

Lesson: Share the Word: The Role of Preaching and Teaching

Lesson Overview

Biblical Passage

2 Timothy 4:1-4

Supporting Passages

Acts 2:42, 20:28-32; 1 Timothy 4:12-16

Memory Verse

1 Timothy 4:2

Table Talk Question

Do I search the Bible to support my own personal preference, or do I search for truth no matter what?

Biblical Truth

Teaching and preaching the truth of the Bible without wavering provides Christ-followers with sound doctrine by which they can live in faithfulness to Christ.

Context

Paul's pastoral letters, especially those written to his young disciple Timothy, contain important words for young Christians. Paul closed the third chapter of 2 Timothy by charging Timothy to continue his personal study of the Word (Scripture). In chapter 4, Paul commanded him to share that Word with others. Paul stressed that Timothy must know the Word and teach it to others when convenient and when not. In the city of Ephesus, where Timothy ministered, preaching was essential in separating the truth of God's Word from the messages that were turning people away from God.

Commentary

Investigation

Second Timothy contains the last recorded words of the *apostle Paul*. Paul had been in prison before, and he had faced death before. But each time, he was confident of his release and continued ministry. But this time was different. This imprisonment was the precursor to immediate execution. He knew that he would be executed soon and wrote a final letter of encouragement and instruction to *Timothy*.

The Church was still very young. There were no church buildings, no professional staff members, no official curricula, and no formal educational institutions. So much work still needed to be done to continue the work of Christ, and Paul entrusted his son in the ministry to guard the treasure that had been entrusted to him (2 Tim. 1:14). He encouraged Timothy to be strong (2 Tim. 2:1) and warned him of the difficult times that would come (2 Tim. 3:1). And finally, Paul charged him to preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:1). These last recorded words of Paul are preserved in this personal letter to Timothy, but they are also a pastoral letter to this generation.

Importance

This lesson teaches the Essential Truth that The Church is God's Plan, one united spiritual body of which Christ is the head. The Church's purpose is to glorify God by taking the gospel to the world and building its members in the likeness of Christ. Effective Bible teaching is necessary for members of the body to grow and mature in Christ.

This lesson also supports another Essential Truth: The Bible is God's Word.

Interpretation

2 Timothy 4:1 To emphasize the seriousness and urgency of this last letter, Paul used the imagery of a courtroom. As a witness in court was held by law to his testimony, Paul would be held responsible for his charge (or instruction) to Timothy. He was testifying in the sight of God and Jesus Christ. This legal-style affirmation not only reflected the seriousness of Paul's statement but also emphasized how seriously Timothy should take the instruction.

2 Timothy 4:2 The idea of the "charge" is conveyed by the imperative nature of this verse. Paul gave five commands: preach, be prepared, correct, rebuke, and encourage.

"Preach the Word" means to herald, as one might cry out, "Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye." The "Word" to be preached had been clearly identified in the previous chapter—the Scriptures, inspired by God, were to be heralded.

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“Be prepared” means to be present and to stand by, ready to speak the truth. Paul wanted Timothy to be ready at all times, even when an opportunity to preach the gospel did not seem likely (out of season).

The term “correct” means that Timothy was to convince or bring proof of the truth. The Scriptures would supply the evidence needed to remove all reasonable doubt that the gospel was truth. From this testimony, others would be corrected in their false beliefs.

To “rebuke” is to blame or condemn. It is the official reprimand or judgment rendered. Guilt had been proven, and Timothy would have the power to rebuke on the authority of the Scriptures.

Timothy was also to “encourage,” admonish, or exhort. Encouraging others to repent and turn to Christ would be essential to his ministry.

Some believe that Paul’s exhortation to act with patience and careful instruction meant that Timothy should remain steadfast and constant. Others think that “patience” describes the same kind of patience God has with us. The word used here is the same one that Peter used when he declared God’s patience (*makrothumia*) in waiting during the days of Noah (1 Pet. 3:20). It is not the same word used to describe the patience (*hupomeno*) that we are to exercise when we endure suffering. The meaning here seems to be that Timothy should act toward others the same way that God acts toward His children.

2 Timothy 4:3 Paul’s admonishment to “be ready in season and out of season” took on greater significance when he gave Timothy the warning found in this verse. There would be a time when sound doctrine would be out of season. People would not just ignore or reject healthy teaching. They would not tolerate or endure it because of their desire for sinful behavior. In fact, they would seek out and surround themselves with those who taught false doctrine. While prophetic in nature, Paul’s warning was already beginning to take place.

It should be noted that Paul was not referring to the outside world. He was referring to the Church. Paul warned that those in the Church would grow weary of sound doctrine and seek teachers who would tell them what they wanted to hear instead of what they needed to hear.

2 Timothy 4:4 Paul emphasized that those who would turn away from the truth and turn to myths would also turn off the preachers of truth. In Acts 7:57, those confronted by the truth that Stephen was declaring literally covered their ears, stormed toward him with one murderous mind, and stoned him. Timothy too would face those who wanted nothing to do with the truth of Christ.

Implications

The apostle Paul knew that Timothy needed to have a passion for the truth of Scripture. The world in which they lived offered many different philosophies. Even believers sometimes attempted to blend some of those philosophies with biblical truths to create a belief system that appealed to them. Doctrinal soundness was essential as Timothy carried on the mission of the Church. Today, the Church ministers to a world filled with spiritual counterfeits. People are looking for real answers. Seekers long to know spiritual truth, but culture tells them that it is to be found on a self-focused voyage through life. The gospel message is simple. Spiritual truth is found in Jesus Christ. When seekers eventually make their way to the local church, they are looking for answers other than those offered by the world. Absolutely essential for pastors, staff, and lay leaders in local churches is an uncompromising commitment to the truth found in Scripture. The Church is God’s Plan, and the truth of Scripture is what is proclaimed from the pulpit and through the lives of believers who belong to it.

Ministers in our churches today as well as Sunday school teachers and others must take a hard look at what they are leaving behind as a legacy. What will the next generation of believers demonstrate as far as a commitment to the truth of Scripture? Key to our effectiveness as the people of God is a readiness to proclaim biblical truth regardless of whether it is convenient. We must be sure that we preach and teach with a deep commitment to spiritual truth as found in the pages of Scripture. False teachers abound and can be a source of confusion for believers trying to grow in the faith. Even friends and family members can take our eyes off of the ball when it comes to truth. Like Paul with Timothy, we must be diligent to teach and model the truth. We must also encourage those who follow us to continue in that legacy.

- Why are believers challenged to be ready to preach or teach God’s Word every time the opportunity arises?
- What are some excuses that we give for sharing truth later instead of sharing truth immediately?
- What evidence do you see that people are seeking truth that suits them instead of seeking the absolute truth of God?
- Why should we continue to speak God’s truth when others don’t want to hear it?

Free Thought

“To teach in order to lead others to faith is the task of every preacher and of each believer.” —Thomas Aquinas