray while others go out? You wouldn't have thought twice about that. You'd have spent the entire hour or two hours in prayer.

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But what we're seeing now is faithless churches, prayless churches, churches that do no outreach, no evangelism, no ministry to the saints, no church discipline. The church is in the state it's in because the church is not confronting sin, the church is adopting it. The church is welcoming it as part of their program, if you will.

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When Paul gave this charge to Timothy here in chapter four, this was not a charge to be taken lightly. I have never taken this charge lightly.

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In fact, I tremble many times at my duties.

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I don't get to pick where my duties are to be carried out. God picks that. I don't get to pick who I get to minister to. Again, He picks that.

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What he's called me to is to be faithful.

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Be faithful.

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And again, in a day and age in which we live, faithfulness is becoming a rare commodity.

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I know in my short time on this earth, and short time as a believer, now 40 years, I've seen people walk away from the faith that they have so once proclaimed.

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to turn their back on Christ, who never turned his back on them.

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Yes, times are tough, times are difficult. They always have been. They always will be.

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until Jesus comes back.

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Timothy, as well as Paul, as well as the church at this time was experiencing immense persecution.

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similar persecution that Peter experienced under Demetian.

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Look at what we see here. First he begins with a command. He says, I solemnly charge you, or better, I command you. The word itself is so forceful of a word and so directive of a term that the language that he is using here is like that of a command, even though it's not an imperative. It's the same language that he used in the first letter.

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In chapter 5 and verse 21 where he began the same way, he said, I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and his chosen angels. It sounds very similar. He says here in chapter 4, I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus. Over in 1 Timothy 6, 13, same language. I charge you in the presence of God.

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The word itself could be translated witness or testify. Again, it's the force of a command. It's so strong.

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and it's so strong because of the content.

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First he tells us it's a serious charge. And the reason why it's a serious charge is because who it's before. He says, I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus.

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The idea of being in the presence of God, that's something that we are always in. We are always in His sight. When Paul says, in the sight of God and of Christ Jesus, he's using a construction here in the Greek that is referring to the same person. So, it could read back, in the sight of God, even Christ Jesus. The term Lord doesn't appear in the

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some of the better manuscripts, but he is Lord. We certainly don't need to argue that. Paul not only tells us that this command is serious because of who is before, but also because of what he's going to do. He says there, I solemnly charge you in the presence of God, even Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead and by his appearing in his kingdom.

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What a setup.

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What a way to get Timothy's attention. In the midst of persecution from an earthly monarch and from others that agree with this earthly monarch and are carrying out the deeds of this earthly monarch as well, Paul gives Timothy this arresting attention of what he's about to say. He says, listen, you might be struggling, you might be timid, you might be...

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really having a difficult time as the church is suffering and you're suffering and others are suffering but listen understand this what I have to say to you is in the very sight of Jesus Christ who is the judge of the living and the dead and he will judge them at his appearing that's why we say in other occasions that when Jesus came the first time he came as this baby in a manger when he comes back the second time he's coming as judge

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This.

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judgment has been granted.

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to the Lord Jesus by the Father. John 5 26 says, for just as the Father has life in himself, even so he gave to the Son also to have life in himself, and he gave him authority to execute judgment because he is the Son of God. Paul made the same point when he was speaking before the Athenians in Acts 17, verse 30.

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and telling us that God having overlooked the times of ignorance but he's now declaring to men that all people should repent because he has fixed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness through a man whom he has appointed having furnished proof to all men by raising him from the dead. Here's the proof, he says, that he is going to use Jesus to judge all men

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is by the fact he raised him from the dead.

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So again, that's the setup.

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That tells us that this charge that he is about to make to him is extremely serious.

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fact I would say all the Word of God is extremely serious, right? But notice the specifics in verse 2. What does Paul command Timothy? What does he command all preachers? What does he command all teachers of the Word of God? What does he command all churches? Well look at the three words in verse 2 as it begins.

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that Paul uses here in this passage. Five of them occur in verse two. Look at what they are. Preach, be ready, reprove, rebuke, exhort. Those are commands. Those are imperatives. There's four of them in verse five. Be sober, endure, do, and fulfill.

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So these are the nine commands that Paul gives Timothy. First, he is to preach the word. How's he to do this? Well, we find how he's to do this by the very term that he uses, the word preach. The word preach means to proclaim publicly. So he is to herald as an official spokesman for the king.

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King Jesus. He is an ambassador for King Jesus. He is a spokesman for King Jesus. So this proclaiming is an authoritative proclamation. It's a proclamation that those who are the recipients of it are to listen to because it's a message that comes from the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

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In fact, the way that the construction is in this verse is a command to be obeyed at once. It is sharp. It's a military command. It's using military language. Kenneth Weiss says this should be the pattern for the preacher today. His preaching should be characterized by that dignity which comes from the consciousness of the fact that he is in an official herald of the King of Kings.

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It should be accompanied by that note of authority which will command the respect, careful attention, and proper reaction of the listeners." So not only is Timothy to preach as an authoritative spokesman for the King of Kings, but he is not to hold back. He is to preach the Word. And there is to preach all the Word. The term Word is referring to the...

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entire body of revealed truth. Now does that occur just in one or two places in the Bible? No, the answer is it's the entire Bible. The entire written Word of God is complete revealed revelation. He is to preach that. And that's what we have sought to do. That's what I have set out to do in the eight years here, is to preach all the Word of God.

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Now, I can't preach all the Word of God in eight years, but I can sure try.

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And what we've covered has been a lot of information, and we've sought to go through it verse by verse, expositively, because we want to understand what it says. And we get that from scripture. 1 Timothy 4:13, Paul again tells Timothy, until I come, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhortation, and to teaching. And the idea of giving attention, and that's...

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something he was to constantly do, and again that's a command, it implies previous preparation in private. Previous preparation in preaching or proclaiming the Word of God is study. It's studying the Word of God so that

you have something to say. It's studying so that you are rightly dividing the Word of Truth. It's studying so that you're accurately interpreting it.

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You're not trying to read into the text. You're not trying to do what theologians call isogesis. You want to do exegesis where you're expounding the text. The whole idea is to give the understanding of what it means. And not what it means today, but what it meant when it was written. And so that's why you hear verses like this in Acts 20 and verse 27, where the apostle Paul said to the elders at Ephesus that I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole

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counsel of God. In other words, I didn't hold back anything. I gave you everything. In fact, he did say that in chapter 20 and verse 20, I kept back nothing.

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It's kind of like the understanding when Jonah was told to go to Nineveh, and when he finally did go after all the events that occurred from his disobedience, and he finally got on the track of obedience and went. And he is told this by God in Jonah 3 and verse 2. And this is the same thing every preacher is told. Arise! Now, the locations are different.

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We understand that, but the content of what he says here is not. He says, arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it, here it is, the proclamation which I'm going to tell you.

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Tell them what I say. Now, I'm not looking for new revelation and you've heard me preach about that before. We don't get new revelation. We have revelation. It's right here. This is a closed canon, closed book. And what we are to preach is right here. I don't know how in the world anybody can be wanting new revelation when we don't understand everything's right here and what God has already given to us.

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This is a lot of information. Yes, let that be intimidating. It's a lot of information.

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Wonderful thing about it, written by 40 different authors, covering a span of 1,500 years, and they had a unity like none other. There was no contradictions between any of these authors. They wrote in complete harmony with one another, and even though the time period covered 1,500 years. That's amazing, you can't get usually two people in the room to agree on everything, right?

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But here, this was controlled by the Spirit of God as He used holy men to pen His Word. And there was a day when we did preach all the Word of God, but we're not seeing it today. Yeah, it's in isolated places, but what you're hearing now is sermonettes for Christianettes. You know, cute little talks. In fact, they don't even call them sermons or messages, they just call them talks. And they last about 20 minutes.

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And that's really given them a little bit of latitude right there, but 20-minute messages. And that's what the people want. And listen, I've said this before, I'll say it again, and I always say this. My goal is not to be up here for a certain amount of time. That is not my goal. My goal is, first and foremost, is try to expound what we're studying. And my goal is, hopefully, to finish it in that time that we've allotted for it.

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But if that doesn't happen, then we carry it on to the next week, and we give it a second part.

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We've done that many times.

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But we're to proclaim the word of God, all the word of God. We're to seek to understand what God says in his word. Well, there's a question, of course, when's he to do this? Well, he answers that in verse two. Timothy is to always be ready to preach the word. He says in verse two, preach the word, be ready in season and out of season. And the idea of being ready means to be at hand.

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to stand by, to be on that lured. It's just like last week when we were looking at Mark, chapter three, and Jesus told the disciples to have a boat ready, have it on standby. I might need it, the crowd's pushing up against me. I might have to get in that boat and you push me a little bit into the water right there so that they can stop crowding me. And here's the case here, when it comes to preaching the word, we're to be ready in season and out of season. You can't.

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say to someone who is asking you questions for the reason for the hope that you have in you is to say, hold on just a minute, let's come back tomorrow at the same time and I'll give you your answer. People aren't willing to wait for that, they want to know now, and you should be ready to give it now. So the idea is that of urgency, that of readiness, that of preparedness. In fact, the word was used of a soldier

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or a guard who was continually alert for any surprise attack.

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So this exhortation is for the preacher to hold himself in constant readiness. He's ready to proclaim the Word of God. And if you think about it, for every preacher, there's really a compulsion upon them to where they're really kind of chafing at the bit, ready to give out the Word of God. And if you don't have that opportunity to do that, it just eats you up until you can. I've had that happen many times. And I've no...

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I've had some Sunday mornings prepared and ready to come and then something may happen with Samuel and I have to immediately adjust that and get somebody to cover for me so I can be with them. But

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That doesn't change the fact that I have a message to share, and until I get to that opportunity to stand in the pulpit again, to proclaim what has been prepared, it's like what's said right here. You're just kind of chafing at the bit. You're biting it. You're ready to give it out. It's kind of like when you're in a conversation with someone and, you know, they're sharing a lot of things with you, and you're standing there, and you're waiting for just this little brief silence so you can interject something there, and you're...

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You know, you're ready to give it out. Well, it says here he is to be ready in season. What's that mean? Well, it means when opportunity occurs. It means when it's favorable.

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And then he says, out of season. Well, what does that mean? It's the opposite. When it's unfavorable. So that covers every situation you'd ever be in. When it's favorable for the Word of God and when it's not favorable for the Word of God. Adam Clark said he is to be urgent whether the times be prosperous or adverse. Whenever there is an opportunity and when there is none, he's to strive to make one. Warren Wiersbie says it's easy.

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to make excuses when we ought to be making opportunities.

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And I agree with that. Why can't we make the opportunities? We're sitting around waiting for an opportunity? Well, the devil will make sure that you don't get that opportunity, if that's what you're going to wait on. You need to make it.

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Now notice the three commands that he puts there in verse two. Not only is he to preach, not only is he to constantly be ready to give out the Word of God, not only is he to do this when it's favorable and when it's not favorable, but he's also to reprove. And then he is to rebuke. And then he is to exhort with great patience and instruction.

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These are probably some of the hardest things for the pastor.

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Because everyone wants to be liked, right? Even the pastor. But you know what? That should never be a criteria for what he says or not says. Because he's a representative for Jesus Christ. He is to say what the word of God says, even if it's uncomfortable.

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I heard John MacArthur on numerous occasions say that his whole purpose when he preaches is to offend. I remember the first time I heard that and I just went, whoa, that's pretty bold. Your purpose is to offend. But then when you listen to him talk about that, you understand what he's trying to say. Some people will not move into any kind of action until their feet are stomped on.

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until they're offended by what is being said. Now I'm not saying purposely try to offend people, but I'm also saying don't hold back because what you have to say may offend somebody.

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But we find it in this word, reprove. The word means to reprove. It's also translated in other occasions to rebuke. One lexicon puts it as to disgrace or put to shame. That would be the offense. A.T. Robinson says it means to give honor or blame.

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is showing someone that he has done something wrong and is summoning him to repent. And of course that's uncomfortable, right? It's uncomfortable to point that out. It's uncomfortable to be the recipient of that. But it's got to be done. I mean, think about this. This is exactly why Herod put John the Baptist to death. Because we're told that he was rebuked by John concerning Herodias, his brother

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and for all the evils which Herod had done." Luke 3 19. He confronted him. And Herod was the king. He didn't hold back because of his status, because of who he was. He said the Word of God is higher than your position. What God says and what God thinks is more important than what you think and what I think.

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Rebuke. And it's used very closely in meaning with the first word, but reproving may have more to do with affecting the mind, with helping a person to understand that what he believes or is doing is wrong. Where rebuke, on the other hand, may have to do with the heart, with bringing a person under conviction of guilt.

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The word itself means to warn strongly, to admonish.

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So first, reprove. Secondly, rebuke. Look at the third word, exhort. That's a very familiar word to us. It's the Greek word para kaleo. Para is a preposition which means to come alongside. And kaleo means to call, so it means to call alongside.

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But it's basically calling someone out and admonishing them. And in this context, it means to admonish, but it also carries the idea of encouragement. And you do find that in this letter. Paul does rebuke some of Timothy's

behavior, his timidity, but at the same time, he encourages him. He's not alone in his suffering.

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Warren Wiersbie says preaching must be marked by three elements, conviction, warning, and appeal. He says to quote an old rule of preachers, he should afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted. He says if there is conviction but no remedy, we add to people's burdens, and if people, we encourage those we ought to be rebuked, we are assisting them in sin. Biblical preaching must be balanced.

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And we hear the balance in 1 Thessalonians 5 14. He says, we urge you brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Well, he is to preach the word, he is to do it when it's in season and when it's out of season, when it's favorable, when it's not favorable, he is to rebuke, he is to reprove, he is to exhort.

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And when he does all this, he's to do it with great patience and instruction. He's not to be afraid to reprove or rebuke, but he's to do it with long suffering and with teaching. In other words, his personal feelings are not grounds for reprove. Doctrine is the only ground. Teaching is the only ground for this. And the idea of patience, this is a word that you may have translated in your

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suffering. And the idea is of an emotional quietness in the face of unfavorable circumstances. Not getting all caught up in the heat of the moment. It literally means to abide under. You're abiding under that persecution. And you're being patient with people.

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Now, Paul is calling for Timothy to be patient with members of his flock. They may have been persistently stubborn, resisting the pastor's admonitions. And so he is to very patiently, with long suffering, give them instruction. Give them what is taught. Give them teaching.

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Give them the word of God. Remember, it goes back to preach the word.

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Well, in the eight years that I have been here, that's been my desire. My desire has been to systematically be ready to preach. I don't come up here unprepared. I've never come here unprepared. I never will come unprepared.

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And not only that, everything else that comes along with it that he just said in verse 2.

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You know, probably the hardest thing for me, and I'm not alone in this, but preparing to preach? I mean, you get taken through a wringer throughout the week, and then you've got a host of things that you have to overcome to have the time that you need to quietly sit down and look at a text. You can't do it while you do something else. It's got to have your complete attention.

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And I've known that and I've seen that and I've witnessed that, I've experienced that all my Christian life. And some things come easy at times and some things never come easy.

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And especially if your vocation of life before Christ was to never make friends with books, never make friends with literature. You know what I mean? I was the guy in school that enjoyed being the class clown, or enjoyed not showing up

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morning walking through a cemetery because I didn't have a car so I could leave so I just went walked around until school was out and jumped up on the bus and went home and no one was any more the wiser other than my homeroom teacher that marked me not there.

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But I had no interest in education, none whatsoever. After I became a believer, about a year into being a believer, I had some friends that I had met at another church, and we were playing some music together. And the first

time I'd done that since becoming a believer, I had played in a heavy metal band before that. I knew that that was not something to keep doing. I stopped all of that immediately.

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But I met these guys and we started playing some music together, Christian music, and one of them was encouraging me to go to college. And I'm thinking, why? Why would I do that? I mean, I've got more things to do to waste my time, you know?

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But he continued to try to encourage me to do that and even enticed it a little bit. Said, you know, you could get a scholarship again. Why would I want to even do that? Well, if I went, if I had some help financially, that would be wonderful. So anyway, short story, I did. And while I was there, I met other Christians. It became an opportunity to be encouraged, came an opportunity to really try to understand.

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what my desires were in terms of music and where that fit into now my new found life as a believer in Jesus. And so about a year into to studying music and I mean I'm talking about study when you're on a scholarship.

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They pretty much pick what you have to take. And if you want to do anything for yourself, it's going to be above and beyond that. So I had a full load of music, got to do some pretty incredible things, got to enjoy some pretty incredible things during that time, but I learned that that was really not my

desire. And maybe that was the whole reason for it. But while I was there, I began to sense more of a call to preach.

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And so I began to do what 1st Timothy chapter 3 and verse 1 says. When you feel that inward desire, you begin to reach toward it.

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and then you have to be examined, that if you're qualified for this, this was a long process. And I share all that to share with you that, you know, my days of education, yeah, there were a lot of things, yes, to prepare me, but there were also nothing that could prepare you for something like this. I still share in the same conviction that Spurgeon shares,

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And I read what he said, I wrote this in my Bible, I read this one day and I thought, this is right on, I got this. He says, I scarcely even prepare for my pulpit with pleasure. Study for the pulpit is to me the most irksome work in the world. I agree. It is one of the hardest things that I ever have done. Because I was never educated, I was never studious, I was.

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I was dropping out. I didn't want anything to do with it. I had trouble with authority. I had trouble with a lot of things. And I wanted sin. I wanted drugs. That's what I did.

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I'm so thankful that the Lord had other plans and the Lord turned all of that around.

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So coming to a text, looking at a text, studying a text, trying to understand the grammar of the text, Greek grammar at that, if I'm in the New Testament, and then try and understand culture and history and wishing so badly that I could just step on the actual soil of Israel and walk.

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these places that the Bible talks about. So since I can't do that, I can do the next best thing, at least view video of those who have.

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But hearing this exhortation here, this is nothing to be taken lightly, and I've really have struggled.

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to not take it lightly.

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I have always been committed to the whole counsel of God. And yes, I have shared things that made me extremely uncomfortable sharing. But my thoughts have always been, it's not about my feelings. It's not about my view. It's always about what God says. What does He say? What does He mean?

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by what he says.

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So that's been my passion. And that's the same passion the Apostle Paul had. And the same passion the Apostles had. And the same passion of many who've come after them. Well, he says that you're going to preach the word and you're going to do it this way, verse 2, but you're not going to do it without any difficulty.

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Here's the difficulty in verse three, look at that. The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths or fables or lies.

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In other words, the climate's gonna change. This time that's coming, it's not referring to chronological time, it's referring to seasons, epochal times. It's used in chapter 3 and verse 1 where it says, pairless times will come. And then verses 2 through 7 tell us what will characterize those pairless times.

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Well, he tells us right here that they're not going to endure sound doctrine and the idea of enduring means to put up with. They're not going to tolerate it. And we're already seeing that today by the dumbing down of doctrine. So Paul warns Timothy that in the dangerous seasons of this age, many people will become intolerant of the confrontive, demanding preaching of God's word.

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They're not going to put up with sound that is healthy and doctrine is teaching. They're not going to tolerate it. It's just like in 1 Kings 22, where the king of Israel, he hated the prophet Micaiah because Micaiah always spoke the truth. He didn't like that.

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So you mean to tell me you prefer someone lying to you? There's two things that stir my blood. One is being lied to.

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And the other is to be stolen from. I do not like to be lied to, and I don't like people stealing. I just can't handle that. And I dealt with my share of that as a school principal for three years, and dealt with those two things.

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But just to try to get that in that person's head, that this is not right.

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But whether they tolerate it or not, it's to be preached. Titus 2.1 says, but as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. So they're not gonna put up with it, and they're gonna accumulate for themselves teachers, and this is gonna happen according to their own desires or their own cravings or lust. They're gonna set themselves against

44:23

What the Word of God says, they're going to be dominated by their own personal cravings, and those cravings consist of the desire for personal gratification. And now that's become the criteria in looking for a church. I'm coming to look for a church that will appeal to my own personal cravings, whether they're right or wrong.

44:51

Wearsby says they have a desire for religious novelties. And this is happening because if you'll notice there he says that they they want to have their ears tickled.

45:05

Well, the only way you can have your ears tickled is to have things told to you that you like to hear, instead of things you don't like to hear. And I think that there should be a balance of both.

45:19

Paul said to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 2, 1 and following. He says, And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. Then down in verse 4 he

says, My message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

45:49

That's the way I came to you.

45:53

And because of their itching ears, he says they're going to accumulate teachers who are going to satisfy those cravings. Warren Wiersbie says the fact that a preacher has a large congregation is not always a sign that he's preaching the truth. In fact, it may be evidence that he's tickling people's itching ears and giving them what they want to hear instead of what they need to hear. That's true. One of the largest churches in Lakeland

46:21

is headed by a false teacher named Joel Osteen. It's one of the largest churches in America. They have a former basketball stadium where they meet. It's full.

46:37

So he says because of their lust, because of their itching ears, they're going to accumulate teachers in accordance to their own desires. They're going to turn away their ears from the truth and they're going to be turned aside to myths. In other words, they're going to seek out the kind of teachers to teach what they want to hear. They're going to accumulate them in piles, it says.

47:01

John MacArthur says, instead of receiving sound doctrine, such churches fiercely reject it, wanting rather to have their ears tickled with unbiblical notions that raise their comfort level, justify or overlook their sins. They also reject as unloving anyone who presumes to hold them accountable to doctrinal beliefs and moral standards they deem outmolded and irreverent. Consequently, the preacher whom they least like to hear brings the message that they need most to hear.

47:32

That's the ones they're rejecting.

47:36

Jeremiah 530 says this, an appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule on their own authority, and my people love it so. But what will you do at the end of it?

47:56

Not many years later, the Lord told Ezekiel, Ezekiel 33, 31, They come to you as people come and sit before you as my people and hear your words, but they do not do them. For they do the lustful desires expressed by their mouth, and their heart goes after their gain. Behold, you are to them like a sensual song by one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument, for they hear your words.

48:25

but they do not practice them. That's the kind of teachers that they accumulate. That's the kind of teachers we're seeing today. Marvin Vincent says they invite teachers in mass in periods of unsettled faith, skepticism, and mere curious speculation in matters of religion. Teachers of all kinds swarms like the flies of Egypt. The demand creates the supply.

48:52

The hearers invite and shape their own preachers. If the people desire a calf to worship, a ministerial calf maker is readily found.

49:05

And you see why then that Paul is saying that you need to preach the word.

49:16

You'll never go wrong if you preach the Bible and you preach what God says. And again, that's what we've sought to do. That's what I've sought to do. And he says right there, too, at the end of verse 4, they're going to turn from the truth and they're going to turn away to myths.

49:40

Myths are fables, tales, things that are not true, things that lack reality. They're going to be like in Acts 7, 57, when Stephen preached to that stiff neck people. It says, they cried out with a loud voice. They covered their ears. They rushed at him with one impulse.

50:04

And when they driven him out of the city, they began stoning him, and the witnesses laid their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

50:13

That's really what they felt about it.

50:17

like Zechariah 7, 11, and 12. The people there refused to pay attention. They turned a stubborn shoulder, stopped their ears from hearing, they made their hearts like flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which the Lord of Hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great wrath came from the Lord of Hosts. But see, in spite of all of this,

50:47

Timothy was to fulfill his ministry. And how was he to do that? Look at verse 5. He says, but you, you Timothy, be sober in all things. Endure hardship. Do the work of an evangelist. Fulfill your ministry. First he says, be sober. That means to be watchful. It's a word that means to be level-headed, be well-balanced.

51:14

be in control of your faculties. In the midst of a very changing world, in a changing church, and even a changing gospel, which is really not the gospel, but a distortion of the gospel of Christ, Timothy's to remain committed to the changeless truth of the Word of God. Secondly, he says, endure hardship. Many years Paul suffered hardship.

51:40

at the hands of those who claim to be God's people. Listen to what he described, 2 Corinthians 11, beginning at verse 23. He says, Are they servants of Christ? I speak as if insane. I'm more so, and far more labors, and far more imprisonments.

52:01

beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews 39 lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. A night and a day I have spent in the deep.

52:19

I have been on frequent journeys in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren. I have been in labor, in hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and in exposure.

52:45

He even said in St. Corinthians 11 28, he suffered the daily pressure of concern for the churches. He said, apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure of me of concern for all the churches.

53:02

See, there's no such thing as a faithful ministry that is not costly.

53:09

A painless ministry is a shallow and fruitless ministry. So he needs to be sober in all things. He needs to endure hardship. Third, he needs to do the work of an evangelist. Notice he doesn't tell him to be an evangelist, but he tells him to do the work. And he does that by proclaiming the gospel.

53:37

He preaches the word and he preaches the gospel.

53:43

And fourth, he says, fulfill your ministry. And to fulfill carries the basic idea of giving full measure or bringing to completion. Paul said it this way when he wrote to the Colossians in Colossians 1.25 and following. He says, of this church, I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God.

54:11

That is the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to his saints, to whom God willed to make known. What is the riches of the glory of the mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory? We proclaim him admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor.

54:41

striving according to his power.

54:47

Beloved, my call, and every preacher's call, is to preach the Word of God. And to do it in such a way so that you can present every man and woman and child complete in Christ.

55:03

Can't do it without the word of God.

55:07

So eight years ago when I stood here, first sermon I preached on that Sunday morning was this one.

55:16

I preached all this eight years ago, same thing. Ask the same question.

55:25

and I still give the same answer. Hasn't changed.

55:32

And like I said, the hardest thing of ministry varies for each preacher. But here's one to consider. I keep this in mind often, and it seems like we're almost there.

55:49

God told Isaiah to go, go and tell this people. Isaiah 6, 9, listen to what it says. Keep on listening, but do not perceive. Keep on looking, but do not understand. Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull and their eyes dim, otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed. And then I answered, Lord, how long?

56:19

How long am I to do this?

56:23

until cities are devastated and without inhabitant houses or without people and the land is utterly desolate. Wow.

56:37

Preachers today don't have anything on what the prophets had to experience. God used them as object lessons many times for the messages that they were to proclaim.

56:50

But Isaiah, you're to go, you're to speak to this people, guess what, they're not gonna listen to you. And I want you to keep doing it till there's no more houses, no more inhabitants, the land is utterly desolate.

57:14

mission is always the same.

57:21

God has not changed the mission.

57:27

Father God, we thank you for today. We thank you for the privilege that has been ours. Lord, open up the word of life. Thank you for each person you brought here today. Lord, may we give you praise. May we give you glory. Because your name is so worth it.

57:51

Pray this in Jesus' name, amen.