

Marks of the Faithful Preacher, Part 2

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:2

Code: 55-21

Let's open our Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 4, that last chapter in Paul's letter to Timothy and the last chapter that he ever penned...2 Timothy chapter 4. And we're looking at part two in our series on the marks of the faithful preacher. The first five verses of this particular chapter are Paul's summary to Timothy of what is required of a faithful preacher. He writes, "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 and by His Kingdom, preach the Word, be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and teaching for 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. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." Tremendously important instruction to the faithful preacher.

Over the last couple of years, all of us in the United States have become very much aware of the great monument that stands in New York harbor which we call the Statue of Liberty. That gift from France has meant much to the emotion of America, standing symbolically for the freedoms which we enjoy. As an interesting little note about the statue that struck me last week as I was reading something about it and that is the fact that when it was sculpted by the sculptor and given to us from France there were no helicopters or airplanes. It is quite curious, however, that the artist took great pain to make sure that every detail on the statue was perfectly right, including the top of the head of the Statue of Liberty. That is especially curious because he must have known that when it was fully erected it would be higher than anyone could possibly see and that the top of the head would only have been seen by various and sundry birds who happen to fly at that altitude. Even buildings did not reach that height. And yet he took great pain to make sure that every hair on the coiffeur of the Statue of Liberty was properly in place. If no one in the world knew but a few birds, he would know whether it was done with excellence. Little did he know that some day almost everyone flying in and out of New York would have occasion to check on the detail of his work as they would fly above the head of the Statue of Liberty.

I guess he knew what every man or woman knows who makes a mark on the world and that is that excellence and quality extends beyond what you assume people can see. There's some things in the quality and the excellence of work which maybe we assume no one will ever see but we must do excellently because that's in us to do it that way. And I suppose that what sets people apart as to the excellence of their labor is not so much what they do that is seen but what they do that is not

seen...the kind of excellence that goes to great great detail to cover every part...cover every part.

That translates into ministry, folks. It really does. The faithful preacher, I believe Paul is saying and it's coming from his own heart, attends not only on what he knows others will see but on what he knows only God may see. He is concerned with the details of his life that may never be public knowledge but that undergird the quality of everything that he does. The faithful preacher gives attention to every detail. He knows, first of all, that God sees them all and he realizes that maybe some day some whom he think will never see them just may. It's in that spirit that I believe the Apostle Paul ministered and I believe it's in that spirit that he wrote to Timothy because here he calls for Timothy to give attention to the details of his ministry, the small things, the great concerns that are behind the scenes. In fact it's not just here, it's been that way through both of these letters. It is a truism, dear friends, in the ministry that what you display to others is a direct product of what your details are like in life. You cannot hide that from God and ultimately you really can't hide it from men either because if you're not a person given over to the excellence of details, it will show up in the visible part just as much as in the invisible part.

And so the Apostle Paul calls for excellence in the life of Timothy, excellence in that which is seen and heard and excellence in that which is not seen and heard by any other than God. And that's the way it must be for the faithful preacher. And I really do believe that very often the difference between an eminently successful and faithful man of God and one who is not so successful and maybe not so faithful is what they do in the details of life that no one ever sees. The faithful preacher is unique because he cares for the little things and that makes a difference in the big things.

Paul has written to Timothy of many little things, many details of life that must be in place. And now he sums up in some sweeping terms the challenge of ministry that lays at the feet of Timothy. And as I noted last time there are eight elements that Timothy must understand if he is to be a faithful preacher, eight elements that I must understand if I'm to be a faithful preacher, eight elements that you must understand as a congregation if you are to hold the preacher to faithfulness.

First of all last time we noted that there must be an understanding of the seriousness of his commission. In verse 1 Paul said, "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...that is His Second Coming...and His Kingdom, the establishing of His millennial and eternal reign." That indicates the seriousness of Timothy's commission. He is commanded to render his service in the presence of the one who will be his judge. And I pointed out to you last time that that is an unusual thing. In the world men are judges of other men, but usually the judge himself has no personal knowledge the man he is to judge. And so he must call into the courtroom many witnesses to ascertain second hand what is true about the man. But in the case of the servant of Christ, he will stand before a judge who has seen everything he ever did, heard every word he ever said and saw every thought he ever thought. The judge has perfect knowledge of the one He will judge.

The compelling thing in ministry is that we are solemnly warned about an accountability to the one who will be our judge who is also knowledgeable of everything we do. Timothy must realize then that he serves in the presence of the very one who will render the verdict on his ministry. That points up the seriousness of his commission. We must all, says Paul, stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive for the things done in the body whether they be good or useless. We will all, says Paul, face the time when the one, the Lord, who searches the hearts will reveal the truth and then each man will have his praise from God. And so we serve with a compelling sense of seriousness because we know we serve in full view of the one who will evaluate our work.

That takes us to the second point and the one that we will look at this morning, along with the third one. The faithful preacher must understand the content of his commission...the content of it. Notice verse 2, just the first command, "Preach the Word." That brief command is the first of five commands and it distills the very essence of the preacher's task. It boils down what we really are to do, we are to preach the Word. The verb speaks of the function and the substantive, the noun speaks of the content. Preach is what we do and the Word is what we preach. That's our calling.

I remember as a young boy when I shared with my father that I felt God had called me to preach. He gave me a Bible and in it he wrote, "Dear Johnny, preach the Word, 2 Timothy 4:2." A simple statement, one that became the compelling charge in my heart. In its simplicity I have never forgotten that instruction from my father...preach the Word. What else is there to preach?

Let's talk about preaching for a moment. The verb kerussomeans to herald, or to literally proclaim publicly, to publicly announce. In the culture of its time apart from Scripture it had to do with one of the imperial messengers sent from the emperor to publicly give a message to the people. Typically since there were no sources of media like radio, television, publications and so forth, when the emperor wanted to make a public announcement, he sent a public herald, or a public preacher, a proclaimer into the community and there they would proclaim the message of the emperor. Paul called himself a preacher in 1 Timothy chapter 2 verse 7 and here in 2 Timothy in chapter 1 verse 11 he says I was appointed a preacher for the gospel. I was appointed a preacher, a herald, a public proclaimer. And that is what a preacher is to do by way of function. Timothy must realize that he is called to publicly proclaim the Word of God.

Now doing a public proclamation was not an easy thing. There was the timidity of Timothy to which we have referred on a numerous...numerous occasions. Timothy was a timid soul, somewhat by nature, not like the strong and courageous Apostle Paul in his personal constitution. And then there was the fact that he was young and some people felt him suspect because of that. Then there was the fact, too, that he felt a bit inadequate in public proclamation because he might therefore enter into debate with some very sophisticated Ephesian errorists who would be able to lay on him arguments for which he had not yet developed a successful polemic or apologetic. And so he felt intimidated in

that particular arena. He also knew full well that were he to continue public proclamation of God's truth he would come into great debate and hostility from both Jews who were antagonistic to the gospel and the ever-boiling Roman hostility that was bringing about persecution and which had even put Paul in prison at this time.

So, there were some fairly compelling external reasons why Timothy might want to silence his proclamation. When Paul commands him to preach, he is then speaking, as it were, against the grain of the natural inclination. Be bold, be courageous, herald the truth in the public forum. He was to do what Noah did, for Scripture tells us in 2 Peter 2:5 that Noah was a preacher of righteousness. He preached publicly against the sin and wickedness of that antediluvian, that pre-flood society. He preached righteousness. He preached the truth of God. He was to do as was Jonah to do, who went...it says in Jonah chapter 3...through Nineveh, one day's journey and was preaching and crying out against the sin of that city. He did what John the Baptist was to do. It said that John the Baptist came preaching. So bold was he, it says, that he preached really boldly and forthrightly repentance, even attacking the Herod himself for his sin, as we shall see a little later. He was to what Jesus was to do, the prince of all preachers who came preaching repentance and preaching the Kingdom. He was a proclaimer. He was a public voice crying out of the truth of God.

There's a two-fold thing here that I would remind you of. When we were in 1 Timothy chapter 6 you remember in verse 20 where Paul instructed Timothy to guard the truth, to guard the deposit which had been given to him? And then again in 2 Timothy chapter 1 I think it was verse 14, he was told to hold on to what was entrusted to him, guard through the Holy Spirit the treasure entrusted to you. Now he is told to proclaim it and there's an almost paradoxical two-fold responsibility. On the one hand, guard it. On the other hand, give it away. Guard it as to the sacredness of its content. Give it away as to the power of its proclamation. And so Timothy is reminded that he is to be preacher. He is to proclaim the Word.

Now what do we mean by the Word? Well go back into chapter 3 at the very end. We have there a clear indication of what he has in mind. Verse 15 refers to the sacred writings. As you know we saw that to be the Old Testament. Then in verse 16, all Scripture Old and New Testament, is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. Then he says preach the Word, and that is the Word to be preached. What Word? All Scripture, all Scripture, the sacred writing, the whole logos of divinely revealed truth.

Back in chapter 1 verse 13, "Retain the standard of sound words which you've heard from me and then guard that treasure." What is that? The revelation of God. Then in chapter 2 he says, verse 15, "Study it, handle it accurately, the word of truth." First, guard it. Secondly, handle it accurately. Now proclaim it. It goes really in that order. First you take in the truth. Then you come to fully understand it. Then you take the responsibility to fully proclaim it. The whole logos of divinely revealed truth we

are to proclaim. That's the preacher's content. He is to preach the Word of God. That seems to be basic and yet there's so many who preach so many other things other than the Word of God. It says, and I love this, in Romans 10, "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved," verse 13, "how then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed and how shall they believe in whom they have not heard and how shall they hear it without a preacher, and how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written how beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things." And what is it that we bring? Verse 17, "The Word of Christ." Preach the Word. How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Word.

In Colossians chapter 1 the Apostle Paul speaking of his own devotion to do that says in verse 25, "Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit in order that I might fully carry out the preaching of the Word of God." And what is it? "The mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations but has now been manifested to His saints." What is that? The New Testament. I am a preacher of the Word of God primarily the New Testament, the mystery that was hidden is now revealed.

In 1 Corinthians Paul even goes a step further in defining what he would do. "When I came to you," verse 2, pardon me, chapter 2 verse 1, "when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech." In other words, I didn't come in some oratorical style that commanded your attention. "I didn't come in superiority of wisdom. I didn't come to you with erudition, education, human wisdom, great logic, reasoning powers. I came proclaiming to you the testimony of God, the Word of God. And I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ. My message, my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power." The Spirit and power. And in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 5, "We do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord."

He preached Christ. He preached the Word of Christ. He preached the mystery revealed in the New Testament. He preached the Word of truth. He preached the Word of God.. All of those terms indicated the content of his message. And, beloved, I really believe with all my heart, and you know this if you know me, that the task of the preacher is still to preach the Word. There are men who are gifted orators who can sway and move audiences with the power of their persuasive speech. There are men who are erudite, wise, knowledgeable, well-trained and schooled, there are men who can apply human reason and logic and wisdom and tell stories and move the hearts of men. There are men who do that. But no man is a faithful preacher who does not preach the Word. That's the calling...that's the calling. And that is why I have set my heart toward expository preaching, toward preaching the Word week in, week out, verse by verse the Word of God.

This is nothing new. Scotsman William Taylor writing in 1876 penned a book entitled The Ministry of the Word. On numerous occasions I have browsed through the book, extracted rich insights. Looking at it again this week I read this paragraph, here he was defining his own commitment to

expository preaching. He said, "By expository preaching I mean that method of pulpit discourse which consists in the consecutive interpretation and practical enforcement of a book of the sacred canon. Exposition is the presentation to the people in an intelligible and forcible manner of the meaning of the sacred writer. It is the honest answer which the preacher gives after faithful study to these questions: what is the mind of the Holy Spirit in this passage? And what is its bearing on related Christian truths and on the life and conversation of the Christian himself?" end quote. That's right. He preached expositorially because he wanted to know the mind of the Spirit. He wanted to know how one Scripture bore upon another. And he wanted to understand what God desired for his people.

Let me tell you why preaching the Word is the only way to preach. First of all, because it lets God speak rather than man. It's that basic, it's that simple. When we preach the Word of God we are preaching the Word of God, not the word of man. And while many things that men say may be entertaining and interesting and informative and even helpful and occasionally even true, they are not the Word of God. We want to give way to the mind of God. We want to give way to the Word of God. What an incredibly thrilling reality to give voice to God. And that's how I perceive the preacher. He is one who gives God a voice to speak.

Secondly, preaching the Word is right not only because it lets God speak rather than man, but secondly, and this one is so dear to my own heart, it brings the preacher into direct contact with the mind of the Holy Spirit. Can you understand that thought? It brings the preacher into direct contact with the mind of the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Spirit wrote the Scripture. When you dig deeply into the Scripture, you are digging deeply into the mind of the Holy Spirit. And I want you to know, dear friends, that is an incredible exhilarating experience. And I have said to you on numerous occasions in the past that the process of discovery and study is much more exhilarating to me than the preaching is for the simple reason that I am dealing with the mind of the Spirit. When you dig into the Word of God, you are interacting with Spirit reasoning, Spirit logic, Spirit truth. And there's no human being who can afford for you such an exhilarating interaction.

There are some preachers who for some strange reason unknown to me will spend a little bit of time interacting with the mind of the Spirit and then run off and spend a whole lot of time interacting with the mind of men. I can't imagine for the life of me how they can find that anywhere near as thrilling as the mind of the Spirit. And the joyous thing for is to go deeply into the Word of God and endeavor with the faculties that God has given me to understand the mind of the Spirit of God. What a tremendous communion that is. That's why, to be honest with you, it's so frustrating to be interrupted. When I come to the church and hide away as best I can in my little study and I am diligently delving into the Word of God deeper and deeper, grasping with the mind of the Spirit of God, in that exhilarating and joyous communion with Him and somebody interrupts me, I mean, it's like having been in heaven and coming back here to deal with some ridiculous thing, no matter how serious it might appear. You hear this little, tap-tap-tap-tap on the door, "Oh I'm so sorry to bother you.." Uh-

huh, you know, and you're in the heavenlies somewhere and you try to be at least conscious of what they're saying...they'll say, "You know there's a problem, the copy machine won't work...or whatever it is...somebody had a flat tire or there's somebody out here who needs..." And it may be legitimate and it's good and all that's fine, but it's just not up there anywhere, it's just right down here some place. And it's very mundane and it has to be done, that's life. But you have to understand when you have been grappling with the mind of Spirit...of the Spirit, the nicest people just aren't in that league, see. It's another world. And the thrill of ministry for me is to just submerge myself and come out understanding the flow of the logic and the reasoning and the commanding of the Spirit. That's why expository preaching is so thrilling and it ought to be equally thrilling for the listener because you too are interacting with the mind of the Spirit.

Thirdly, preaching the Word is the priority because it forces the preacher to proclaim all the revelation of God. You can't avoid certain issues. You can't run away from things. If you're going to preach expository, you've got to take everything as it comes. It puts no limit on what you preach, you've got to preach it all. That means you have to preach the things that convict your own heart. That means you have to have the Holy Spirit tromping all over your own life. That means you have to deal with the issues that people in your church would rather you didn't have to deal with. You don't avoid anything. There's tremendous integrity in that because you take everything that comes and you preach it exactly the way the Spirit of God revealed it.

Another reason why expository preaching is the priority is because it promotes biblical literacy...it promotes biblical literacy. I'd rather preach the Bible because I'd rather study the Bible. And I'd rather preach the Bible cause I'd rather you know the Bible. I could stand up here for 40 minutes and tell you all kinds of interesting stories and you would go away and you would know the stories instead of knowing the Word of God. I'd rather you knew the Word of God. I'd rather you be biblically literate. There are some compelling things that the preacher could say, there are some fascinating things the preacher could say, there are some very very motivating things that the preacher could say but there's nothing he could say that's as important as the Word of God. And if we are to master the Scripture, if we are to know the Word of God, hide it away in our hearts, bear the sword of the Spirit, then we better learn it. And I am committed to studying the Word of God and preaching the Word of God because it promotes biblical literacy. I want to know the Scripture, I want you to know the Scripture. And I could spend my life and so could you learning a lot of things other than the Bible, but I could never spend my life learning anything that's any way shape or form as closely...or in any way, shape or form, closely related to the significance of the Bible. So it's an easy decision for me.

In fact, this is kind of a personal insight, I'll be studying the Scripture and just studying and studying and studying hour after hour in the Scripture and sometimes I'll say to myself, "You know, there's so much Bible here maybe I ought to go somewhere else and get some kind of a story to put in here," and I just can't make myself do that. I have been accused of not having very many illustrations in my messages. I think that's...maybe that's true if you're looking for extra-biblical illustrations. If you're

looking for stories of one kind or another. Now I started this morning with an illustration that wasn't biblical, got your attention, gave you a little concept on the Statue of Liberty thing, and we were off and running. There's a place for that. But given the privilege and the choice, I would always rather choose a biblical illustration cause then you're learning while I'm illustrating, then you're putting away the Word of God in your heart. So to promote biblical literacy, I'd rather spend my life in the Word and my life teaching the Word, that will help us all get to know the Word a lot better and we want to know the Word because we love the God of the Word.

Another point in this little list of why preaching the Word is the priority is this, it carries the ultimate authority...it carries the ultimate authority. There might be a certain amount of authority in the preacher's reasoning, there might be a certain amount of authority in the preacher's logic, there might be a certain amount of authority in his wisdom, there might be a certain amount of authority in his voice, in his intensity, in his commanding demeanor. There might be a certain amount of authority in his position, but let me tell you, friends, all of that combined doesn't bear anywhere near the authority the Word of God bears. So if you want to compel people to do something, give them what? Give them the Word of God, God is the ultimate authority.

So I'd much rather preach the Word of God because it carries authority. That's another reason why I like to use biblical illustrations because when you illustrate with the Bible you not only help people understand but you compel people to obey because that's an illustration that carries authority. No other illustration has authority. It might have interest, it might have elucidation, but it doesn't have authority unless it's biblical.

And finally in this little list of personal thoughts about why preaching the Word is the priority, it transforms the preacher. And the Lord knows and you know well that you'd rather have a transformed preacher anytime. The power of the Word in the life of the people is what blesses the people. And if I were to spend all my time coming up with sermonettes for Christianettes or book reviews or who knows what all, telling stories about this and that and the other thing, or simply rehearsing things I've already known in the past and not digging freshly in to the Word of God every single week of my life, you wouldn't be having a transformed preacher and transformed preachers lead to transformed congregations.

There's some compelling reasons then to preach the Word. First of all, it's right, it says do it. And in case that might not be sufficient to convince you, may I suggest that you will by preaching the Word let God speak rather than mine, you will bring the preacher into direct contact with the mind of the Holy Spirit in a commune that is all surpassing. You will force the preacher to proclaim the whole revelation of God, you will promote biblical literacy, you will bear great authority on the hearts of people and you will transform both preacher and people...preach the Word. William Taylor again in the book, The Ministry of the word, wrote, "Let it never be forgotten then that he who would rise to eminence and usefulness in the pulpit and become wise in winning souls must say of the work of the

ministry, This one thing I do. He must focus his whole heart and life upon the pulpit. He must give his days and his nights to the production of those addresses by which he seeks to convince the judgments and move the hearts and elevate the lives of his hearers," end quote.

That convicts my heart. I should spend all my days and all my nights in the production of the addresses by which I seek to convince the judgments and move the hearts and elevate the lives of my hearers. And life offers so many distractions. And I really believe that this is at the heart of the reason we don't have many powerful preachers. As John Stott says we have many popular ones, we don't have many powerful ones. We are called to preach the Word. And any faithful preacher must understand the seriousness of his commission and the content of his commission.

Let me take you to the third point here. A faithful preacher must understand the scope of his commission. How far reaching is this called to preach the Word? What is the scope of it? Well there are several dimensions as you scope out this preaching responsibility. The faithful preacher must comprehend them all. The far-reaching scope of his commission here is summed up in several different ways as we look back at verse 2. Let's begin with just the phrase that follows "preach the Word," "be ready." That's the first thing I want to draw to your attention regarding the scope of the commission. The faithful preacher must be ready, be ready. It is translated in some versions "be urgent, or watchful." It has the idea of eagerness. The word literally means to stand beside. And it can be used of a military guard who is always at his post. It sort of says beyond duty all the time...that's the idea. No holiday for the preacher. No real vacation for the preacher. No off hours for the preacher...no office hours for the preacher. He is driven, he is compelled, he is always on duty, he is always at his post. The idea is of a mindset that seizes every opportunity, that there's a constant readiness, there's an eagerness to preach. There's almost an explosiveness like Jeremiah for whom the Word of God was a fire in his bones. In Romans 1:15 Paul said, "I am ready to preach the gospel at Rome...I am ready." Constant readiness, a constant desire for opportunity to show itself in order that the truth might be proclaimed. That's what he's asking of Timothy. Not reluctance, readiness...not hesitance, fearlessness.

Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, Agabus the prophet came down said, "You go to Jerusalem and they're going to bind you." He took his belt and he tied him up in a sort of a physical demonstration of what would happen when he got there, and that people were all begging him, it says verse 12, the local residents were begging him, "Don't go to Jerusalem. You go to Jerusalem you're going to be a prisoner," and so forth. Paul said, "What are you doing weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." What are you doing? I'm ready to die if my preaching brings me death. Peter says we ought to be ready, 1 Peter 3:15, to give an account for the hope that is in us. We ought to be ready. My Dad used to say, one of his favorite little expressions to me when I was growing up was, "If you're going to be a preacher, son, you've got to be ready to preach, pray or die in a minute." I don't know where he got it, but I always remember it...preach, pray or die in a minute. There's got to be a message burning in

your heart given the slightest opportunity it comes out...that's the compelling thing.

I had the privilege yesterday of having a sort of a celebration service for Anna Michaelson, the mother of Burton Michaelson in our church, she went to heaven. This last week we were gathered around the graveside and family and friends were just sharing about all of the things that she meant, the richness of her life in contribution. And as I was sharing a few words in my heart I was constrained to begin to want to preach the gospel because I assume there were unsaved people there. And it just...there's no way to constrain that. And soon the gospel comes and the confrontation of sin and death and hell and the hope of salvation in Christ and that's just part of the compelling of the preacher of that kind of readiness at all times. There's no close season on preaching, it's always in season. And we have to, as Paul said in Ephesians 5:16, redeem the time, buying up every opportunity. Spurgeon said, "What in a Christian minister is the most essential quality for securing success in winning souls for Christ? Answer, earnestness. And if I were asked a second or a third time, I should not vary the answer...success is proportionate to the preacher's earnestness." He's right, end quote. Eagerness, readiness, earnestness, zeal, you have to have the zeal to preach, the zeal that doesn't ever die.

And I want to be honest with you, folks, that's just not natural. Okay? It's hard after years and years and years cause the novelty wears off. You can watch people grow stale who once had the fire of God. You can watch them grow weary and lose their passion, the novelty is gone. I can look back to the early years even here at Grace Church when I would discover something for the first time in the week and preach it to you on Sunday and there was a tremendous exhilaration between preacher and people and people were learning things for the first time and I was learning them for the first time and in this incredible aura of discovery there was a joy and a thrill. And as the years go on and you really become knowledgeable of the Word of God and you've got the principles down, the novelty isn't there anymore, it isn't novel, it isn't unique, it's just into the routine of that ministry of preaching and that responsibility of hearing and the flesh gets hard and apathetic and indifferent. It happens if you're in the flesh.

No less a one that John Wesley, great preacher that he was, writing in his Journals and Letters page 15 said, "I know that were I myself, John Wesley, to preach one whole year in one place, I should both preach myself and most of my congregation asleep," end quote. He knew the novelty would wear off in the flesh. And Spurgeon said, again, "He who at the end of twenty years ministry among the same people is more alive than ever is a great debtor to the quickening Spirit." That is a profound statement...profound statement. If after 20 years of ministering to the same people the zeal is there, the fire is there, the passion is there, the love is there, it can be credited to the quickening Spirit because in the flesh the novelty will die and I submit to you that unless the preacher is in the Spirit and unless he is eager in the Spirit, his ministry will die, too. You see it all the time. The lasting readiness, the man who still has the heart to preach boldly and fearlessly and with zeal must credit that to prayer and continuing diligent study of the Word of God in which he continually interacts in communion with the mind of the Spirit of God. Adam Clark used to say, "Study yourself to death and

then pray yourself alive again." Ready, eager, earnest, never losing the passion, and if it's so it's credit to the Spirit. And if a man is faithful to be in the Word and in prayer, thus communing deeply with the Spirit, he'll have that zeal through all his years.

The scope then of the preaching goes even beyond that. The next phrase says "in season and out of season...in season and out of season." That means when it's convenient and when it's not convenient...when it's suitable and when it's not suitable...when it seems to fit and when it doesn't fit at all...when it's what is expected and when it's what is not wanted. He'll do it when there's a readiness for it and he'll do it when there isn't a readiness for it. At all times he'll do it. Nothing constrains him. Nothing compels him. Nothing silences him.

I heard recently about a funeral and there were some there who were to speak representing Christian faith, representing the gospel of Jesus Christ but because there were many unbelievers present who had instructed them not to speak the truth, they feared then to speak the truth and totally evaded the truth. That's not the heart of the preacher. That's not out of season preaching. Out of season preaching says you have the preacher, you get the preacher's message. So you run high risk when you associate with the preacher, folks, because whatever there is that compels his message, he is bound by God to preach in season, out of season. He is not concerned with social acceptance. He is not concerned with the esteem of the community, he says what needs to be said whether people expect him to say it or not. It's not that he's abusive and abrasive, it is that he is truthful at all times, zealous to speak the truth.

Then he turns to the tone of that preaching in looking at the scope. First he deals with the negative tone then transitions in to the positive tone. The negative tone is indicated by two words "reprove, rebuke." That's part of the scope of preaching as to its tone. We've seen the scope of preaching as to its time, all the time, anywhere, any time. Now it is tone, it is first of all negative. The preacher's message is negative. He has to reprove and rebuke.

Now what does it mean to reprove and what does it mean to rebuke? They're very closely connected. We know that preaching has to deal with sin because in chapter 3 verse 16 it says all Scripture is profitable for reproof and for correction. So it has a positive ministry of teaching and instructing and righteousness. And a negative ministry of reproof and correcting. And so he says the preacher must reprove and rebuke. The idea here is really a two-fold idea. Reproof has to do with the mind, rebuke has to do with the heart. Or to put it another way, reproof has to do with the understanding that this is wrong, rebuke has to do with the conviction that you're guilty. To reprove someone is to refute their error with reasonable biblical argument. It is to reveal the wrong because it's unbiblical. It is to show what God says and therefore reveal the sin. Rebuke is then to convict the sinner of the sin. So first you disclose the sinfulness of sin and then you disclose the sinfulness of the sinner. That's the two-fold negative element of preaching.

Jesus preached against sin, forcefully did He preach against sin. In fact, almost exclusively Jesus preached against sin. So did John the Baptist. When I mentioned earlier about him speaking to Herod, speaking about Herod in his sermons, he demonstrated the preacher's perspective. In Luke 3:18 he preached a gospel to the people, it says. And verse 19 says, "When Herod the tetrarch was reproved by him on account of Herodias his brother's wife," that is on account of his adultery, "and on account of all the wicked things which Herod had done," of course he locked John in prison. You want to know how confrontive John the Baptist was? He preached against sin. He not only preached against sin but he preached against the sinner. He not only preached against the sinner, he preached against the sinner by name. I think if John the Baptist were alive to day he would have preached a sermon on Gary Hart and maybe on a lot of other folks.

The preacher has the responsibility, he has the role of reproofing the sin, that is showing to the mind the sinfulness of sin because it violates the Word of God, and then of rebuking the heart that is striking the conscience of the sinner so that the sinner is under conviction for that which he now knows in his mind is wrong. We are to reprove these things. It says in Ephesians 5:11 we're not to have any part with the unfruitful deeds of darkness but we are to reprove them, we are to reprove them.

Titus 1:13 it says, "Reprove them severely that they may be sound in the faith." And who is he talking about? Rebellious men, empty talkers, deceivers who upset families and so forth. It talks about people who are detestable, disobedient, worthless, defiled, unbelieving. We have to reprove them. So the role of the preacher is to reprove and rebuke sin.

And, beloved, that's at the heart of it. May I say something to you that maybe you never thought of? There is no occasion in all the New Testament where Jesus ever preached a sermon on the love of God, none. He never did that, it's not recorded. He preached on sin. He preached on repentance. He didn't preach the love of God when He preached to the unbelieving. He had to expose their sin before the loving grace of God meant anything. And so the preacher's negative ministry is to reprove, that is to give reason for them to understand that something is wrong and then to rebuke, that is to be convicted that they have done that thing.

Then the third term in this verse 2 list is exhort. It's really the word to encourage, parakaleo. It's the word that indicates calling them to restoration, and now we're transitioning out of the negative to the positive which is patience and teaching. The preacher confronts their sin and then encourages them out of that. He comes alongside after having confronted them to encourage them to take steps to change. In fact, Paul in 1 Thessalonians 2:11 talks about he did it. He says as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who called you into His Kingdom and glory, or calls you into His Kingdom and glory. We encouraged you. So you confront the sin. You confront the

sinner and then you encourage the recovery. That's the preacher's job. His time, all times, all tasks, he's eager, he's zealous, he's ready in season, out of season. The tone, it's negative. But it's also positive in that he begins to encourage toward right behavior.

And then you come to the two positive mentions in verse 2, great patience and teaching. You must have that great patience and teaching. You must have that great patience, makrothumeis a Greek word that means patience with people, not patience with events or circumstances...patience with people, don't ever lose it. The preacher has to have it. Why? Because people don't change that quick. They don't change over night. I've got to tell you, folks, that is the difficult battle. You confront sin, you rebuke the sinner, you encourage the recovery and then you just can't believe how long it takes. And sometimes you find yourself exasperated over that whole process because you know they know the truth and sometimes you long to sort of grab them by the spiritual nape of the neck and shake them. Or you just want to pray that God would bring some circumstance into their life to chasten them more severely until they would move more rapidly. But the word makrothmeo, I love that word, it's the spirit that never gets annoyed, it's the spirit that never gets irritated, it's the spirit that never becomes exasperated, it's the spirit that never gets mean or bitter. It's the spirit that never comes to despair. And that's a spiritual grace, beloved. That's right out of the nature of God because we don't have that. We don't have that. The patience of God, Romans 2:4 talks about it. God is patient with us, oh how patient is He with us, how patient must we be with each other.

So, the positive side, we have to show patience as we encourage people to spiritual recovery. And the context for all of this is that last word "and instruction," or and teaching, didache, the word for teaching. It's all accomplished through the content of God's Word. We're back to that again. We preach the Word. As we preach the Word we're exhorting people out of sin into righteousness, but we have to teach them what that means. It's not enough to brow-beat people about their sin. Take an unbelieving person, you can't just reprove their sin and rebuke the sinner and encourage them to recovery and be patient while he gets there until you've taught him what recovery is...faith in Christ, submission to His Lordship. And you can't come to a Christian and reprove the sin he's doing and rebuke his conscience for doing it and encourage him to recovery and be patient in the process until you've instructed him on what that recovery demands. Rebuke without teaching leaves people with no understanding. They don't know where to go, they know they shouldn't be where they are, they're not sure where they're supposed to be. Rebuke without teaching leaves the root cause of the sin untouched. You've got to rebuild the doctrine. You've got to rebuild the truth.

So what is the scope of preaching? Well the time, the scope in terms of time, all times. The scope in terms of circumstances, all circumstances. The scope in terms of content or tone, negative and positive and you have to bridge those. That's the role of the preacher. It's a tremendous life consuming task. It's not a part-time job...not a part-time job. If you understand the seriousness of your commission, if you understand the content of your commission to preach the Word, you've got to be diligent in that, preparation and preaching and then you understand the scope of it, that you're to

do it all times in all places with everything from negative to positive, you can see that it's a life consuming thing. And if it is for someone a part-time task, they cannot fulfill it to the degree that God would desire.

Now having said all of that let me say this. While all of us are not called to preach to the extent of the specially called preacher, all of us are called to give the gospel. Is that not so? So in a real sense all of us are responsible to preach the Word on our level, at our point of contact to those who need to hear. We're all responsible to be bold and courageous in season and out of season. We're all responsible to reprove and rebuke sin and then in love and patience and teaching to encourage people toward righteousness. The preacher, in a sense, is a model of what all of us are to do at another level. Although we're not called and placed in that particular office of preacher, we all have the responsibility to disseminate God's Word whenever the opportunity arises, to be eager to do that, to be negative against sin and positive toward righteousness. The preacher then simply does in one unique way what all God's people do in their own unique way. And we must also understand that all of us are responsible to the judge who will evaluate our faithfulness. We're responsible to make sure that what we do communicate is the Word of God and that we fulfill the scope of it.

Well there's much more in this text and we'll look at it next time. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we think of the great artist who took care to make sure that every hair on the head of the Statue was right, never knowing whether anyone would see them. But maybe he knew You would see them and that's enough. And certainly it was in his heart to do what he did with excellence. Help us to have that same spirit. Make of our lives an excellent offering. You've asked us to present ourselves living sacrifices, may that which we give You not be the blind, the lame and the halt but the best. And help us to render our service preacher and people alike with excellence. Help us to live every day in the consciousness of the seriousness of our calling for we do what we do in the presence of the one who will evaluate it. Help us ever and always to evaluate carefully the content of our ministry. Make us people of the Word. Give us a love for it and if we've grown apathetic, forgive us for that and challenge our hearts afresh to spend time with the Holy Spirit for if we are with the quickening Spirit we lose no zeal toward the Word or the ministry. Help us to know, Father, that if we're apathetic in the church it's because we've lost touch with the Spirit and we're functioning in the form and without the power for the Spirit is ever zealous, ever committed. Help us, Father, to confront sin, to encourage the sinner, patiently teach for the process of recovery. And, Lord God, may we have earnestness in all of this, borne of the Spirit that flows out of a deep prayer life and deep study of Your Word that we might be the committed people that You would desire, for whom there is not a waning but an ever-increasing exhilaration as we walk longer with You and learn more and more about You. Thank You for our time this morning, we commend it to Your Spirit to produce in us that which would be the reflection of Your perfect will in Christ's name. Amen.

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