

2014 New Year's Message - PREACH THE WORD

2 Timothy 3:10-4:8

Key Verses 4:2

“Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.”

2 Timothy is Apostle Paul's last letter written when his martyrdom was near. Today's passage is his last words to Timothy, like a will to his dear spiritual son. Apostle Paul's will for Timothy was: **“Preach the word.”** Have you thought of what you would write in your will to your beloved children? This is a question about our first priority. As ministers of Christ, we have many things to do. The younger generation today seems not to be enthusiastic about truth and spiritual life. To serve them, we may apply different kinds of programs and methods. But we must be clear about our first priority and focus in our ministry.

Today's passage exhorts us solemnly and urgently to refocus our calling. Let's think about the words through the Apostle with three questions in mind: What is the nature of the Word? Why should we preach the Word? How should we preach the Word?

I. What Is the Nature of the Word?

Read verse 3:14-15; **“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”** Leading up to this passage, we see challenges Timothy was facing--false teachers and godless environments hostile to the truth of God. Verse 14 begins with **“But as for you.”** In contrast to false teachers and godless people, Paul exhorts Timothy to continue in what he has learned. Here **“continue”** is the same word as **“remain”** in John 15. Timothy is to continue or remain in the gospel faith of the Bible he learned from the faithful servants of God. Who were those from whom Timothy learned? They were Apostle Paul and those who worked with him--Barnabas, Silas, Dr. Luke, Priscilla and Aquila. Wherever they went, they preached the word of God. They shepherded people and raised disciples. Paul exhorts Timothy to continue in the faith and life of those godly people.

I am most thankful to God that I could learn the gospel faith of the Bible from the faithful servants of God. Apart from God's calling and his Word, I would

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have spent all of my life for worldly life and worthless things. What I have learned and have become convinced of made my life truly meaningful and fruitful. I presume all of you would say the same. As ministers of Christ, we must come back to the Word of God and gospel faith we have learned and have become convinced of again and again.

Then what is the nature of the Word of God? Look at verses 15 again: “... **and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.**” Nourished by a Jewish mother, Timothy had known the Old Testament from infancy. Wow, from infancy! May God raise many mothers who nourish their children with the word of God and prayer! Scripture means writing. The Apostle calls the Bible “holy writings.” The Bible is holy—it is separate and different from all other books. In what respects is the Bible holy? The Bible is holy because it is the Word of God even though written in human language. The Bible uniquely gives answers to our fundamental questions - where we came from, who we are, how should we live, and where we are going to. It tells us who God the Creator and the Savior Jesus Christ are. It tells us what God’s plan of world salvation is through the Christ. The truths to these questions shine a great light into human souls and drastically change our lives.

Read verse 16a; “**All Scripture is God-breathed...**” When God breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life, the man became a living being (Ge 2:7). In the same way, all Scripture is breathed out by God. So the God-breathed Word is the Spirit and it is life (Jn 6:63). The Bible is written by 40 human authors over a period of 1,400 years. Yet it has one God as the divine Author. It has a unified theme—the kingdom of God through Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit breathed on each writer so that each word and sentence may perfectly convey the message of God. The fact that God is the author of the Bible puts immense authority and trustworthiness into the words written in it. God is invisible. But God himself speaks to us through the Bible. Through words, we communicate and develop relationships. Likewise, God has communicated and has developed relationships with humans through his words. Abraham became God’s friend and an ancestor of faith through his faith and obedience to God’s Word. Throughout history, God has revealed his power, love and faithfulness to those who showed reverence and love for him through their faith and obedience to his Word.

A great work of God arises when there is even one person who has faith in God’s Word and obeys it. As you know, D. L Moody was an uneducated man. But

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he simply put his faith in God's Word and believed that God will keep his Word. Here is an example of his preaching; "Have faith in God! Take Him at His Word! Believe what He says! Believe the record God has given of His Son! If a man told me he couldn't believe me, I should have a right to ask him if I had ever broken my word with him. And if I had not broken my word with him, he ought to believe me. I would like to ask you, 'Has God ever broken His Word?' Never! My friends, He will keep His Word. Unbelief is not a misfortune, but is the sin of the world." God used this one man who put his faith in God's Word to bring a great spiritual revival in America and the United Kingdom.

I'd like to share one UBF missionary's testimony. Like many of us, he was deeply touched by the words in Genesis. He said, "Genesis chapter 1 is the Word of light to the world. It is God's proclamation that we came from him, and we exist because of him. It is the absolute truth that all people must hear. Genesis 1:31 declares how beautifully we were created. When this truth was revealed to me, I said out of complete confidence 'There is no one who will not be changed by this Word of God.' Since then Genesis Bible study became the very important asset for my missionary life." When his family started a new chapter in 2004, he deeply accepted God's calling for him to be a shepherd for the lost, the wounded and the demon-possessed. He served one high school graduate who could not read or write properly, holding on to John 11:40; **"Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"** The young man received Genesis 1:26 and began to grow as a Bible teacher. His change revealed the glory of God and moved many. As disciples grew, the missionary helped them to write deep Bible testimonies until they accepted one Word of God. Based on their learning, he also helped them to prepare Bible study notes. Then they began to invite students and teach them the Bible. After 10 years, now there are 50 dedicated disciples and seven married couples in his ministry. Many leaders serve 10-20 weekly one-to-one Bible studies. Their weekly leaders' meeting is filled with heavenly joy as they share the grace they received from the Word of God. This is happening in the United States through one missionary family who has absolute faith in the Word of God. May God help all of us to believe the Word of God and teach and preach it by that faith!

II. Why Should We Preach the Word?

(1) We preach the Word, because it is the solemn command of God and of Christ

Read 4:1-2a; **"In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge**

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the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word..." Here "word" refers to the Scriptures, with special reference to the gospel. **"Preach the Word!"** This is the command, not advice. This is given in the presence of God and of Christ who **"will judge the living and the dead."** This means that it is the command of God and of Christ Jesus. This charge is given also in view of Christ's appearing and his kingdom. What can be more imperative than the command of God and of Christ Jesus who will come as the Judge and Ruler of the universe? This is why the ministry of preaching is more important than any other things in this world.

Preaching is not only explaining Bible passages. In ancient times, a herald proclaimed the king's message. Preaching is heralding the Word of the King Jesus. Before his ascension, the Risen King Jesus said, **"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."** (Mt 28:19-20) Jesus preached the Word of God from the first day until the last day of his earthly ministry. He raised disciples by teaching them the Word of God. Jesus commissioned his remaining work to the church. The church exists to carry on this Commission. When we teach the Word of God and help our Bible students to obey His words, Jesus promised to work with us to raise disciples

(2) We preach the Word, because the Word leads people to Christ the Savior.

Paul said that the Holy Scriptures **are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (3:15b).** The Old Testament as a whole points to Christ the Savior to come. And the New Testament testifies to Christ who has come to save sinners. Jesus Christ is the heart of the Bible. Jesus said, **"You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me"** (Jn 5:39). **"God wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"** (1Ti 2:4). God waits for sinners to come back to him like the father who waits for his prodigal son to come home. All cars yield to an ambulance, for there is nothing more valuable and urgent than saving a human life. What can save people's lives from eternal death? The wisdom of this world only makes people foolish because of its darkness of sin. Only the Word of God has the power to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. And faith is born through hearing the Word of the gospel (Ro 10:17). Where there is the preaching of the Word, there is the work of life coming from the breath of God. We must preach the Word to lead the perishing souls to

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Christ the Savior. We must preach Christ from all Scriptures, the Old and New Testament.

(3) We preach the Word, because the Word of God is able to equip the servant of God for every good work.

Read verses 3:16-17; **“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”** So the Bible not only leads people to salvation, but also transforms their lives. **“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart”** (Heb 4:12). The Word of God convicts, corrects, and trains a person in holy living. As servants of God, how can we be thoroughly equipped for every good work? We should devote ourselves to deep Bible study and obeying God’s word as of first importance. The best example in the Bible is Ezra. As a Jewish exile, he had a deep sense of problem and broken heart for his time and people. What did he do? Ezra 7:10 says, **“For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.”** First thing he did was to devote himself to the study the Scriptures and obeying God’s Word. Then he could be thoroughly equipped by the Spirit of God to serve his people in a dark time. He was filled with a passion for God that he even pulled out the hair from Israelite men who had compromised with sin. We don’t have to pull out people’s hair, but we should have the same passion that comes from the Word of God. Through his preaching and teaching, a national revival came.

Since the Scripture is the very Word of God, deep Bible study is supremely useful in raising disciples. A deep Bible study doesn’t mean that we master the Bible text. Rather, the living and active Word should thoroughly master our hearts and lives. To raise disciples we can think of many programs and methods. Ultimately, however, only the Word of God can transform people and equip them for every good work. We should preach the Word and prayerfully help our Bible students to accept God’s word and obey it.

III. How to Preach the Word?

How then should we preach the word?

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(1) Be prepared in season and out of season.

Look at verse 4:2b; **“...be prepared in season and out of season...”** The word **“be prepared”** refers to positive actions, and it can be also translated as **“approach, pop up, stand by.”** It best describes our fishing in campuses. What does “in season and out of season” mean? It means all the time. We are to be prepared whether the time is favorable or unfavorable, whether it is convenient or inconvenient, whether we are welcome or unwelcome. When we are prepared with the Word of God and readiness, God can use us any time for his work.

UBF shepherds in a chapter that serves the most prominent university in Korea wanted to invite students of the Medical School to Bible study. During the day, students were so occupied with classes that they wouldn't even talk to them. So the shepherds changed their strategy and decided to go night fishing when students leave the campus to go home. The golden fishing time was 11 p.m. when school library closed. So they went to the campus late at night. In this way many disciples came to grow, and they became medical doctor missionaries and shepherds. Now this chapter is one of the most growing chapters in Korea with 120 members, though many said that a successful gospel work would not be possible in that campus.

(2) Preach the word with great patience and instruction

Preaching is not one-sided speech or teaching. It involves pastoral care. The apostle says, **“...correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction (4:2c).”** These days, it seems almost impossible to rebuke and correct anyone. But we can do this with the Word of God. When we advise people by correctly handling God's Word and encouraging them, the Holy Spirit moves their hearts to repentance. We should do this with great patience and careful instructions through prayers. We should never do this when we are angry. When we are angry it is time to pray, not to rebuke or correct. We should notice the emphasis – “great patience and careful instruction.” This requires listening ears and carefully thought out words in love. Proverbs 25:15 says, **“Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone.”** There is great power in having great patience and careful instruction, enough to break a bone. Wow!

Paul predicts that **“people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead,**

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they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths” (4:3-4). It is striking to see that the Apostle precisely described our time. Today many people think there is no absolute truth. They value experience and regard morality as personal preference. In their emptiness and darkness, they embrace many human teachings that cannot nourish their inner life nor solve problems in life. This postmodern mindset produces many Christians who try to build their spiritual life based on personal experiences rather than the Scriptures. In this atmosphere, there are many who mislead people through their heretical teachings.

Read verse 4:5; **“But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.”** **“Keep your head”** means to be sober and watchful. Intoxicants are not limited to alcoholic liquor and drug. Spiritually anything that comes from the world intoxicates human mind. How can we keep our head in all situations? We can be spiritually sober when Christ dwells in our hearts through his Word. Let’s do the work of an evangelist by reaching students, and discharge all the duties of our ministry by taking care of God’s flock of sheep and raising disciples.

(3) Preach the word to the end

As the end of his life was near, Apostle Paul wanted to pour out his life like a drink offering to God (6). A drink offering was wine added to a burnt offering; its fragrance pleased the Lord (Nu 5:7). Here we can see that Paul’s inmost desire was to glorify God. Read verses 4:7 and 8a; **“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...”** Even when he was waiting for his execution, there was no hint of sorrow or fear in Paul. Rather, he was like a joyful marathoner who was waiting for the award of a gold medal after finishing his race. Paul fought the good fight to the end. Marathoners say they face a moment during the race when they are tempted to give up. The moment is called “the wall.” Those who overcame the wall can complete the race. A famous marathoner said, “Sometimes the moment that challenges us the most defines us.” For a soldier or an athlete, the ultimate fight is with oneself. Paul could finish the race, since he overcame all the walls by having Christ dwell in his heart through his Word. Let’s continue the preaching of the Word to the end, looking forward to the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to us.

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Let's remember the Lord Jesus who preached the Word, took care of God's flock of sheep and raised disciples. Let's also always remember His Command, **"Go and make disciples of all nations.teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."** A herald is not to make the King's Word obscure by his own ideas. We should preach the Word, not our feelings or ideas. We are to preach Jesus Christ and his gospel from all Scriptures. There is life, glory and power in the Word. It thoroughly equips us for every good work and leads people to the Savior. May God help us preach the Word to the end, so that we may face the end of our life on earth triumphantly like Apostle Paul. I'd like to finish this message with a quote from a famous preacher's book:

"Only one life, 'Twill soon be past; Only what's done for Christ will last."