



Sermon Study Guide

Questions from the Brink: Will You Preach the Word?

2 Timothy 4:1-8 – Sunday, November 3, 2013

**Study questions are in italics*

Introduction

- Pastors are regularly told that they need to do all they can to market their church. The counsel usually comes in the form of figuring out who lives near the church and writing a sermon to address their needs. These advisers don't deny the need for Scripture, but the emphasis is on what people want to hear. As one guru so crassly put it, "People don't buy products, people buy solutions, features and benefits. When you invite people to church, try to list the benefit they or their family will get from attending."
- We live in a generation of church growth "experts" who don't need the Holy Spirit because they have mass marketing. God has a different plan. It's pretty simple: preach the Word and trust the Holy Spirit to bring the growth. That's the point of 2 Timothy 4:1-8. *What comes to your mind when you hear the phrase "church growth"?* We want to understand Paul's charge to Timothy.

First, the Urgency of the Charge (verse 1)

- Paul's charge to Timothy is made in the presence of God the Father. This is Paul's way of saying the command he is about to give Timothy is not to be taken lightly. But not only that, the charge is made in the presence of God the Son, who will one day return to judge the living and the dead. *Why do you think Paul points out that Jesus is the Judge right before he issues Timothy an important charge?*
- It is clear that God will hold Timothy accountable for how he shepherds the church in Ephesus. Paul wants Timothy to know he is not finally accountable to him, to the false teachers, or even to the church—Timothy is accountable to Jesus Christ.
- Timothy, therefore, ought to minister with a sense of urgency. For Timothy, as we are about to see, that meant preaching the Word. *But what does living with a sense of urgency mean for you? Jesus Christ could return at any moment. Are you ready for his return? What can you do, this very week, to live with a greater sense of urgency?*

Second, the Content of the Charge (verse 2).

- Here, in one simple verse, is the pastor's job description. Look carefully at 2 Tim 3:16-17. *What do these two verses have to do with 2 Tim 4:2?*
- Every pastor's main responsibility is preaching the Word. This is what God uses to build the church. Of course, the preacher must have the gift of teaching and of course the preaching will be of no use unless the Spirit works, but the preacher's mandate is still a simple one, preach the Word.
- As God's people, we are called to gather under the preaching of the Word. Which is what God's people have always done. Adam and Eve lived, at least for a season, together under the command of God in the Garden of Eden. Noah and his family lived under God's command to build the ark of their salvation. Abraham and his family lived under the command of God to go to the land of Canaan. The freed slaves of Israel lived under God's Law in the wilderness and later in the Promised Land. Those Israel regularly failed, they were always called to live under the Word spoken to them through God's prophets.
- Today, God's people are called to live under the Word of Christ (Heb 1:2). Christ is the Word that Paul preached (Col 1:28) and the Word Timothy is commanded to preach. Every believer is, therefore, called to gather together in a local church and sit under God's Word just as God's people have always done. *What parts of a church service should change with the times and what parts should stay the same?*
- The preacher is "to be ready in season and out of season" to preach the Word. *Why do you think Paul told Timothy to be ready all the time? Part of preaching and teaching the Bible is reproving, rebuking, and exhorting (v. 2). What does this look like? How have you seen this done well and how have you seen this done poorly?*

Third, the Reason for the Charge (verses 3-8)

- Paul charges Timothy to preach the Word *because Paul knows we need the Word. But a day will come when people will not recognize this, they won't want the Word but they will want, instead, "teachers to suit their own passions."*
- Look carefully at verses 4-5. *Where do you see people like this? Is Paul talking about people in the church? Do you ever find yourself struggling to "endure sound teaching"? Why or why not? What can we do to help people realize they need the Word of God more than anything else?*
- Paul is so convinced that we need the Word of God, that he makes this his final charge to Timothy. In verses 6-8 he drives home the point that his end has come. *What did it look like for Paul to fight the good fight, finish the race and keep the faith? Part of the answer must be that Paul, himself, preached the Word. And in so doing, Paul knows that "there is laid up for [him] the crown of righteousness."*

The Word is what Paul needed, the Word is what Timothy needed, and the Word is what we need.

Conclusion

- **First, listen to the Word.** If you want to be able to say that you fought the good fight, then you must, personally, listen to the Word of God. *What does this look like in your daily life? How do you listen to the Word?*
- **Second, rejoice in our calling as a church.** No other organization is tasked with the responsibility of preaching the Bible. This should bring us joy. Read Psalm 19:7-8. Notice that the Word makes the believer's heart rejoice. *Are you thankful to be part of a church that preaches the Word?*
- **Third, know what to look for in a church.** It is tempting to choose a church on the basis of the music or a particular ministry you value. But the most important criterion is whether that church preaches the Word. *How would you counsel someone who asks, "How can I know if this church preaches the Word?"*
- **Fourth, pray for your pastors.** Pastors will one day be held accountable by God for whether they preached his Word. Pray that your pastors would be holy, honest, and direct. Pray they'd be sober-minded and willing to endure suffering. Pray they would faithfully preach the Word. *What could keep a pastor from being willing to preach the Word?*
- **Fifth, pray for your church.** Pray the congregation would never lean on its own understanding but always lean on God's Word. Pray we would never think it takes gimmicks to build the church. Pray the Holy Spirit would take God's Word and build his church.