

Preached at GBC on 2/25/24
"PREACH The Word"

II Tim.4:1,2

I had the blessed privilege of meeting online and talking with a dear brother and sister in Christ who just came under the Gospel of God's grace, being brought by God the Holy Spirit to a knowledge of the truth. As I listened to them talk of the great freedom, liberty, joy, and relief the Lord had brought to and revealed in them concerning Christ's accomplished work as their Savior and Redeemer, my mind was drawn back to when I first heard the Word of truth. I remember quite well how I thought what I had heard and been given faith to believe in was something **EVERYBODY** in my family, friends, and even my foes would be thrilled to hear. Since I thought that to be the case, I sought to **TELL EVERYBODY**. But sadly, like every other regenerated and converted son and daughter of God, I soon learned the natural hatred and contempt my religious friends and family had for the **TRUTH** of God's **FREE GRACE** – "*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know [them], because they are spiritually discerned.*"(I Cor.2:14); "*Because the carnal mind [is] enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*"(Rom.8:7) Even though they rejected and despised it, I pressed forward uncompromisingly, warning and admonishing them, which in reality drove a wedge between us that has existed to this day. **You might be thinking:** "Richard, are you saying we shouldn't witness or declare the Gospel to our families and friends?" **ABSOLUTELY NOT.** Matter of fact, according to the words of our text today, Paul admonished Timothy, as well as all those who have been called as "*ambassadors of Christ*" to "*preach the word, be instant in season, and out of season.*" Let's read our text for today – "*I charge [thee] therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*"(I Tim.4:1,2 - KJV) Here's a literal translation of the same verse – "I do fully testify, then, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who is about to judge living and dead at his manifestation and his reign — preach the word; be earnest in season, out of season, convict, rebuke, exhort, in all long-suffering and teaching."(YLT) Paul makes it clear that since the Lord Jesus Christ will "*judge the quick and the dead at His appearing*", as His ambassadors we are encouraged to "**PREACH THE WORD**". The word translated "*preach*" means 'to herald or to proclaim'. What are we to 'herald' or 'proclaim'? "**THE WORD**". But we have to take into consideration what the Word of God tells us in this matter of proclaiming the Word. Paul made it clear to Timothy – "*be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*" The word translated "*be instant*" means 'to be ready'. The word translated "*in season*" means 'when the opportunity occurs'. The word translated "*out of season*" means 'to lack opportunity'. This reminds me of Peter's words concerning this all important matter of proclaiming the word – "*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and [be] ready always to [give] an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.*"(I Pet.3:15) I've told you this before, but it bears repeating, seeing wisdom gained from experience is important – **EXPLAIN THE VERSE. Listen to me:** You'll know when they are asking with "*meekness and fear*". When that's the case, you should be

prepared through prayerful study of the doctrines of God's Gospel to present and proclaim the Gospel message the Lord has purposed to use to call His sheep to true faith and true repentance.

The young lady I spoke with asked a question that I hadn't really considered in some time: "Do you have a simple way we can share the Gospel with our friends and family when the opportunity arises?" **Let me be clear:** We can't by reasoning and presentation convince folks to believe, but we can and should always be prepared and ready concerning our **HOPE** of salvation if any person asks us "a reason of the hope that is in you." What should we be ready to proclaim to someone when they ask in "meekness and fear"? Let me give you a few doctrinal truths we should and must declare in their hearing.

If someone asks me "a reason of the hope that is in me with meekness and fear", I'd start with this all important Scriptural truth. I would dogmatically declare to them from the Scriptures that the true and living God **DEMANDS** and **WILL ACCEPT NOTHING** but His own perfection! **Listen to our Lord** – "Be ye therefore **PERFECT**, even as your Father which is in heaven **IS PERFECT**." (Matt.5:48) The word translated "perfect" in this verse is the same word our Lord used on the cross, translated by three English words – "**IT IS FINISHED**." It means 'brought to its end, finished, wanting nothing necessary to be complete'. By the mouth of His servant Moses God told us **3 times** of God's **HOLINESS** – "For I [am] the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; **FOR I [am] HOLY**." (Lev.11:44); "Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, **Ye shall be holy: for I THE LORD YOUR GOD [am] HOLY**." (Lev.19:2); "Sanctify yourselves therefore, and **BE YE HOLY: for I [am] the LORD your God**." (Lev.20:7) God wasn't telling sinners to **TRY TO BE HOLY**, but **TELLING THEM WHAT HE DEMANDS – THEY MUST BE HOLY**. Moses knew, believed in, and proclaimed a **THRICE HOLY GOD, and we do too**. The prophet **Habakkuk** made it clear – "[Thou art] of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." (Hab.1:13) God Himself spoke to Moses declaring: "And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear [the guilty]; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth [generation]." (Exo.34:5-7) We must stress to them the reality that wherever God finds the least of sin in the best of men, His holy justice **DEMANDS** their condemnation – "For the **WAGES OF SIN [is] DEATH**." (Rom.6:23a) There are many other Scriptures we can bring before them, all of which requires us to study the doctrines of God's grace and be prepared to declare them.

On the heel of this staggering truth, we must next tell those who ask us "a reason of the hope that is in us with meekness and fear" that every sinner stands guilty and condemned because of their sin. Paul tells us plainly man's state **BY NATURE** – Turn to **Rom.3:10-18**. Let me give you a list of verses that set forth the same reality – "For [there is] not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." (Eccl.7:20); "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of

God.”(Rom.3:23); “Because the carnal mind [is] enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”(Rom.8:7,8) Their natural response to this declared truth will probably be: “But I’m trying to keep the law, and go to church, and praying.” **BE PREPARED** and tell them – “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed [is] every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, [it is] evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.”(Gal.3:10-12) **This is what the Scriptures stress and what we must be prepared to declare:** Trying to do better, trying to be moral, trying to keep the law **WILL NOT DO**. In order for any sinner to go to heaven, “they must have a **RIGHTEOUSNESS** in which God Himself can find no **flaw**.”(William Gadsby) Let me share this quote by J.C.Philpot on God’s work of conviction by His Holy Spirit through the declaration of His strict justice and man’s guilt before him: “All conviction to be true conviction must be thorough. The field must be ploughed, broken up, and furrowed, before the seed can find a home, a seed-bed for the seed to fall in so as to germinate and grow. There is much to be done in a sinner’s heart before Christ can dwell in him by faith, or be formed in him the hope of glory. The heart is naturally very hard; thorns, thistles, and briars overspread its surface; the noxious weeds of pride and lust have taken deep root; much grubbing up of these bosom sins, as well as of our inbred self-righteousness and fleshly holiness, creature strength and sufficiency, is needed to--prepare us to receive a free grace salvation--separate us from the world and false professors--embitter to us the loved things of time and sense--and lay us suing for mercy at the foot of the cross.” In other words, God will strip them bare of **EVERYTHING**, before He sets forth the **ONLY HOPE**.

This brings us to the “**GOOD NEWS**” or Gospel message of **HOPE WE MUST PREACH** to those who see themselves **GUILTY**. Before a sinner will look outside of themselves, they must be convinced of God there is absolutely no hope to be found in them or anything they have done. God alone by His Holy Spirit must do this work, and thank God He does it in all that are His. Think about the Philippian jailor – **Turn to Acts 16:23-31**. This is a sinner asking “a reason of the hope that is in thee with meekness and fear.” **What did Paul do?** Did he get him to say the “sinner’s prayer”? Did he get him to confess Jesus as “his personal Lord and Savior”? **NO** – Paul declared **God’s HOPE** to him and to his family – “And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.” **This is so important:** Unless you **KNOW** the “word of the Lord”, you can never speak the “word of the Lord.” But even if you know the “word of the Lord”, the only way you can set it forth or declare it is by preparing yourself through study of all the doctrines that set forth the Christ that set you free – “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”(II Tim.2:15) The Greek word translated “rightly dividing” means ‘to make straight and smooth, to handle aright, to teach the truth directly and correctly’. The **ONLY WAY** we can do this is through “**STUDY**”! What do we declare? **Quote Rom.1:16,17**. We tell them the doctrine of substitution; the doctrine of imputation; the doctrine of reconciliation. That’s what we come together every Sunday

to do, to prepare ourselves for the work of the ministry – **Eph.4:7-16**. Being convinced of God that He has determined to use the means of His Gospel preached to call His elect to true faith and true repentance, we realize and diligently prepare ourselves to declare the message of reconciliation to all who ask – **II Cor.5:17-21; Rom.10:1-4, 13-17**. Like Phillip, whom the Lord sent to one of His sheep in the desert, God sends forth His children to declare the good news of “*peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*”, using that message to call His sheep by name to Himself – “*Be it known unto you therefore, men [and] brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.*”(Acts 13:38,39) That’s **GOOD NEWS** to every sinner who has seen God’s absolute **HOLINESS** and their absolute **HOPELESSNESS** and **HELPLESSNESS**.

I hope and pray that all of us will use the means God has graciously provided us to prepare ourselves to give an answer to every man that asks us a reason of **OUR HOPE**.