Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Marks of the Faithful Preacher, Part 4
Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:5
Code: 55-23

Let's open our Bibles this morning again to 2 Timothy chapter 4, the study of these first five verses we have been continuing in over a number of weeks and this morning we will bring to a conclusion our look at verses 1 to 5...2 Timothy chapter 4 verses 1 through 5. As we begin again our thoughts along the lines of the teaching of the Apostle Paul here, let me remind you that in our last message the dominant element in these two letters to Timothy, I think, became very clear. The dominant element is really a series of commands. Both in 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy, the Apostle Paul is laying on Timothy a tremendous responsibility regarding the duties of ministry. He is calling on Timothy to perform his ministry with excellence, with commitment. The commands that come rapid fire in the first and second epistle to Timothy carry a broad and heavy weight of responsibility.

The thing that impressed me as I have read and reread and reread these epistles is that these are commands which are tremendously difficult and well nigh, of course, impossible if attempted in the flesh. But they are rather, for Timothy and one who is in the Spirit of God, matter of fact and are nothing more than the basic elements of his own ministry which he must faithfully perform.

As I thought about it this week I realized that perhaps there was an underlying presupposition in all of this with which I had not properly dealt, that there was probably a question here that ought to be looked at and that question is why should Timothy necessarily be bound to do all of this? I mean, if someone were to walk up to you and say, "Rebuke heretics, preach the Word, nourish yourself up in sound doctrine, confront false teaching, be an example to the believers, read the text, explain the text, apply the text, give your life, endure hardships, suffer along with me for the gospel," you might say, "Now wait a minute, what is to compel me to do that?" Now in general, I think, as we've studied First and Second Timothy, the Spirit of God has used the words of Paul to Timothy to touch all of our hearts and to call us all to general spiritual duty. But there's a sense in which these things directed particularly at Timothy are above most people in terms of the congregation of the church, they are uniquely given to a man who is uniquely in a position of responsibility before God to fulfill them. And so I submit to you that the underlying assumption here, the underlying presupposition is that Timothy must do these things because he has been called and mandated by God to this ministry. And that's an essential thing to keep in mind. The reason these are so binding on the life of Timothy is because God has set him apart to this end. That is the underlying assumption. He has been called by God to the public ministry of teaching and preaching the Word. He is therefore a man under divine appointment. He is therefore a man under divine authority. He is therefore a man under divine obligation. He really has no choice for as God has sovereignly called him unto salvation, so

sovereignly did God call him to ministry, even the public ministry of the Word of God. Thus he is bound by the sovereign call of God and by his own conscience in response to that call to obey. He does not have a choice. And that strikes at the heart of a very important issue, the compelling thing in the life of any preacher is the call of God. And when that call is on your life, you know you must respond. You're bound to a duty given you by God.

Paul, wanting to sum that all up in one word, chose to call himself a bondslave of Jesus Christ. That is to say in a sense one who has no choices, one who does whatever he is bidden to do. And so the underlying and compelling thing in the life of Timothy through listening to all these exhortations is that he must respond because to that end he has been called by God.

Now with that underlying assumption in place in our minds, how are we then to understand the call of God? How do you know you're called? How do I know I'm called? How do you know if you're called? We have here in our church in the Master's Seminary about a hundred and twenty young men this year and more coming who will be here because they sense the call of God. They want to train to serve the Lord. We have about 700 students at the Master's College, many of them are there because they feel the call of God on their life to preach the Word of God. There are approximately one hundred people right now in missionary candidate training in our church who are headed toward a career in missions around the world because they sense the call of God on their life, that is that God has uniquely set them apart to a ministry of publicly preaching and teaching His Word. Now how are we to understand that? How does one really know if one is called? How can that be affirmed so that we know whether we ought to in the first place respond to commands such as Paul has given to Timothy? Let's talk about that call for a few moments.

First of all, let me say to you that there's a general call to ministry in salvation. There's a sense in which all of us are called to ministry. We were saved, Ephesians 2:10 says, unto good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. In Revelation 22:17, all who hear are to say come, so all who have heard and believe the gospel have then the responsibility to call others to come to that same gospel. Peter says in no uncertain terms that we are a unique people. He calls us in 1 Peter 2:9 a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you. Now he's talking there about a general call to salvation and because we have been called unto salvation we have been given the responsibility to call others to salvation to recognize the excellencies of the Lord Jesus Christ who Himself called us. It goes all the way back, does this concept, to the Old Testament, the Pentateuch says in Deuteronomy 11:13, "It shall come about if you listen obediently to My commandments which I am commanding you today to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul." From the very beginning every believer was called upon to serve the Lord with all his heart and all his soul. So there is that compelling to service that is in the general call to duty belonging to every believer. In that sense serving the Lord and proclaiming the gospel of God's truth is not left just to a few, but to all who belong to Christ. Yes, in 2 Corinthians 5 Paul affirms himself as

an ambassador of Christ but I think that affirmation can be broaden to include all who believe. We have all become responsible as ambassadors to call upon men to be reconciled to God.

Charles Spurgeon wrote, "According to the measure of grace extended to him by the Holy Spirit, each man is bound to minister in his day and generation, both to the church and among unbelievers, to exert themselves to the utmost to extend the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ," end quote. We all have that responsibility.

Now that doesn't mean that all are to preach and to teach publicly God's Word. But it does mean that we're to do what our motto says that we are to exalt the King and extend the Kingdom. We have all been called unto good works. We have all been saved to serve the Lord God. We all have what Paul calls in Ephesians 4:1 a worthy calling, a high calling of service to Christ. We have all been gifted with spiritual gifts. We have all been enabled by the divine Spirit in some dimension to serve with blessing in the ministry. So that is the general call to service.

But secondly, and most pointedly for us this morning, there is a specific call to the direct ministry of the Word. And may I say that that is what I see as the unique call of God. It is a call to the ministry of the Word of God, to the direct ministry of the Word of God, not indirect. God has uniquely set apart some people whose mission in life is to publicly preach and teach God's Word. They are uniquely called as proclaimers of that divine truth. And whether you're going all the way back into the Old Testament where God identifies Aaron and says, "Aaron is to be properly cared for as the high priest so you shall speak to all the skillful persons whom I've endowed with the spirit of wisdom that they may make Aaron garments to consecrate him in order that he may minister as priest to Me." And God set apart a special man for a special duty. Or whether you come through Isaiah to whom God says, "Who will go for us...whom shall I send? Isaiah says, Here am I, send me. The Lord says go and tell this people." And he too is called. To Jeremiah to whom the Lord says, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you, I have appointed you a prophet to the nations." Or whether you're talking about beyond Isaiah and Jeremiah to those others whom God called mentioned in Jeremiah 3:15, "I will give you shepherds after My own heart who will feed you on knowledge and understanding." What a great statement.

God has always called out special priests and prophets and shepherds for His people. He called that wonderful prophet Ezekiel, in chapter 2 He said, "Son of man, stand on your feet that I may speak with you, and as He spoke to me the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet and I heard Him speaking to me and He said to me, Son of man, I am sending you to the sons of Israel, to a rebellious people who have rebelled against Me, they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day. I am sending you to them who are stubborn and obstinate children and you shall say to them, Thus says the Lord God." Verse 7, "You shall speak My words to them whether they listen or not." That's the call. That's the unique call upon the life of one who is to publicly and directly minister God's Word.

You come into the New Testament, in Acts 9, and you meet the Apostle Paul to whom the Lord says, "You are chosen by Me to go to the Gentiles." Paul was chosen of God, set apart. And God has ordained Apostles, prophets, evangelists, teaching pastors for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, Ephesians 4. Paul in Colossians 1 says, "I was made a minister by the stewardship given to me from God."

And so God has ordained that certain people preach and teach directly His Word. They are uniquely called. All of us on a general level are called, some of us very uniquely set apart for the direct ministry of the Word of God. And Paul understood that compelling reality and so did Timothy. Paul knew it well. He knew he was called. First Timothy 1:12 he says, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has strengthened me because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, or putting me into the ministry." Chapter 2 he says, "For this I was appointed a preacher and an Apostle, as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth." In 2 Timothy 1:10 he says, "That marvelous appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus who abolished death and brought life and immortality light through the gospel for which I was appointed a preacher and an Apostle and a teacher." Paul knew his calling. He knew he was uniquely called of God. Timothy was such a called man. He had been set apart from Acts 16 when the Apostle Paul identified him, he had been trained by Paul, he had been gifted by the Spirit of God, he had been compelled to ministry.

The question comes then, how does a man know if he's called? Since there's a difference between the general call and the unique call, how does one know if he's called to the direct ministry of preaching and teaching publicly, how do you know that? Four ways, four ways I believe are indicated in Scripture. First of all, subjectively...subjectively. I believe that men know they're called when they are internally compelled to that. Spurgeon called it, quote: "An irresistible overwhelming craving and raging thirst for telling others what God has done to our own souls," end quote. A raging thirst, an overwhelming craving...certainly something of what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:16 when he said, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel, I am compelled, he said, I am compelled," as if to say I am literally driven by a force within me, something in me that can do nothing else but that. He says even in verse 17, if I did it voluntarily I should have a reward, 1 Corinthians 9:17, but not so, verse 16, "I am under compulsion." Compulsion...Paul knew that compulsion, that driving force inside. When I say compulsion will you please understand that I don't mean ambition? Big difference. Ambition tends to be that drive which is generated by our need to fulfill certain goals and dreams which we have established. Ambition is that which primarily driven by ego, by the desire for self-fulfillment, by the desire for accomplishment. Compulsion is quite different. Compulsion is a driving force within us, the root of which may be completely outside of ourselves, but it's necessary. Those who are to preach and teach God's Word publicly and directly, I believe, are given by God's Holy Spirit an internal compulsion to that, like those mentioned in 3 John 7 who went out to preach for the sake of the name, like 1 Timothy 3:1 where it says if a man desires the office of overseer, he desires a good thing. And that's the compulsion again. In the hearts of some there's a tremendous desire for preaching and

teaching God's Word...a compelling thing.

There were so many great Puritans in the 1600's, among them was a noble man of God by the name of Joseph Alain(?) whose primary work as far as this generation is concerned is his remaining book entitled, An Alarm to the Unconverted, which if you have not read you should read. It was said of Joseph Alain quote: "He was infinitely and insatiably greedy for the conversion of souls. Never did the evangel of Jesus burn more fervently in any English heart," end quote. He was known for his passion. He was known for his compulsion. So compelled was he that he was barred from the pulpit in his own life time. So compelled was he that he was oft imprisoned for preaching the gospel. In poor health he died at the age of 34 and left the world the legacy of that book and the example of a compulsive spirit to preach the truth. And I say to young men who would pursue the ministry, do not enter the ministry of the Word of God if you can help it, only enter it if you can't help it. It demands compulsion. Ambition will corrupt it. Compulsion will make it survive over the long haul.

And I believe Timothy fits that criteria. I believe Timothy was compelled on the inside to ministry. And I think there's some signs of that. Look at 2 Corinthians chapter 1, you might miss this if you didn't take note of it carefully. In 2 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 1, Paul introduces himself in this way, "Paul, an Apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God...notice...and Timothy brother to the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia." Now Timothy here is with Paul. In fact, Paul pulls Timothy in and includes him in his personal references. That's why all the way through chapter 1 the pronouns are plural. Verse 2, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, the God of all comfort who comforts us in all our affliction." Who is us and our? He and Timothy. Verse 5, "Just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundances." Verse 6, "But if we are afflicted..." And verse 8, "We do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction." Verse 9, "We had the sentence of death within ourselves." Verse 10, "Who delivered us from so great a peril of death." Verse 11, "You also joining and helping us through your prayers." So he's writing about himself and Timothy. Timothy was compelled enough in ministry to go along side the Apostle Paul enduring everything that Paul endured.

And then you come down to verse 19, "For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us, by me and Silvanus or Silas and Timothy was not yes and now but is yes in Him." And here Paul embraces Timothy in his own ministry and his own preaching and his own suffering and his own trials and his own tribulations. And I believe that it's an indication of the heart of Timothy being compelled to ministry, or he would have bailed out long before.

Look at Philippians chapter 2. Philippians chapter 2 verse 19 really seals this issue. He says in verse 19, "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition...now notice...for I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare." Beloved, that's part of the passion of the servant of God. The rest seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus, but you know of his proven worth that he

serve with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father, therefore I hope to send him immediately as soon as I see how things go with me. Here was one of kindred spirit who when all else sought their own interests, sought only the interests of Christ Jesus. Here was one who had proven his worth in ministry, no defector he, but a compulsive servant of God. He was obviously a man who felt compelled to the duty of ministering the Word or he wouldn't have followed through as faithfully as he did. Again, Charles Hadden Spurgeon, that great English preacher, in lecturing to his students at the Pastors College one day said this, "If any student in this room could be content to be a newspaper editor or a grocer or a farmer or a doctor or a lawyer or a senator or a king in the name of heaven and earth let him go his way, he is not the man in whom dwells the Spirit of God in its fullness, for a man so filled with God would utterly weary of any pursuit but that for which is in most soul pants. If on the other hand you can say for all the wealth of both the Indies you could not and dare not espouse any other calling as to be put aside from preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, then depend on it, if other things be equally satisfactory you have the signs of this apostleship. We must feel that woe is unto us if we preach not the gospel. The Word of God must be unto us as a fire in our bones, otherwise if we undertake the ministry we shall be unhappy in it, shall be unable to bear the self-denial incident to it and shall be of little service to those among whom we minister. I speak of self denials, he says, and well I may, for the true pastor's work is full of them and without a love to his calling he will soon succumb and either leave the drudgery or move on in discontent, burdened with a monotony as tiresome as that of a blind horse in a mill," end quote.

You better be called, subjectively. There better be a driving compulsion within you. You better desire the office of an overseer with a strong desire.

The second factor in the call because we're not in a supernatural era where God is speaking out of heaven as He did in identifying Aaron and Isaiah and Jeremiah and other shepherds and Paul and even Timothy who was identified by God's Spirit through the laying on of hands of Paul and the elders. But in our day where the supernatural call is not made visible, how do we know first subjectively a Holy Spirit planted compulsion? Secondly, we know it objectively...objectively. This term then takes into consideration the external factors, circumstances, opportunity, giftedness and God's providence pulling them all together. Compulsion has to be linked with innate talent, has to be linked with Spirit-given gifts. The man who is compelled in his heart to preach will find that his circumstances on the outside go along with that if indeed it is the call of God. He will have wisdom, he will have been given by God good judgment. He will have courage. He will have affection for God's people. He will have certain ruling ability, he will have spiritual giftedness to teach or preach, otherwise God would not put a Spirit-given compulsion in the man and not give him the objective abilities to fulfill it. And further, God will order his life so that he will have circumstances and opportunities and providential events in which his giftedness can come to its fruition.

So we say then that the call of the ministry begins with a compulsion. It then begins to take shape through God's providence ordering experience and ability, the two go together. John Newton wrote,

"That which finally evidences a proper call is a correspondent opening in providence by a gradual train of circumstances pointing at the means, the time, the place of actually entering upon the work," end quote. In other words, God will order all the circumstances to make that work a reality. That was Timothy's experience. In Acts 16 there he was in his home town, the area of Galatia, along came the Apostle Paul. By God's gracious providence Paul identified Timothy as a young man he wanted to pour his life into. God gave Paul that information, no doubt, working in his heart. Timothy was then given a tremendous opportunity, tremendous privilege. Providence moved him alongside the Apostle Paul, the greatest teacher of ministry the world ever knew except Christ. And he sat at his feet and learned how to minister...that's opportunity. And when time came for him to step into ministry, he stepped in, he preached the gospel, he suffered alongside Paul. He pastored churches. It was all a part of God's ordering the objective to go along with the driving compelling subjective in his heart.

And then the time came, of course, early on for him to be ordained. It says in 1 Timothy 4:14 that the elders' hands were laid upon him and he was set apart for ministry. All the external circumstances were in place. He was gifted for it. He was set apart for it. He was trained for it. God ordered all of those and he was given opportunity to do it. There is no one running around fully gifted for ministry, driven in the heart to do that ministry, whose life is all it ought to be who doesn't have a place to do it.

That brings us to a third element, very important. A man's call to ministry is known not only subjectively and objectively but collectively. And here is the judgment of the church so crucial. In 1 Timothy 3, "If a man desires the office of an overseer, desires a good thing." It starts with that compelling desire. It's then affirmed of course in his giftedness. But further it says, If that man is to do that, there has to be an examination of his life." And here's where the church steps in. "Is he above reproach? Is he a one-woman man? Is he temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money? Does he manage his own household well? Keep his children under control with all dignity? Does he have a good reputation with the people who are on the outside? He's not a new convert. And so forth. The same thing in Titus chapter 1, the church collectively has to affirm this.

Why? Listen, there could be a man subjectively motivated to ministry, objectively gifted for ministry but who has sinned, who has violated God's standard, who is not exemplary in life and the church must hold him accountable for that. Collectively we are answerable to the church. The Holy Spirit, of course, in Acts 13 came into the assembly of the church at Antioch and the Spirit of God directed that church to assess Paul and Barnabas as suitable to the ministry and they affirmed their suitability and they sent them out. The church must be a part of that affirming toward ministry. So the subjective and the objective are linked to the collective. The church affirms, the church supports, the church lays its hands on by way of identification, by way of underwriting those whom it sends.

And there's another aspect to this and that is the fact that the church not only affirms and sends but the church collectively receives. And this is not often talked about. I believe that when a man is

really gifted by God objectively, when he is compelled by the Spirit subjectively, the collective church is ready to receive that man. Let me put it to you again in the words of Spurgeon who said, "None of you can be pastors without the loving consent of the flock and therefore this will be to you a practical indicator if not a correct one. If your call from the Lord be a real one, you will not long be silent. As surely as the man wants his hour, so surely the hour wants its man. The church of God is always urgently in need of living ministers. To her a man is always more precious than the gold of Ophir. The anointed of the Lord need never be without a charge for there are quick ears which will know them by their speech and ready hearts to welcome them to their appointed place. Be fit for your work and you'll never be out of it. Do not run about inviting yourself to preach here and there, be more concerned about your ability than your opportunity and more earnest about your walk with God than about either. The sheep will know the God-sent shepherd. The porter of the fold will open to you and the flock will know your voice."

That's right, exactly right. A man's gift makes room for him, it says in Proverbs. And collectively the church will not only affirm that you be sent but the church will receive you. So as Spurgeon says, spend less time trying to preach here and there and more time trying to be a better preacher and the preaching here and there will take care of itself.

I believe Timothy fit the criteria collectively. In 1 Timothy 4 the elders of the church laid hands on him and sent him. Second Timothy 1:6, Paul put his hands on him and sent him. Collectively they all approved him. Further, Timothy was received, welcomed by churches to minister and serve there. He was presently in the church at Ephesus and while some resisted him there were many true believers who welcomed him. He was a representative of the Apostle Paul and of such kindred spirit that he could be received in Paul's own stead. The church had room for Timothy. Collectively they would send him, collectively they would receive him. And that's an affirmation of a man's call.

Fourthly and finally, not only is a call substantiated subjectively, collectively...subjectively, objectively, and collectively but get this one, effectively. The final seal on the call of God is how effective is the man...how effective is the man. What is the effect of his ministry?

I'll never forget going to preach at a church. A man invited me for a week. He said, "I want you to come and preach Monday...I think it was Monday through Sunday." And before two days were gone that week I was compelled by the Holy Spirit after seeing the circumstances and the situation to say to that man, "Based upon all that I know and all that I've seen here, you are ineffective in this. God loves you and God has gifted you but not for this. Your ministry has absolutely no effect at all. There is no response to anything you do." He said to me, "But I feel God's called me to do this." As far as I could tell there was some collective affirmation in a church that sent him but absolutely no collective affirmation in a church that had received him because his ministry had absolutely no impact, none at all. And while he chose not at that time to hear me, the Spirit of God continued to work in his heart until the time came when he ceased to try to do what God had not called him to do.

There should be response. Let me take you back to Jeremiah chapter 23, just listen, I'm only going to read two verses but they are so potent, Jeremiah 23. God says this, "I did not send these prophets but they ran, they went anyway, I did not speak to them but they prophesied. But if they had stood in My counsel," in other words, if they were there because I sent them, "then they would have announced My words to My people...listen to this...and would have turned them back from their evil way and from the evil of their deeds." If they had been sent by Me they would have had an impact. They would have had an effect. They would have turned things around. It couldn't have stayed the same. Paul writing to the Thessalonians says, "You know when we came to you we didn't come in wisdom of human speech, you know that. We didn't come making...1 Thessalonians 2...some vain effort to pull something off. You know it was not insipid and empty. You know you saw the power of God." And that's right. That's exactly right. That's an essential indicator of those who are truly called.

And so, Timothy fits this as well. Timothy's ministry had an impact. First Corinthians 16:10, "If Timothy comes, see that he's with you without cause to be afraid...listen to this...for he is doing the Lord's work just as I am." Wow, that's pretty great commendation. Paul says Timothy's coming alongside me and God's hand is on his ministry just like it's on mine...just like mine. Do you want to know whether you've been called? You say I've got this driving compulsion to do it, and I think that objectively God has given me the gifts and opportunities and collectively I have a place to ministry...only one other question, is your ministry effective? Do people repent? Do people come to Christ? Do sinners face conviction? Do saints grow? Do people's lives change? Do they catch your fire? Do they adopt your convictions? That's the issue.

You can know you're called and those are the ways you know. Timothy was called and that was underlying all Paul's instruction and that's why he had to obey because God had called him. He had no choice.

Now let's go back to 2 Timothy 4 and wrap up the last few statements that he makes to this called man. Remember now, there are eight elements that should mark the faithful preacher. In verse 1 the seriousness of his commission, "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 His Kingdom," the seriousness of it is you are doing what you do in full view of the one who will judge you. Then he says, "Preach the Word," that's the content of his commission. Then he says, "Be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and teaching," that's the scope of his commission. Then he says, "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," that's the urgency of his commission. The time is coming when they won't listen, do it now. Then verse 5, "But you be sober in all things," that's the attitude of his commission. Sober means balanced, consistent, solid, clear- minded

stability. You be a rock, never picking up the ear- tickling stuff that entertains the lusts of the untruth masses. You be solid.

That brings us to the last three, just briefly. The cost of his commission. Verse 5, "Endure hardship...endure hardship." What it really means is go through suffering, accept suffering, go through suffering, expect it. It's amazing to me, dear friends, how many young men approaching ministry are wanting to find a place where there's no pain and that will only happen to people whose ministry is so innocuous there's never any resistance. But if your ministry has any power and any effect, get ready because there will always be pain. I suppose you could evaluate any preacher on two things, how faithful is he to the Word of God and how much pain is he able to endure. That's the criteria. How faithful is he to the Word of God and how much pain is he able to endure because the more effective he is because of his faithfulness, the more grief he's going to have to endure. And the idea that you can have an effective painless ministry is a lie. It isn't so. When you come to trouble or hardship in ministry, you have two choices. You endure or you compromise and find a short-cut out of the situation. The faithful preacher never compromises. So he says to Timothy, "Timothy, you've got to endure hardship. You've got to suffer." The verb in the Greek simply means to suffer evil. You have to suffer evil treatment, that's part of it.

Now he's already spoken of this many times. Second Timothy 2:1 to 4, we went into it in detail. Timothy was called to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. And here he reminds him again, be willing to suffer. In times of departure from the faith such as described in 1 Timothy 4, in times of dangerous peril to the church such as described in 2 Timothy 3:1, there's going to be hostility toward the preacher, the faithful will suffer. And he says endure it, go through it. Of course, he's the living illustration. Look at verse 6, "I'm ready already poured out as a drink offering, the time of my departure has come. My life is on the line. I'm going to be taken from this world. I fought the good fight, I finished the course, I've kept the faith, I'm your example. You endure it." Paul suffered from the start to the end of his ministry. Why? Because it was a powerful ministry. So he says to Timothy endure suffering.

Timothy was faithful to that, by the way. Look at the thirteenth chapter of Hebrews, the last chapter. I don't know if you've ever seen this verse, it's tucked away at the very end of the thirteenth chapter but it's wonderful insight. Hebrews 13:23, we don't know who wrote Hebrews, likely it wasn't Paul. But whoever wrote it knew Timothy well and loved him. And, of course, they all knew each other in the early days. But in Hebrews 13:23 it says this, the writer says, "Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released with whom if he comes soon I shall see you." Released from what? The Greek verb apoluois used most frequently in the New Testament in relation to releasing from custody prisoners who were under arrest or in prison. Timothy was in prison. What that says to me was when the suffering came Timothy endured it. He didn't compromise. He didn't try to find a short-cut, the cheap way out. We don't know anything about his imprisonment, we don't have any details, but apparently he was jailed for preaching Christ. Since Hebrews was likely written soon after 2 Timothy,

he may have been jailed right while he was ministering there in Ephesus not long after he received this very letter.

But I'm so glad for that little note at the end of Hebrews because it tells me that Timothy was faithful, doesn't it? That he endured. He was imprisoned and then God graciously granted him a release. That's the measure of a man's character. Not how clever he is, how faithful is he to the Word of God and how much pain is he able to endure and never waver...never waver, that's the cost. The cost of our commission: persecution, rejection, hostility and still we never compromise...never compromise.

Number seven in our little lest of eight marks of the excellent preacher, the extent of his commission. I wish we could spend a lot of time on this but we'll spend only a moment. Verse 5, "Do the work of an evangelist." Timothy, you're in the role of a teaching pastor, you're a sort of second level Apostle, you've done a lot of things in a lot of places, but, Timothy, in your work with the church at Ephesus, in your pastoring work, do also the work of an evangelist." He doesn't say Timothy is an evangelist. The word evangelist is only mentioned three times in the New Testament. There were certain men called evangelists, they're so designated in Ephesians 4:11. But even though the term evangelist is only mentioned three times, the verb form to proclaim the good news is mentioned 54 times and the noun for good news is mentioned 76 times. So it's a great part of the New Testament, preaching the gospel, that's what it means. He is saying, "Timothy, while you're shepherding the sheep, while you're pastoring the flock, evangelize the lost." I really believe that that is the extent of the ministry of the faithful preacher. We cannot engulf ourselves strictly in preaching to the saved, we must confront the lost. Evangelists here even though in three places it's a sort of an official title, the three I mentioned, Ephesians...the two I mentioned, Ephesians and Acts 21 where it mentions the evangelist Philip, here it seems unofficial. It does not have an article. It doesn't says, "Timothy, since you are an evangelist." I think in its form here it's simply a general reference and it could be translated, "Timothy, do evangelists kind of work." In other words, recognize that while you're feeding the flock and building the church, you have to be evangelizing the lost. That's why in our little motto we say, "exalting the King, extending the Kingdom." Part of our pastoral duty is not to forget the unsaved and not to forget that some of them are in the church. It's too easy to just settle for sort of entertaining the saints, we must preach boldly and faithfully to the lost. The evangelist was one who went where Christ was not named and led people to the saving knowledge of Christ. Preach the gospel, that too is the faithful preacher's duty. We must be faithful to proclaim the gospel. Why? Because there will be unsaved people in the church. Why? Because there are people in the church who need to know how to preach the gospel to the lost. Why? Because there will be in the hearing of the preacher in the church those unsaved who have been brought to the church, it's vital that we preach the gospel. We could say so much about that.

Let me just say a couple of things. Reminders to those who preach the gospel...a couple of things are important to me, one is that when you preach the gospel be sure you're simple and clear. Just be simple and clear, choose the simplest language. The temptation is, you know, you graduate from

seminary and you think you're so erudite and you're so educated that you want to approach people like that. It's so important to stay simple. Do you remember this wonderful little rhyme? "Scintillate, scintillate, globulvavedic...feign what I fathom thy nature specific, loftily poised in the either capacious, strongly resembling a gem carbonaceous," ???? Or, "Twinkle, twinkle, little star, how I wonder what you are, up above the world so high, like a diamond in the sky." The first one was done by a recent graduate of seminary, the second one had been around a little longer. There is no particular virtue in being impossible to understand. So be simple and be clear in preaching the gospel.

Secondly, know your limits...know your limits. In preaching the gospel you have limits. Preach for men to make a choice. Present the truth that calls for a response, but don't manipulate. Don't manipulate. Martyn Lloyd-Jones says, "Keep the music in its place, it shouldn't be allowed to control in any sense." How often we have heard someone give a gospel message and then all of a sudden comes the music and the lilting music and then comes turning down the lights. Martyn Lloyd-Jones called that "cheap psychological conditioning." And he said people justify it in terms of making it easier for people to believe and accept the truth which to him was unthinkable, and is to me as well. How in the world can music and dimmed lights make it easier for anyone to believe when believing is a divine work of God? What are we doing with that kind of stuff? Lloyd-Jones refused to follow such tactics for a number of reasons, he said, "It's wrong to put direct pressure on the will. The only place to apply anything is the mind where you give the truth. It is wrong to put direct pressure on the emotions, he said, the truth must compel the emotions. It is wrong to assume that sinners have the inherent power of decision and self-conversion when Scripture says and you hath He quickened, Ephesians 2:1. It is wrong to think that the preacher can manipulate the Holy Spirit to save somebody. It is wrong to produce superficial conversion."

So preach the truth, know your limit. Don't manipulate, just preach the truth. Preach it with power and boldness. "No sinner decides for Christ, the sinner flies to Christ in utter helplessness and despair, compelled by the Spirit of God." "Crying foul eye to the fountain fly, wash me, Savior, or I die." That's a true conversion. The appeal must be in the truth and the truth alone, not the music and the lights and whatever other manipulative devices. The commission that we have must consume itself with a zeal for the lost. So much more to say on that but time is gone.

Timothy was a pastor but he was also committed to spreading the gospel. And since the glory of God is our chief object, we have to aim at the salvation of sinners. And if you're going to aim your preaching at the salvation of sinners, you have to preach Christ and Him crucified, you have to preach the law, sin, judgment, hell, you have to preach depravity not dignity of man, you have to preach the Second Coming and eternal judgment, you have to preach the cross, the resurrection, the atonement, grace, faith. There must be solemn preaching, persuasive preaching. As Spurgeon said, "You give the ungodly no rest in their sins." So in a sense we're teaching and evangelizing.

The faithful preacher then knows the seriousness, the content, the scope, the urgency, the attitude, the cost, the extent of his commission and finally the goal...what's the goal? End of verse 5, "Fulfill your service," diakonia, fulfill your service. Fulfill means accomplish, fill it up, it's a beautiful word, fill it up, fill it up, do it all is what he means, don't do it half-heartedly, do it with all your might. Labor, as Paul said in Colossians 1:29, labor with the Spirit working in you mightily, no half-hearted effort will allow you to fill up your ministry.

Can you imagine being able to come to the end of your life like Paul in verse 6, "I'm ready to die because I finished?" Wow, what a thought. To be done. Vividly in my mind do I have the memory of my Grandfather who in dying felt that he had not accomplished his ministry, desperately wanted to preach yet again. That has stuck in my mind. I don't know the dynamics of his own spiritual life, I know that he was a deeply committed man of God. I don't know what the Lord was doing particularly in taking him to glory, what His purposes were, but it stuck in my mind that he had the sense that he never fulfilled and finished what God gave him to do. And it's always been in the back of my mind that if you're going to finish at the end you have to go fast through the whole duration. You can't make up ground. And so you serve the Lord with a whole heart and a whole mind and a whole soul. That's what it means. We go all the way back where we started this morning, Deuteronomy 11:13, you've got to lerve me...love Me and serve me with all your soul and your heart and your mind. It takes that kind of total commitment.

And that's true for all of us. We all need to be committed. Now we're not all under the compelling of these instructions to Timothy as if we had a specific call to the public teaching and preaching of the Word, but we are all compelled under the general call to serve the Lord and extend His Kingdom proclaiming Christ. And we have to fill our ministry up. We have to complete it, do it all. It would be the most wonderful thing of all in my life leaving this world to be at the end of my life and say I'm ready to go, Lord, I'm done, to have that Holy Spirit confirmation that I had finished the work. Wow, what a thought...what a thought. But the only way that will ever happen at the end is if you're given the maximum effort all the way along in the process.

The goal of ministry, the goal of commission, fill it up. Do the whole thing. Don't be half done when the Lord takes you home. That's the goal. It should be that way for all of us. That same commitment. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, thank You for the commitment that Your dear people have made today. Seal it to our hearts and may it not have been hypocritical words without meaning. May we in this moment of silence affirm that we have meant what we have said.

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