

The Responsibilities of the Church: Preaching, Part 2

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-144

Well, we started this morning to discuss a very important part of the anatomy of the church. One of the functions of the church is essential to its life and ministry and that is preaching. For those of you who are visitors tonight, you haven't been with us, let me just say for a number of months now, in fact I think this is message number 34 in this series, we've been talking about the church and what a church is and what a church does. We started out talking about the church as a body. The Bible talks about the church in the metaphor of a body. And as a body has a skeleton, the church has a skeleton, or basic foundational structure of certain doctrines and certain commitments. And then we moved to talk about internal systems which are spiritual attitudes that characterize the church. And now we're talking about the muscles that make the body function. We're talking about what the church does. And last study had to do with fellowship, the church is engaged in the sharing of common life and consequently the sharing of common ministry and we call that, in the Bible, fellowship.

But there's another very important element of life in the church and something the church cannot do without, something designed by God to play a primary role in the life of the church and that is preaching and teaching. And as I said this morning, preaching and teaching is a crucial function in the church. I went so far as to say, and I think it needs to be emphasized far and wide, that the primary reason for choosing a church is the preaching, biblical preaching, because that is what makes a church strong and the absence of that is what makes a church weak. And since man shall not live by bread alone, says God, but by every word that proceeds out of his mouth, it is essential that His truth be proclaimed. And God has designed that it be proclaimed through preaching and teaching. That is God's method. We remember 1 Peter 4:11 that says, "If anyone speaks, let him speak the oracles of God." God has placed in the church those who preach, those who teach and they are to speak the oracles of God. That's what we do when we come together on the Lord's day, that's what you do when you go to a fellowship group, or Sunday School class or some kind of a Logos class, our weekly Bible institute classes, or a Bible study. There are those there who will teach you the Word of God. God has ordained the means for delivering His truth to be through gifted folks who can preach and teach His Word. God has designed by the foolishness of preaching, not foolish in His eyes, but very often foolish in the eyes of the world, He has designed by the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe.

And as I said this morning, you cannot honor God, you cannot worship God any more than by reverently listening to God's Word being preached with a heart eager to obey. That is the highest expression of worship, hearing God's Word with an eagerness to obey it. So we trusting that you

grasp the message this morning, and plant it in your heart, the centrality of preaching and teaching in the life of the church.

Now that by way of introduction brings me to the text that I want to draw you to. If you'll open your Bible to 1, 2 Timothy and Titus, just kind of hovering in those three pastoral epistles, I want to sort of lead up to the main passage, but I want to emphasize to you that these epistles written to Timothy and Titus, who were two young pastors, give instruction for life in the church. And they point out clearly the priority of preaching and teaching. In 1 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 6, Paul writes, "In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you've been following." He says to young Timothy who is a preacher, a pastor, he says to him, "You must be constantly nourished on the words of the faith and the sound doctrine which you have been following." Then in verse 11 he says, "Command...is the verb there...Command and teach these things." And then he adds in verse 13, "Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and to teaching." Read the Scripture, explain the Scripture and apply the Scripture. And then in verse 16 he adds, "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching, persevere in these things." This is the heart and soul of ministry is to learn the Word of God and then to proclaim it to others.

In the next chapter of 1 Timothy, chapter 5 and verse 17, we are reminded that elders, or pastors, who rule well should be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. I could launch off on a rather lengthy and impassioned sermon on how leaders in the church are to be honored when they work hard at preaching and teaching. In contrast, we have today pastors working hard at lots of other things and not that. But that is what God honors and that is what the church is to honor, hard work at preaching and teaching, that's God's design for disseminating His truth.

Then I want you to turn, if you will, to 2 Timothy chapter 1. In verse 13 and verse 14, Paul reminds Timothy again in this second letter, "Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus." Again he's saying hold on to sound doctrine, hold on to the truth, verse 14, "Guard through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us the treasure which has been entrusted to you." And the treasure was the treasure of truth, divine revelation, the Scripture. Then back up in verse 6 he says to him, "I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands." He had been given the gift of preaching and teaching, he was to retain the sound doctrine, guard the treasure of revealed truth and kindle afresh or stir up to a fire the ministry of preaching for which he was gifted and to which he was called.

In preparation for that, 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 15 says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the Word of truth." And again here is a call to careful study, to the learning of the Word of God so that it might be passed on. Now all of that leads us up to 2 Timothy chapter 3, and this chapter I want to begin to

have us look at along with chapter 4 because here is a direct commission. And this is the Word of God to every pastor, the Word of God to every elder, the Word of God to every leader in the church. Chapter 3 and chapter 4, at least chapter 4 down through verse 4, we'll not have time to go beyond that, are all built around one command and the one command in this entire section is in chapter 4 verse 2. Chapter 4 verse 2 says this, "Preach the Word, be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction." Now there is the dominating command of this entire section from chapter 3 verse 1 on through chapter 4 verse 4. Preach the Word. And he adds, "Be ready in season and out of season." That means stay at your post. That means seize every opportunity. Preach on every occasion that is presented to you. And when you preach, there is a negative side, reprove, rebuke. There is a positive side, exhort with great patience, and instruct.

Preaching then is to be strongly confrontational in that it reproves and rebukes, and it is to be gently encouraging in that it exhorts with great patience and instruction. So whether you are strongly confronting sin, or whether you are gently encouraging believers, you do it all the time remaining at your post, seizing every opportunity, you preach the Word. That's the command. That's what Timothy, a young leader in the church, was told to do. That was to be the heart and soul of his ministry.

Now the remainder of the passage surrounding that command gives us reasons why that is so critical. Reasons why that is so critical, and I want to share those reasons with you. And I know in the past you have studied this section and I have preached through this section in years past, but I want to approach it a little bit differently and not quite so detailed, but to give you the sweep and the flow of this particularly important passage.

There are five reasons why the Lord has designed that the center and heart of the ministry of the church is preaching and preaching the Word, the Word of God, the revealed Scripture.

Reason number one is because of dangerous times...dangerous times. Look at chapter 3 verse 1, "But realize this...he says...that in the last days difficult times will come." Now the phrase "difficult times" is dangerous times, really, dangerous times not in a chronological sense, but *kairos* in the Greek which means seasons, or epochs. It's not talking about clock time, it's talking about movements, eras. And he says, "You must preach the Word because of the dangerous seasons that will come." He says they'll come in the last days and I don't need to remind you that the last days began when Jesus Christ arrived. The last days arrived when the Messiah came to earth. The last days were initiated by Jesus Christ when He came preaching His Kingdom. We're still in those last days and these are a prolonged period of time, but nonetheless the last days awaiting Christ's return and the establishment of His Kingdom.

In these last days dangerous epochs, dangerous seasons will come. And the intent of the verb there, "will come," sort of carries the emphasis of accumulation. It's not as if they come and go, that would make things easier. It is as if they come and stay. And so the longer we go after the coming of Jesus

Christ, the further we move toward His return, the more of these dangerous epochs we collect. In fact, look down at verse 13 where he addresses this same issue. He says, "Evil men and imposters," that's false preachers, false teachers, religious fakes and charlatans, "will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived." They are both deceived in their own minds, and deceivers of others. And they will get worse and worse and worse as time goes on in the last days.

When Paul was writing to Timothy, the dangerous seasons had just begun. And here we are 2,000 years later and we have the accumulated impact of from bad to worse for 2,000 years. We live in very dangerous times. These epochs have accumulated through these years and they threaten the very life of the church, they threaten the integrity of preaching, they threaten the proclaiming of God's truth all around us.

Now let me just suggest what they might be for you briefly. As you look back over the history of the church, as you look back over the epochs that have thrown themselves, as it were, against the church, a number of things come to mind immediately. First of all, let's start way back. After the early church had begun to develop and grow and gain a little strength and spread the Word of God around, it wasn't long until persecution came...a frightening, fearful, angry, hostile persecution against believers. And believers were being killed for their faith in Jesus Christ. And we're aware of that because we have documentation that goes way back up to the times when persecution was unleashed against believers. And I suppose that...that kind of hostility was an epoch of its own. That kind of hatred, that kind of animosity toward the truth that comes out in the fury of actual persecution and produces martyrdom and imprisonment and all of that was a epoch of danger to the church.

But I don't want to include it because in all honesty as you look at that, the truth of the matter is typically in the life of the church, persecution has a purging effect. Persecution tends less to be a threat to the church than to be a boon to the church because it has a way of purifying and it has a way of ridding the church of those that are shallow and uncommitted. So let's start with the dangerous epochs at the time when Christianity became the religion of the Holy Roman Empire. And so you have not long after that what is commonly known as the Dark Ages that runs from the time of the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire clear through to 1500, over a thousand years of Dark Ages they're called and the dominating danger to the church at that time was sacramentalism...sacramentalism. And that's the word that you will identify in your mind with this first epoch.

Sacramentalism means that the church was dominated by sacraments, by mechanisms, by external mechanical means, dominating by attempting to know God through some kind of automatic action whether it was lighting a candle, whether it was genuflecting, whether it was bowing down, whether it was going through beads, whether it was inflicting some pain upon yourself physically, whatever it might have been, these were mechanical means supposedly to give people salvation. Certain prayers, certain rituals, certain confessions under the authority of the Church. The Church became a

surrogate Christ and people were called to attach themselves to the Church who had no personal knowledge of God whatsoever. This era was dominated by the rituals developed by the Roman Catholic Church. The Church became the only interpreter of Scripture, the Church became really the source of spiritual life, at least in its own mind and the minds of its people. Sacramentalism was a severe danger to the church. In fact, it dominated the church, it took the Word of God out of the hands of the people and the litany and the liturgy that was done during all of those years was done in the Latin language which was obscurantist and people didn't even know what was being said or what was going on. And that was part of the idea. The Church was the only justifiable interpreter of God's truth and nobody was allowed to interpret it on his own or her own and you attached yourself to the Church externally. A terrible, terrible era in which the Word of God was terribly suppressed and people thought they were Christians because they had an attachment to a system but no knowledge of God. By the way, sacramentalism came and stayed and it's still with us.

It was then the Reformation came. As you remember, the Reformation in the sixteenth century when all of a sudden the Word of God broke loose from this terrible incarceration in the Dark Ages. And as the Word of God broke loose in the Reformation, people turned to the Bible and they found out you're not saved by attaching to the Church, you're saved by attaching to the living God through faith in His Son. And as Martin Luther discovered it and articulated it, the just shall live by his faith. The Reformation was born. It was a great dawning of a new day. Always through the era of sacramentalism there had been pockets of believers. God always had His remnant, whether it was the French Huguenots, or whether it was the Anabaptists, or whatever, Waldensians, there was always a group of people who were true to the faith marching through those terrible, terrible years. Then came the Reformation and the light dawned and it was a great turning point in the history of the life of the church.

But it wasn't long after the Reformation, in fact before the Reformers could really sweep through all of theology and all of the church and do all of the corrective work that might have been done, a new dangerous epoch came called Rationalism. In the eighteenth century, you remember what happened, the enlightenment, the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution followed and man coming out of the Dark Ages began to realize his intelligence. He began to realize what could happen when he could read for himself and when he could discover things and it was an explosion of inventions and discoveries. And man began to worship the human mind. And the byword of that era was the book by Thomas Paine called *The Age of Reason*, written around the eighteenth century. Thomas Paine, of course, basically denied the existence of God, debunked the Bible and called people to bow down to the shrine of human reason. That swept into the church, that swept into the colleges, universities, and seminaries. And they came up with this commonly known liberalism, or theological rationalism which denies the Bible. It is that which is taught today in most seminaries in America and around the world. It had a dominating effect. They denied that the Bible was inspired by God. They denied the deity of Jesus Christ, the deity of the Holy Spirit, and on and on and on it went. That had a tragic effect on the church as it destroyed the church across Europe and destroyed the church across America to the

degree that today most of the major denominations are dead as dead can be because of the liberalism that entered them, the supremacy of reason, the discrediting of the Bible, and so it went.

It wasn't long after that, that there came a kind of a movement back to grip the Scriptures and the Bible was published and disseminated in a breadth that it never had been before because even during the Reformation it was impossible to print Bibles and spread them around since they were printed one page at a time. And so there was not yet mass produced Bibles until you get in to the late eighteenth century, the nineteenth century, all of a sudden the Bible starts to spread, people get a hold of the Scripture but there was a sad reality in the nineteenth century, the end of the 1800's, and that was shallow spirituality, dead orthodoxy. There was an orthodoxism, it was sort of denominational and wasn't personal and that dangerous reality entered the church. And it's still around. We still have dead orthodoxy. We still have sort of angry fundamentalism even today where it's cold and dead and indifferent. They have the Bible but their spirituality is shallow at best.

This was followed, you come into the early twentieth century and the influences in Europe by what you could call, I suppose, another great danger, politicism. The church became politicized. The church became the state church. The state began to own the church. And the church was politicized. And it began to take on agendas that were social agendas and political agendas. One of the most remarkable of those was what happened with Adolph Hitler. When Adolph Hitler developed the Third Reich and when he developed his Aryan supremacy theories and wanted to obliterate the Jews from the face of the earth and that was simply a man carrying out a satanic plan, it wasn't new. You remember that Satan has tried to obliterate the Jews a number of times. Just go back and read the book of Esther if you want to see an attempt at genocide that failed there. And here came Hitler and he wanted to obliterate the Jews. And in the process he wanted to capture all of the thinking of the people of his time who were involved in the Christian religion which was the state religion, of course. Lutheranism of Germany, and so he developed what was called German Christian Movement...The German Christian Faith Movement, declared himself the true Christian preacher...in fact, declared himself the Apostle of Christ and may have even said things like he was the Messiah. And he managed to wrap his arms around the whole of the church, politicized the church, get them to believe that they should eliminate the entire Old Testament and all positive references to the Jews in the New and take the rest as being from God and follow him as the voice of God. And believe it or not, the church moved right in and acknowledged that.

Well, you know, the church is still dealing with politicism. We still have that with us today, social gospel, reconstructionism, liberation theology, and all of that trying to win the culture war at the expense of sound doctrine, setting aside the preaching of the gospel in favor of some social moral agenda. We fight that battle as well.

Then after politicism in the fifties, the 1950's came...well I guess we could call ecumenism. And the big wave in the church was, "let's all get together and love everybody. Jesus is all about love and

God's all about love." I remember because I was starting to study the Word of God at that time, something came down the pipe from the liberal seminaries called "The Jesus Epoch," or "The Jesus Hermeneutic." And since Jesus was all love and hearts and flowers and gentleness and kindness and tenderness and meekness, and all of that, only the things in the Bible which reflected that attitude were true and everything else wasn't true. And the only way you could ever interpret the Bible was by the Jesus Hermeneutic and that is to say you looked at every passage and says...and said, "Does it express the loving, tender-hearted, kind and meekness and kindness and meekness of Jesus? If it does, we accept it. If it doesn't, we don't. And let's all get together on the basis of love and let's forget what divides." And that was the raging issue when I was a seminary student. Sentimentalism, unity without dogma, tolerance of error, it's still around. It has all kinds of different forms but there is a new sentimentalism even in evangelicalism that wants to make sure doctrine is not an issue.

Then in the 1960's in no less a place than Van Nuys, California, a movement was born that has swept evangelical from pillar to post...evangelicalism from pillar to post. I like to call it experientialism. It was called the Charismatic Movement, 1960 and the Episcopalian Church right down here in Van Nuys, California under a rector by the name of Dennis Bennett. There was an explosion of interest in the revival of the expressions of quote/unquote "Christianity" that were characteristic of the early twentieth century in what was called the Azusa Street Meeting, when people broke into tongues and claimed healings and visions and all of that.

Experientialism basically said, "Truth comes through experience....Truth comes through feeling God...Through getting visions...Getting touched...Hearing prophecies.. Signs.. Wonders.

The Charismata and the church faced the dangerous, dangerous season of experientialism where all of our spiritual experience becomes authoritative. As one lady said to me one time after I had spoken, she said, "I really don't care what the Bible says, I know what Jesus told me." And I've looked back at that as kind of a byword for where that movement has taken the church. Experientialism is a dangerous, dangerous epoch. It came along with all the rest and it never went away. And here we are up to our ears in sacramentalism, and exploding in burgeoning sacramentalism in the growth of the orthodox church and Roman Catholicism. We continue to face rational liberalism in the seminaries and universities of our land. We still have a cold, dead, sort of shallow orthodoxy, we have the politicizing of the church not only in our country but all over the place, certainly South Africa endured some of the horrors of a politicized church. We face ecumenism, the idea of let's all get together and not make doctrine an issue. And experientialism dominates in so many ways.

We came into the seventies and there was a New Wave. And in the seventies we could...we met the terrible danger of subjectivism. And in the seventies the psychologists began to rise and tell us all to contemplate our navel if we wanted to get in touch with spiritual reality, that spiritual reality started within us, not outside of us. We needed to be concerned about our own needs and the meeting of our own needs and coping with our own anxieties and developing self-esteem. And so we became

Narcissistic Navel Watchers. And we turned inward and we got very preoccupied with psychology and psychologists became the reigning gurus in the church and they were the ones who knew all the mysteries of being and all the secrets of the human heart and all the reasons why people did what they did. The church became very subjective and very enamored with that. And it engulfed the church. Here the church, on the one hand, had just been exposed to experientialism and was getting engulfed in that and then came another wave of subjectivism, both of them turning the church away from the Word of God.

We came into the 1990's and we added another danger, mysticism...mysticism. That's sort of believing in everything. Believing in intuition, coming to truth by intuition. Mysticism began to accumulate power energized both by sacramentalism which is mysticism as well, and by experientialism which is mysticism and by rationalism which is mysticism and by subjectivism, the psychology which is a form of mysticism. And so we had all of this stuff accumulating. And here we are, it's all around us. And then in the 90's, and you notice as we go they come faster. Once they took a thousand years to develop, and now they develop in a few years because of the intense exposure of media. Into the nineties we came and another ism came, pragmatism. And pragmatism basically says that the appropriate means for ministry are those that are most popular with the people. I mean, that's basically what it said. That's a purely MacArthur definition but as I tried to boil down what pragmatism is, it simply says this, the appropriate means for ministry are those that are most popular with people. So find out what people want and do it. Preaching is seen as a sort of a Pony Express function in a high-tech computer world. They say that preaching is like Pony Express in a time when we ought to be using e-mail.

And then number ten on my little list, just in the last couple of years is Syncretism says, "Oh well, we all worship the same God whether we're Buddhists, Muslims, Catholics or even Atheists who are searching for truth. As I expressed to you in that interesting book called *Ecumenical Jihad*, we all are worshipping the one true God anyway, so let's all get together and forget about our differences and realize we're all going to wind up in heaven in the end anyway and it will all get sorted out up there. '

These are deadly dangerous seasons. Here we have accumulated all of this and I've over-simplified it. There are nuances that overlap in these issues and they come in all different forms. It's one of the reasons why young men today need seminary training. You can't send a babe in the woods out to deal with this kind of stuff. They need to be trained. These are deadly, dangerous seasons and at stake are the souls of men, and at stake is the truth of God and the honor and the glory of God.

Now, the characteristic of people who are engaged in developing these dangerous epochs are given to us starting in verse 2. People who develop false systems he describes in this way. "Men who are self-lovers, who are money lovers, who are boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." Not a very nice

group, really. They are characterized as those who are self-lovers, money lovers. They develop these things out of their own pride, their own desire to be wealthy. They are boastful, arrogant, proud. They have little regard for their forefathers, their parents. They're ungrateful, unholy. They have no love. They don't want to make peace or reconcile. They're malicious, haters of good, and so forth and so on.

The people who develop these things are then not well intentioned but they are ill intentioned and they seek to destroy the truth. Verse 5 defines them not only as self-lovers but, "As religious frauds. They hold a form of godliness although they have denied its power and avoid such men as these," he says. Now not everybody in every one of these isms that I've talked about is a non-Christian and a false teacher. But the basic error of these is produced, I believe, by those who have malicious intent toward the truth. Many well-meaning people get caught up in them. Many believers get caught in them. Therein lies the responsibility that faces us.

Down in verses 6 and 7 he says, "These people are typically out to capture people. They are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning, never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." I don't want to be accused of being chauvinistic here, I just want to tell you that what the Scripture says here is most movements go, first of all, for the women. That's where Satan went in the Garden, right? He wanted to get a woman out from under her authority, the one who had been given by God to be her covering and her protector, get her on her own and come after here in her weakness and lead her astray. As Satan went after Eve, so does Satan with all of his evil systems seem to target women.

Verses 8 and 9 further defines the people who are behind these kind of movements as those who are the opposers of truth, like Jannes and Jambres. Those two names, by the way, are names of the magicians of Pharaoh. And if you go back to read the account in Exodus about Pharaoh's magicians, you won't find those names. But they opposed Moses and these men also opposed the truth. They have depraved minds, they reject the faith. And then in verse 9 he says that there are going to be some limits to their progress. So when we're talking about these dangerous seasons, we're talking about dangerous epochs developing and being accumulated, going from bad to worse, and at the core of them is the love of self, the love of money, religious frauds who intend to capture people's souls and they are in opposition to the truth.

Now therein lies the initial compelling reason to preach the Word. He says, "Preach the Word because of the dangerous times, the dangerous seasons." It is a time of all times to preach the Word. Here we are, getting further down the line, accumulating more and more danger and at the same time a diminishing of the proclamation of the truth to meet that danger rather than an escalation of it. We ought to be doing exactly the opposite of what we are doing. Instead of setting preaching aside, we ought to be increasing the preaching of the preachers because of the increase and the dangers. Serious dangers exist today in the church. And everything I've mentioned to you is in the church,

threatening the church. And that's why we have to preach the Word because the Word answers all of these things. The Word sorts it all out whether it's sacramentalism, or rationalism, whether it's some form of liberalism, or experientialism, or mysticism, or subjectivism or pragmatism, or whatever it is, the Word of God gives the truth that comes to bear against all of that.

There's a second reason why Paul tells us we have to preach. Not only because we live in dangerous times, which can only be addressed by divine truth proclaimed but we are to preach because of godly examples, of godly examples because we have been given a pattern to follow. Look at verse 10. Paul says to Timothy, "You followed my teaching, conduct, purpose. You followed my faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions and sufferings. Such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra. What persecutions I endured and out of them all the Lord delivered me and indeed all who desired to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Then down to verse 14, we've already considered verse 13, verse 14, "You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of knowing from whom you have learned them."

Paul says you must preach because that's the pattern that has been set for you. You have followed me in my ministerial duty, that is my teaching and my conduct. You heard my teaching. You watched my ministry unfold. You saw how I conducted myself as God's servant as an Apostle. You not only followed my ministry, but you followed my personal life. Verse 10, "You saw my purpose, that is my motive, what drove me, what compelled me. You saw my faith, you saw me in all of the issues of ministry, trust in God, you saw the strength and direction of my faith. You saw my endurance. You saw my love."

In other words, the Lord brought you beside me to follow my pattern, a pattern of ministry, how I taught and how I conducted my ministry, a pattern of personal quality, the motives of my heart, my faith in God, my endurance, my love for Him and love for people. And then he says, "You even had the opportunity," because Timothy, of course, followed Paul, spent years with him, "You even had the opportunity to see me in difficult experiences, to learn...he says in verse 10...of my perseverance." Then in verse 11, "To learn of my persecutions and my sufferings, such as happened to me, for example, at Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, all the way there to being stoned and left for dead on the dump. You saw the persecutions, you saw that I endured them. You saw that the Lord delivered me out of them all."

In other words, God gave you a model to follow. God gave you a model of ministry. You saw the truth of verse 12 that all who live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Timothy, you were exposed to a godly example with the divine intention that this was the pattern for you to follow. Paul was a strong champion for truth and Timothy was to follow him. And so in verse 14 he says, "You, however, continue in the things you've learned. Continue in the things you've become convinced of knowing from whom you learned them." And he's talking about himself. God didn't put me in your life for any other reason than to teach you the truth and set a pattern for ministry.

I mean, I look at...I look at myself as a preacher simply in a long line of preachers. We kind of covered that a little bit this morning, didn't we? The prophets of the Old Testament and John the Baptist is the last of the Old Testament prophets and he's a preacher and he's preaching repentance in the Kingdom. The Messiah comes, and the Lord preaches and then He takes His Twelve and He ordains them to preach. And then comes Paul, and Paul is a preacher. And then Paul trains Timothy to be a preacher, and so it goes and men of God, as I've said, all the way along through all of redemptive history had been ordained by God to follow in that line. I don't really want to take the responsibility to change the plan. Just give me the baton and I'll run the same race. Paul is saying to Timothy, you must preach the Word because that's what we do and that's what we've trained you to do and that's the model that has been established for you. You've seen it, you've experienced it both in terms of ministry, character, heart, quality, and suffering and enduring difficulty. You saw what we were, what we are. We're not entertainers. We are preachers and we live and die for the truth.

So we preach in the church because of the dangerous seasons that can only be confronted by the truth proclaimed that threaten the life of the church and the honor of the Lord at the church. We preach because of godly examples who have passed on this baton to us. I look back to a father, grandfather, a great grandfather, a great, great grandfather. Five generations passing on the preaching responsibility. My professors, my teachers in seminary, ministers and pastors and Bible teachers who influenced my life, I'm just one in a long line. I just want to keep being faithful to the same pattern that God established, that's why we preach because our godly examples have established that pattern. If there's anybody I would chose above all to be like, it would be the Apostle Paul. You probably know that. I really don't want to change anything, I just want to try to do as closely to what he did as I can possibly do.

There's a third reason why we preach. We preach because of the dangerous times, we preach because we're in a line of godly examples, we preach, thirdly, because of the power of the Word. We preach because of the power of the Word. Verse 15, "And that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." We preach and we preach because we know the sacred writings. What are the sacred writings? Right here, the books of Scripture. "And they are able to give the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." We preach because the Word is powerful to save. That's why we preach. We preach the Word because the Word saves.

In 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 23, "You have been born again not of seed which is perishable, but imperishable, that is to the living and abiding Word of God." And verse 25, "And this is the Word which was preached to you." We preach because the Word saves. The Word makes alive, the Word quickens. The Word transforms. Psalm 19, "The Law of the Lord converts the soul." That's why we preach, the power of the Word. Then in verse 16 he adds, "All Scripture, we preach all Scripture, because it's all inspired by God, it's all profitable." We preach the whole Counsel of God because it's

all inspired and it's all profitable. People sometimes say to me, "You go so slowly through the Scripture." The truth is, I probably don't go slowly enough. If it's all inspired, I really don't want to skip anything. If it's all profitable, I don't want to go over anything.

"It's all profitable for teaching." What's that? Doctrine. For giving people truth that is precise, and accurate. The Bible is not just a blur that you can sort of fill in anyway you want. The Bible is clear and precise and you are to study to show yourself approved, a workman needing not to be ashamed because you rightly divide it. It needs to be handled with great precision so that you can give people teaching, or doctrine, sound truth.

Then he adds, "reproof." It has the power not only to give people truth, but it has the power to expose error. It reproves. It exposes error. It uncovers the lie.

And then he adds in verse 16, "for correction." That literally means to restore someone to an upright position. It has the power to correct, to put something back in place, to put something broken set and back functioning. And then he adds "training," positive side of correction. You pick up the broken pieces, reassemble and train for usefulness.

Now when you think about the work of the Word, when you think about what the Word does, it saves. It provides truth. It exposes error. It restores. And it trains. You begin to understand its power. Verse 17, "That the man of God may be adequate." I don't think that's a very good translation because when we think of adequate we think of something that's marginally acceptable. Well, it's adequate. That's not what this means. It means that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Why do we preach the Word, folks? Because the Word makes the man of God complete, equipped for every good work. That's the sufficiency of Scripture. We preach then because of the dangerous seasons. We preach because of the godly examples before us. And we preach because of the power of Scripture. We preach the Word because the Word changes lives. God has ordained, as we saw this morning, by the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe. And we were begotten again as we read in 1 Peter 1 by the Word which was preached to us.

I believe in personal counseling. I believe in personal discipleship. I believe in small group Bible studies. But I think the greatest power in the proclamation of truth in the church is preaching and teaching through gifted men who know Scriptures.

Fourthly, we preach in case we're not motivated enough yet, chapter 4, we preach because not only of the dangerous times, the godly examples and the power of Scripture, but we preach because of the command of God. Chapter 4 verse 1, "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 preach the Word." Now that is heavy language, folks. I charge you not because of some earthly ordination, not

because of some ecclesiastical expectation, not because of some seminary training, I charge you...the word charge means command, and Paul is speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit like an Old Testament prophet the very Word of God...I command you from God to preach because your whole life and ministry is carried on in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and they will judge you."

That's why Paul said, "Woe is unto me if I...what?...preach not." Woe is unto me if I preach not. God is watching. Christ is watching. Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead. And that's going to happen in the glory of His appearing when He establishes His Kingdom. There is coming a reckoning time. First Corinthians chapter 4, Paul said it's not of concern to me what you think, remember that in verses 1 to 5, and he said, it's of small consideration what men think about me. He said I don't even judge myself because when I know nothing against myself, I'm not necessarily justified, I'm not a very good judge of myself, either I tend to be biased in my own favor. But, he said, the Lord will judge me in the day that the secrets of the heart are disclosed. That's the final verdict. Then we'll find out how much wood, hay, stubble, how much gold, silver, precious stones.

Hebrews 13:17 says, "Submit to those over you in the Lord, for they must give an account." James said, "Stop being so many teachers, for theirs is a greater condemnation." Those of us who preach and teach the Word of God stand before God with an immense responsibility. And obviously we realize, as James said, that the man who never offends with his mouth is a perfect man. And since none of us are perfect, we have a great liability to that kind of offense. We must give an account to God and we will give an account to God for the character of our ministries and our preaching. And so again I have to confess to you that it frankly matters little to me what human opinion is. It matters little to me and should continue to matter a little to me what I might prefer to do and it matters an awful lot to me what God has demanded what I do. I really...I really could never do anything other than what I do, preaching the Word of God, because I'm a man under command, and I have to give an account. And an account will come in the day when I come before the Lord, and then we will receive, says Paul in 2 Corinthians 5, according to what we have done, whether it's good or useless. And in the day that I give an account to the Lord, I want to honor the Lord.

Well that's why we preach. Preach the Word, Timothy, because of dangerous times, godly examples, the power of the Scripture, and your accountability to God. And lastly, he says preach the Word because of the tendency to deception...because of the tendency to drift.

Verses 3 and 4, "The time will come," and he doesn't mean, you know, it's some time in the nebulae eons ahead. He really means again, it's *kairos*, it's seasons again. And he's right back to kind of where he started. He says you need to do this because there are going to be those times when they will not endure sound doctrine. They will have had it, they will have heard it. You will have preached it and they won't like it. And so they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires. They'll go looking for somebody who says what they want to hear. They'll crave the teachers

who suit their tastes. They'll crave the teachers who make them feel good and truth will have a hard time getting a hearing.

You know, it will happen in a lot of cases. It sometimes happens in a little church where there's some prominent individual in the church who starts a fight and the preacher gets up and preaches to that issue and brings the Word of God to bear upon that fight and loses his job because they don't want to hear the truth. It happens sometimes in a church where a prominent person who maybe gave a lot of money is involved in some serious sin and the preacher addresses the sin and loses his job because they don't want to hear the truth. And maybe there's a meeting and he's told to cool it if he wants a paycheck.

It can happen in a lot of ways, those times when there's a tendency to deception. It can happen when people don't want to come under the conviction of the Word of God and they want the preacher to back off because they really don't want to hear that. It comes when....I've had this happen to me through the years, I suppose more often when I was young and people would come to me and say, "I brought a friend to church and, boy, did you ever offend that person." And I always feel badly about that and I always want to ask, "Well, was it me that offended them or was it something I said out of the Word of God? Was it some offhanded comment, or something insensitive or unkind that I said, or was it something out of the Word of God?"

I have been told on a number of occasions, "Look, not...not a month ago I was told, I'm bringing a friend on a certain Sunday, watch what you say, MacArthur." I hope I do, you know. I don't know what all those seasons are that come and go in the life of the church that people don't want to hear the truth. And then there are those times when somebody might come to a pastor and say, "You know, there's a church down the road and they're just packed out, they've just got people pouring in there. You know, they're doing a lot of wild stuff and having a big time. And all you do is get up and preach the Word. And we really would like a little more action and a little more variety and some interesting stuff. You know, the dancing bears, and whatever." And they don't want to hear the Word because they're getting influenced, they're getting influenced because some neighbor is saying, "Well my church is bigger than your church and we're really growing and what are you people doing over there?" You know. A lot of seasons. That's what he means when he says time will come, *kairos*, epochs, eras, periods. And they just...they don't want to hear it. They just want to hear what they want to hear. In verse 4, "They'll turn away their ears from the truth, turn aside to myths."

Pretty good reasons to preach the Word, right? Stay faithful. Stay on track, Timothy. Verse 5, "Keep your priorities straight," that's what be sober means, it doesn't mean don't get drunk, it means keep your priorities right. "And when suffering comes, endure it. Keep reaching out to the lost, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. You know what it is, it's to preach the Word, just keep doing it and remember me, when you get to the end, don't expect too much. I'm ready to be poured out as a drink offering, the time of my departure has come."

Here was the greatest...the greatest of all and he was about to be executed. But he could say in verse 7, "I fought the good fight, I finished the course, I kept the faith." And then he could say in the next verse, "I'm going up there to get my crown and it's a crown available to all who love His appearing."

Well I think you get the message here. Preach the Word because of dangerous times, godly examples, the power of the Scripture, accountability to God, and the tendency of people to drift. They'll drift, sad to say, even when you're preaching the Word. Hard to imagine what they'll do if you don't. Constantly be faithful to call them back for all these reasons. Great function in the church is to preach, to preach God's Word. That's what we do. And as I said this morning, and I close with this statement, You never worship God more than when you reverently listen to His Word with an obedient heart. Let's pray.

Father, it is the Word alone that gives life, the Word that quickens, the Word that empowers and enables and purifies and cleanses so many things in Your Scripture attributed to the Word. It's by the Word that we grow. Father, we will be faithful to preach the Word, the plan has not changed and the Word is powerful to save, to bring doctrine, to reprove, to correct, to train, to bring one to completeness and being equipped for every good work. We thank You for this great treasure and we with the psalmist say, "O how we love Your Law." And we would make it our own by meditating on it day and night and observing to do all that is written in it and knowing that then we will make our way prosperous and then we will have good success. We thank You, Lord, for this wonderful day to consider this essential function of the church and may You continue, God, to give this precious congregation such a love for the truth that they eagerly hear those who preach and teach. And bless all the preachers and teachers in this church and all across this earth who are faithful to You and raise up many more for Your own glory in Christ's name. Amen.

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