

DEAR TIMOTHY...

AN 8 WEEK SERIES IN THE BOOK OF 2 TIMOTHY

Connect group questions

2 Timothy 4:1-8 - Dear Timothy... preach the Word!

1. Read 2 Timothy 4:1-8. If you have different translations read the passage from several different translations. In this passage, we are urged to “preach the Word”, to share our faith. What obstacles do we face in trying to do this? What fears within and obstacles from without?
2. **DEVELOP AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE.**
3. Read verse 1 again. Paul’s starting point is to ask that we be motivated by an eternal perspective. Describe this perspective. What should we be conscious of? How will this help?
PREACH THE WORD.
4. Read verse 2. What do you understand “preach the word” to mean? Whose job is this? What does “in season and out of season” mean? Give practical examples of the latter, and discuss how we might overcome those situations.
5. Read again the second half of verse 2, from “correct ...”. Why might correcting and rebuking be necessary as we seek to proclaim God’s message? How difficult might this be?
UNDERSTAND THE TIMES.
6. Read verses 3-4. In what sense does this description reflect our current society? What are some of the greatest challenges we face in seeking to share God’s message with a world that is moving further away from God?
WE NEED COURAGE AND PERSEVERANCE
7. Read verse 5. What charge does Paul give to Timothy here? How does this apply to us all? Read Matthew 28:19-20 to refresh you memory of God’s charge to us all.
8. In asking us to “endure hardship”, what inevitable outcome of proclaiming God’s message is Paul referring to? Can you share some experiences you have had in this regard?
BE INSPIRED BY THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE US.
9. Read verses 6-8. Paul reminds Timothy that he, Paul, has almost finished his race - he has faithfully preached the Word through many trials. The inference is that the example of those who have gone before us should inspire us - even those who have now passed on. Can you share some examples of faithful servants of God who have inspired you? How does their example encourage us to persevere?
10. Read Hebrews 12:1. This is at least partly a reference to God’s servants who have died and are now watching us and cheering us on. How might this inspire and encourage us?
11. Read verse 8 again. Part of Paul’s motivation is the thought of the reward he will receive from God. In Matthew 6:19-20. Jesus encourages us to “store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” Are you very conscious of this yourself? How might it help you to remain faithful?
12. Can you share the names of people with whom you have an opportunity to share God’s message? Pray together as a group for God’s help as you seek to do that.

Dear Lord, help us to have a passion for sharing the good news of Jesus with everyone we can. Please forgive us for those times when we have held back. Please grant us boldness and sensitivity. Please lead us by your Holy Spirit and enable us to live our whole lives faithfully proclaiming the message of salvation.

Date: 9 June 2019
Services: 7:30, 9:30 Tewantin and Peregian
Series: Dear Timothy
Title: ... preach the Word!
Passage: 2 Timothy 3:4:1-8
Outline:

1. **The True Gospel Will Become Increasingly Unpopular**
 2. **Proclaiming God's Message is Not Linked to its Convenience**
 3. **Proclaiming God's Message Requires Grounding in God's Word**
 4. **Proclaiming God's Message Requires Courage and Perseverance**
 5. **Proclaiming God's Message Is Motivated by an Eternal Perspective**
 6. **Proclaiming God's Message is Inspired by Those Who Have Preceded Us**
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INTRODUCTION

- Have you ever had an opportunity to speak up for God and failed to do so? I have.
- Have you ever been presented with a clear opportunity to share something of your faith, but you have balked, you have seized up, you have pulled back from the precipice? I have.
- Have you ever come away from an encounter with someone, knowing that you should have said something, but you didn't, because of fear of ruining that relationship, or fear of rejection, or just plain old tiredness and laziness? I have.
- Or maybe you DID say something, but you know, deep down, that you soft-peddled the message to make it more palatable. You watered it down until it was so inoffensive that it was devoid of any significant spiritual impact. I have.
- This morning's Bible passage is for me and for you. It's a poignant reminder to us all, that God's primary call upon each of our lives is to be his voice to the world, to speak up for him, even when it is not convenient, or popular, or well-received.
- Paul, in this section of his letter to the young pastor, Timothy, makes 6 important points.



1. THE TRUE GOSPEL WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY UNPOPULAR (vv.3-4)

“The time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, 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.”

- This prophecy is being fulfilled before our very eyes. In fact you would have to be living under a rock not to be aware of it. These are unprecedented times.
- Never before, in the Western world, have we seen such a deliberate, wholesale rejection of Christian beliefs and values by mainstream society.
- Sin is no longer sin, in fact many sins are now openly promoted as wholesome lifestyle choices.
- The biblical narrative has been relegated to the realm of myth.
- The creation story has been replaced by the theory of evolution
- God has been dethroned, and the new god of science is now the ultimate authority, along with the god of hedonism - the all-consuming pursuit of pleasure.
- In fact, the transformation of Australian society in just a few short decades is extraordinary.



- In 1947, when the Australian Bureau of Statistics first started collecting data, 85% of all Australians attended church at least once per month. Today, in 2019, an estimated 85% of Australians will not darken the doorway of a church all year long.

**** My daughter, Kylie, teaches 1st class at a Christian School. A mother of a girl in her class recently came to see her. The mother said her daughter had come home from school saying that Easter was all about someone rising from the dead. The mother said she had tried to correct her daughter by explaining that Easter was about Easter eggs and the Easter bunny, but her daughter was adamant that her teacher had told her that someone had risen from the dead. So the mother came to Kylie, her daughter's teacher, saying, "I'm really sorry. My daughter is obviously making stuff up, so could you help us correct her."*

Kylie had to correct the mother. She had to explain that Easter IS actually the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead! That her daughter had got it right! The mother had NEVER HEARD the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus! NEVER! She is a white, Anglo-Saxon Aussie woman, not a recent immigrant. And she had never heard the story of Jesus Christ.

- Ladies and gentlemen, this is the Australia, in which we now live. You don't have to go overseas to be a missionary! You just need to walk out of your front door.

- The ignorance of the gospel within our own nation is extraordinary! And there is an urgent need for God's people to share the good news of Jesus!



2. OUR CHARGE TO PROCLAIM GOD'S MESSAGE IS NOT LINKED TO ITS CONVENIENCE - EITHER TO US OR TO SOCIETY (v.2a)

"Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season"

- Paul's reference to "in season and out of season" here, is simply saying "whether its convenient or not". We need to share the good news, whether we feel like it or not.

- Sometimes I will feel like sharing my faith, and other times I won't feel like it. But Paul says, that is irrelevant. Your duty is the same.

**** In a recent sermon, Mark shared how the hairdresser who was giving him a haircut wanted to engage in a discussion about his job and his faith, and Mark confessed that he was feeling a bit like: "Can you please just cut my hair - I don't feel like having an in depth discussion right now."*

- We've all been there, haven't we?

- But the Apostle Paul is saying to us, "No. Every moment is a gospel moment - whether you feel like it or not."

- Similarly, we need to proclaim God's message, regardless of whether the society around us is open to hearing it or not. They NEED to hear it, whether they want to or not!

- Sadly, there are people in Australia who will live all their lives without ever hearing the Gospel. That person that you encounter tomorrow or the day after - you may be their only chance of hearing the Gospel. You may be the only Christian they ever have a meaningful conversation with. You may be the last Christian they meet before they die.

- Every moment is a Gospel moment. Every encounter is a Gospel encounter. In season and out of season. Whether its convenient or not.



- The Apostle Peter wrote, in 1 Peter 3:15, ***"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."*** ALWAYS. Every day. Whether you feel like it or not.

**** The Australian evangelist, John Chapman, was a great inspiration to me. I remember hearing him say that every single morning he started his day by reading the newspaper and thinking of a Christian response to current*

affairs - a comment he could make in normal conversation with people that would gently introduce some element of the gospel.

- He took his mandate very seriously - to always be prepared, in season and out of season.

- What about you? Do you go into each day ready, willing and able to be God's spokesperson? Do you go into each day looking for opportunities to share your faith? Because that is what this passage is calling us to do.



3. OUR CHARGE TO PROCLAIM GOD'S MESSAGE REQUIRES THAT OUR MESSAGE, AND WE AS MESSAGE-BEARERS, ARE GROUNDED IN GOD'S WORD (v.2b)

“Correct, rebuke and encourage, with great patience and careful instruction.”

- We live in a postmodern world where truth is now seen as relative. Your truth is not my truth, and my truth is not your truth. Society now insists that there is no absolute truth, and no one has the right to correct someone else.

- But that's not what God's word says. ***“Correct, rebuke and encourage, with great patience and careful instruction.”***

- And the only way we can do that, is if we know God's Word ourselves, and are willing to speak it and able defend it.

- Are you reading your Bible? Are you growing in your understanding of God's Word? Are you growing in your ability to explain and defend the truth?

- (I encourage you to get some resources to help you to understand the Bible better ...)



4. OUR CHARGE TO PROCLAIM GOD'S MESSAGE REQUIRES COURAGE AND PERSEVERANCE (v.5)

“But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.”

- Paul is not unrealistic. He knows that what he is asking us to do is not easy. He knows that what God is demanding of us, will at times be very difficult. We will meet resistance. Our message will be unpopular. At times, we will be mocked and ridiculed. We may even lose friendships. We may lose jobs or positions. We may lose respect.

- But in the midst of all that, God's Word says very clearly to us, ***“endure that hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.”***

- This is not just a verse for pastors and ministers. This is a verse for all Christians. Because we have ALL been given

the great commission by Jesus himself -




“Go into all the world and make disciples ... and you will be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth.”

- But this is by no means an easy task. The world is increasingly hostile to the gospel.

- Marten Iles is an Australian lawyer who has a podcast. And he says that his law firm has been inundated in the last 12 months with cases of Christians who have been sacked because they have simply voiced their Christian views in the workplace. Doctors, dentists, scientists, financial advisors, counsellors, construction workers, council employees, academics, university students. They have been disbarred, sacked, removed from courses - all because they expressed their Christian faith. They didn't steal from the office petty cash. They didn't abuse fellow workers. They didn't engage in sexual harassment. They weren't violent. They weren't ineffective in their jobs or studies. They simply shared their faith.



- And to those people, and to us, God's word says, *"endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry."*

- We need to remember that Jesus said, *"If they persecuted me, they will persecute you."* But he also said, as he gave the great commission,  *"And I will be with you always, to very end of the age."*



5. OUR CHARGE TO PROCLAIM GOD'S MESSAGE SHOULD ARISE FROM AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE (v.1)

- Notice how Paul prefaces his charge to us ...

"In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word"

- In other words, the thing that should motivate us, that should enable us to persevere, motivate us to be faithful in proclaiming God's message, even through terrible persecution and hardship, is the knowledge that we will one day stand in God's presence. The knowledge that God will one day evaluate my life - my service for Him. The knowledge that I will have to give an account of my life to God, and that He will ask me, *"How did you go, fulfilling the mission that I gave you?"*

- It's a very sobering thought. But instead of frightening us, it should motivate us. It should radically change our perspective regarding our life here on earth. The purpose of your life is not to be happy. It's not to be comfortable. It's not to be popular. It's not to accumulate enough so that one day you can transition into a retirement of self-serving pleasure.

- The purpose of your life is to joyfully serve the living God, before whom we will one day stand. And every other purpose must be subjugated to that primary one.



- Also implicit in this eternal perspective is the knowledge that those who do not know God will one day stand in His presence and be judged by him. And that knowledge should motivate us with compassion - to do all we can to rescue them, and help them find the grace of God that we have found.



6. OUR CHARGE TO PROCLAIM GOD'S MESSAGE SHOULD BE INSPIRED BY THOSE WHO HAVE FAITHFULLY GONE BEFORE US (vv.6-8)

"For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. 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."

- What a statement! I hope, at the end of my life, I can say the same thing. *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith"*.

- What an inspiring servant of God the Apostle Paul was. What a faithful servant - despite at times terrible persecution and suffering.

- He was whipped. He was stoned almost to death. He was beaten with rods. He was imprisoned twice, the second time in a lonely dungeon where he many have eventually died. And all because of his faith.

- Yet he never once waived in his commitment to speaking out for God.

- History is replete with men and women of great faith and extraordinary perseverance - people who have endured great hardship for the sake of God's kingdom, and who are now in paradise, having received their reward for faithful service.

- We follow in the footsteps of men and women of great faith and commitment. And the writer to the Hebrews tells us that these saints are now cheering us on.



- Hebrews 12:1 says, ***“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us”***

- We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses - those who have gone before us - and they are cheering us on! They're saying ***“Come on! You can do it! Speak up! Speak out! Don't be afraid! Don't be ashamed! Speak up for the Saviour! You can do it!”***

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CONCLUSION

- Some of you may be feeling as though you haven't been all that great a witness up to this point. You haven't been all that bold. You haven't taken every opportunity that has come your way. You've been reticent to speak about your faith.

- Join the queue. I stand there with you.

- But today is the first day of the rest of your life. A life that can now be lived with an eternal perspective. A life dedicated to serving God above all else. A life spent fulfilling the great commission, by pointing others to the One who saved you.

- You don't have to be a gifted evangelist. You may never actually lead someone to Christ. You may never be the last link in the chain. But you CAN be A link in the chain. Another Christian voice that helps someone move one step closer to God.

- This morning I invite you to come into the mission field. Come and join the team. Be an active part of God's great saving work on earth.



- I want to leave you with a selection of quotes from the great Christian missionary, C.T. Studd. Charles Thomas Studd played cricket for England in the famous test against Australia in 1882 that became the start of the ashes - the test where they burned the stumps. But soon afterwards, he turned his back on fame and glory to become a missionary. He spent the rest of his life as a missionary in China, then India, and finally Africa, where he died in 1931.

- Have a listen to these quotes, and be inspired by his passion and zeal to share the Gospel with the lost.



- ***“Some want to live within the sound, Of church or chapel bell; I want to run a rescue shop, Within a yard of hell.”***



- ***“Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last.”***



- ***“If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.”***



- ***“Let us not glide through this world and then slip quietly into heaven, without having blown the trumpet loud and long for our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Let us see to it that the devil will hold a thanksgiving service in hell, when he gets the news of our departure from the field of battle.”***



- ***“True Christianity is like smallpox. If you get it, you give it to others, and it spreads.”***

- May God help each one of us to have the same zeal to take his message to the world.