

2 Timothy 4:1-4 | “Preach the Word”  
*Preached on March 19, 2023 by Pastor Matt Brown*

You can turn in your Bibles to 2 Timothy 4, as we are nearing the end of the book of 2 Timothy.

We will be in verses 1-4 this morning. *[pauseeee]*

How important is the preached Word to you? *[pause]*

“In a British weekly called the “Glass Window” this letter was published: ‘It seems ministers feel their sermons are very important and spend a great deal of time preparing them.

I have been attending church quite regularly for 30 years and I have probably heard 3,000 of them.

To my consternation, I discovered I cannot remember a single sermon.

I wonder if a minister's time might be more profitable spent on something else.’ *[pause]*

For weeks a storm of editorial responses ensued which was finally ended by this letter: ‘I have been married for 30 years. During that time I have eaten 32,850 meals—mostly my wife's cooking.

Suddenly I have discovered I cannot remember the menu of a single meal.

And yet, I have the distinct impression that without them, I would have starved to death long ago.

I received nourishment from every single meal.’<sup>1</sup> *[pauseeeee]*

How many people think like that guy - that time would be better spent on something other than preaching?

Some people think, “I can just read my Bible. I don’t need to sit under preaching.”

But is that true?

Is that the witness of Scripture? *[pause]*

Now certainly the Word has power when we read it, and each of us should be individually reading it all the time.

But there is something about the preached Word, too. *[pause]*

Some people may even wonder, “Why don’t we just get rid of preaching altogether? Can’t we learn just as much from a film, music, or a piece of art?

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<sup>1</sup> Original source unknown. Found at:  
<https://www.ministry127.com/resources/illustration/the-importance-of-preaching>.

Can't we merely just have discussion groups online about it?" *[pause]*

Surely some of those things are helpful for our growth, but once again, there's something special about the *preached* Word.

Why else would God call for His Word to be preached? *[pause]*

This is because God does something special in the preached Word.

He uses the preached Word to help us understand the text deeper, to impress it upon our hearts more, and to call us action. *[pauseeee]*

If you think about it, it is truly a unique time.

How often do we go somewhere week-in and week-out to hear someone talk, and not only talk, but to talk about the same book every week? *[pause]*

Yes, we sometimes hear people talk during TED talks, academic lectures, political speeches, or stand-up comedy sets.

But preaching is not a TED talk, it's not an academic lecture, a political speech, or a stand-up comedy set.<sup>2</sup>

It's not merely for informational purposes, it's not for political causes, or to make you laugh and entertain you.

It's to equip, grow, mature, and lead you into more godliness.

It's to draw you in to lift your eyes up to Christ and to worship Him.

And we do this together as a church community, so that we are all led to be built up.<sup>3</sup> *[pause]*

This means that when someone neglects sitting under the regular preaching of the Word, they are missing an essential part of their growth as a Christian.

God has made a church and individual Christians to function and flourish under the regular preaching of the Word.

This is why Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4: "Preach the word." *[pause]*

2 Timothy 4:1-4 says this...*[READ VERSES 1-4]*

*The main point of this short little passage is to:*

**Preach the Word!**

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<sup>2</sup> This statement is adapted from some ideas in David Mathis' article at: <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/five-benefits-of-faithful-preaching>.

<sup>3</sup> See Ephesians 4:11ff.

The Word is speaking of the Bible, the Scriptures.

It is none other than the Word of God.

And to preach is to proclaim.

It's to announce and herald the Word. *[pause]*

So really, that's what I am: I am a proclaimer, a herald.

This means that I don't make up new truths or ideas, I simply declare what God has said.

I am a messenger, broadcasting what the God of the Universe has said to us. *[pauseeee]*

So preaching the Word is not sharing advice.

It's not presenting it as one option among many, like a lecture explaining differing views.

And though there is a place to discuss God's Word with others, preaching the Word is not a discussion, it's a proclamation. *[pauseee]*

We are proclaimers, declaring what *He* has said.

So we are not entertainers, not philosophers, not politicians, and not idea innovators - we are messengers. *[pause]*

And so we must *preach*, but we must actually preach *the Word*.

The sermon is not time to give opinions, or to rant on about current events, or to talk about a popular book. *[pause]*

A couple weeks ago, I saw that another pastor was actually planning on preaching a sermon based on a Christian book.

This will not do.

Preaching is to be done by proclaiming the Bible, not another book. *[pause]*

Yes, Christian books can be helpful at times by pointing us to the Bible in certain situations, but the sermon is not the time.

The sermon is 'proclamation time' based solely on God's Word. *[pauseeee]*

So Paul's command to Timothy is straightforward and clear: "preach the Word".

Imagine if more churches would simply follow that command.

Yet so often 'preach the Word' gets discarded, and talk about other things gets put in its place. *[pauseeee]*

Now what surrounds that main command as we look at the text this morning?

There are some things mentioned before the command and after, let's look at them.

*First...preaching the Word...*

### **I. Is to be done by believing it is what it is.**

Now you may wonder where I got that point, and that's a very good question because it means that you are holding up what I say to what the Bible says.

*And where I get it is actually from the last two verses of the previous chapter. [pause]*

The chapters and verses that we have in our Bibles are helpful, but they can also hinder our understanding of a passage.

*(Just so you know, they aren't original to the Bible, but were added later on.) [pause]*

So just imagine that the chapter break isn't there and look at 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and then read right into chapter 4. [pause]

Paul has just talked about how Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for us, and now right after that, he goes on to say "preach the Word".

So in light of the fact that Scripture is the very Word of God and is so beneficial for us, then preach the Word!

*Remember what the Word is and what it does, and so preach it! [pause]*

Just think of it this way...

*If a pastor believes that the Bible is God's Word, and it is all that he needs and his people need to grow and be equipped, how could they neglect preaching it?*

The churches that preach the Word most faithfully are the churches that believe the Bible is what it is most deeply. [pause]

There's a direct link between someone's view of the Scriptures, and someone's preaching of the Scriptures.

You show me a church that presents the Bible as mere advice, and I can accurately pinpoint their view of Scripture itself. [pause]

*This is why so many churches are neglecting the command to preach the Word...*

...Because they don't believe the Word is totally God-breathed and that it is *all* that they need for saving wisdom and equipping power. [pauseeee]

By God's grace, as long as I'm your pastor, you will always hear the Scriptures preached.

May it never be said of us, "They don't preach the Bible, but their opinions and thoughts."

No, I want to be known in Clearfield County, as the church that always preaches the Word.  
[pause]

Yes, we may be lacking in all of the church programs that others have, but may we never be lacking in faithfulness to the Word of God preached.

It is so vital because we always remember what it is we are preaching - the God-breathed Scriptures. [pauseeee]

*As Paul commands Timothy to preach the Word, he also shows him that...*

## **II. It's to be done as before God.**

Notice how he starts out in verse 1, "I 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."  
[pauseeee]

Paul gives a serious charge.

He solemnly exhorts him about the important and vital responsibility of preaching the Word.  
[pause]

This isn't to be taken lightly.

This isn't a task that he could take or leave.

It isn't a task that we can spend little time and attention on, but it has utmost weightiness.  
[pauseeee]

Whenever I walk into this pulpit, I can feel the seriousness of this task and weightiness of it.

I'm not speaking about the sport's scores from last night; this isn't a game.

I'm not sharing my opinion in a crowd of like-minded enthusiasts about a hobby.

This is God's very Word, and it impacts lives for eternity. [pause]

I'm not to take this lightly, but I am to do it *as before God*.

Paul's charges Timothy (and any preacher) in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead.

Talk about a serious charge!

Every preacher preaches in the presence of God Himself.

Every sermon is done before a watching God, who will someday judge all. *[pause]*

I can't take this lightly, for God knows, God sees, and God will judge whether I was faithful to His Word.

My preaching isn't hidden from His sight.

It's not like some days He's away on vacation or sleeping. *[pause]*

This is so important to remember, for if you don't remember this truth, then it would be a temptation to slack off.

Kind of like how some people slack off a little at work when the boss has left for the day, but when he or she is around, they shape up.

But we must always remember, God sees and will judge me based on my faithfulness.

Even James 3:1 says, "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness." *[pauseeee]*

But really, each of us is held accountable for what we do in His service.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians, "So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil."<sup>4</sup> *[pause]*

As believers, we aren't judged and sent to Hell, but rather, we are judged for our faithfulness, and rewarded in accordance with it. *[pauseeee]*

So we serve in light of a watchful Christ, who will someday judge all.

But we also serve in light of His appearing and His kingdom. *[pause]*

He will come again soon and will bring all things to completion, so we must serve remembering that He is coming soon.

And that's when He will judge and reward. *[pauseeee]*

Do you serve knowing that it is before God?

So many Christians don't consider this truth.

So many act like God doesn't care whether they serve or how they serve. *[pause]*

It's so easy to forget that God knows and sees everything.

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<sup>4</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:9-10.

But we can't fool Him, no matter how many other people we fool.

He knows our heart and motivation.

And he has called us to live for Him, and we are to be His good stewards, no matter what service we do for His kingdom. *[pauseeee]*

We serve before God.

One man named Hugh Latimer, a protestant reformer in the 16th century knew this truth well.

“Once he found that he was to preach before King Henry VIII of England.

As he thought about his great responsibility to bring a message before the king he realized that the message that God laid on his heart was not the message that the king would want to hear.

As he began his sermon he said, “Latimer! Latimer! Do you remember that you are speaking before the high and mighty King Henry VIII; who has power to command you to be sent to prison, and who can have your head cut off, if it please him?

Will you not take care to say nothing that will offend royal ears?”

He then paused and continued, “Latimer! Latimer! Do you not remember that you are speaking before the King of kings and Lord of lords; before Him, at whose throne Henry VIII will stand; before Him, to whom one day you will have to give account yourself?

Latimer! Latimer! Be faithful to your Master, and declare all of God's Word.”<sup>5</sup> *[pause]*

Like Hugh Latimer, may we always remember that while our service is seen by men, what truly matters is knowing that all of our service is done before God. *[pauseeee]*

*Not only is preaching done before God, but...*

### **III. It's to be done well.**

Paul tells Timothy in verse 2 to “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.” *[pause]*

Here we see Paul telling Timothy *how* he is to be preaching the word.

First, with readiness. *[pause]*

Timothy is to “be ready”.

Literally the word means to stand by.

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<sup>5</sup> Original is from J.C. Ryle's sermon, “Not Corrupting the Word”. Found at: <https://www.ministry127.com/resources/illustration/preaching-boldly>.

So it's like Timothy should always be on "standby", always "on duty" and "on call". *[pause]*

He should always be ready to be used and to speak God's Word.

Whether it's in season or out of season, he should be ready. *[pause]*

This 'in season/out of season' idea is the idea of whether it is opportune or not, favorable or not.

Whether the people want to hear the word or not.

Whether it is convenient for Timothy or not.

Every opportunity should be taken, no matter how successful it looks or how hard it seems.  
*[pauseeee]*

If you aren't available, then you miss out on so many opportunities to minister God's Word to others.

So the pastor should be ready and available, taking every possible opportunity to speak God's Word to others. *[pauseeee]*

We also see that the pastor must preach the word, being willing to reprove, rebuke, and exhort.

So he must *boldly* speak God's Word, not shying away from the hard parts.

He must *fully* speak God's Word, and that means reprovng, rebuking, and exhorting at times.  
*[pause]*

Let me tell you, if you want everyone to like what you say, don't preach.

Because as just learned last week, Scripture reprovng and corrects, so that means that the preacher must reprove and correct using the Scripture. *[pauseeee]*

It's said that "John Wesley used to ask his young men whom he had sent out to preach on probation two questions: "Has anyone been converted?" and "Did anyone get mad?"

If the answer was "No," he told them he did not think the Lord had called them to preach the Gospel, and sent them about their business.

When the Holy Ghost convicts of sin, people are either converted or they don't like it, and get mad."<sup>6</sup> *[pauseeee]*

One of the preacher's roles is to rebuke with truth.

It's certainly not fun, but it's necessary.

And so if you ever feel conviction or challenged under my preaching, don't disregard it.

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<sup>6</sup> Original from *Moody's Anecdotes*, page 123. Found at: <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/p/preaching.htm>.



This is what I'm called to do because Scripture itself is reproofing and correcting you. *[pause]*

Scripture is used to expose our sin, bring conviction, and lead us back onto the right road - it's truly for our good.

I'm not trying to step on your toes, just to get a rise out of you, I'm stepping on your toes because that's what Scripture is doing to us. *[pauseeee]*

The preacher also exhorts, which means to encourage people to a response or action.

This is one of the ways that preaching is different from teaching.

Preaching invites, encourages, and calls people to live differently in light of the truth. *[pauseeee]*

And how is reproofing, rebuking, and exhorting to be done? With patience.

Let me tell you, it takes great patience to preach to others because we are all slow learners, including me.

There's a temptation to be impatient, and want to give up on people because they aren't getting it.

There's a temptation to become frustrated, but people need a patient preacher...

One who bears with them, and who lovingly and patiently just continues preaching the word to them. *[pause]*

Over time, the Word does its work.

And the results are not usually instantaneous, but that's why patience is needed. *[pauseeee]*

Reproofing, rebuking, and exhorting also needs teaching with it.

People don't just need rebuked; they need rebuked and taught why it's wrong and how to correct it.

People need to be taught, not left floundering. *[pause]*

Any parent knows that patience and teaching are what's required of training up children.

Children will not get it the first time, they will mess up, they will need patience shown to them, and you will need to instruct them.

I'm not saying that you are children, but it's the same principle, when it comes to preaching the Word of God to others. *[pauseeee]*

Preaching the word should be done well.

A preacher can't expect to be effective if he is unavailable or unready.

A preacher can't expect to be effective if he never reproves, rebukes, or exhorts.

And a preacher can't expect to be effective if he is impatient and won't teach others. *[pause]*

Preaching the word should be done well.

I pray that I would do it well, and I ask that you pray that I continue growing in this area. *[pause]*

*Fourthly, preaching the word...*

#### **IV. Is to be done with urgency.**

Paul tells Timothy to preach the word, and look at verses 3-4, "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths." *[pause]*

Since more and more people will not want to hear the word preached, then we should preach it more!

The more people turn away from sound teaching, the more sound teaching is needed.

It's urgent, for people need to hear the Word of God!

It is "sound" teaching, which really points to healthy teaching that brings healing and life.

So it's not time to give up when people don't want to endure sound teaching, but we fight the tide of itchy ear syndrome with sound preaching. *[pause]*

We don't let the trend of turning away from good teaching stop us from being faithful to the Word of God.

Rather, we step it up, and preach, preach, and preach. *[pauseeee]*

Paul talks about a time when people will not endure sound teaching.

They have healthy, sound teaching spoken to them, but they won't endure it.

These people can't stand to have their lives held up to the convicting, rebuking Word of God.

So they don't bear with it, put up with it, or accept it as true. *[pauseeeee]*

Since sound teaching challenges them and confronts them in their sin, they don't want to endure hearing that. *[pause]*

The truth is that sound teaching is unpleasant and difficult to hear at times, why else would others not want to endure it?

But for those who are willing to endure the sword of the Word, which pierces and discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart, they will find healing, health, and growth.<sup>7</sup>

For those who endure, they know that though it's convicting and challenging, and hard to hear at times, it's good and beneficial, for it is truly God's Word. *[pause]*

What about you?

Do you endure the reproofing, rebuking, hard to hear at times Word of God?

Or are you easily offended by it, reject it, and get mad at it? *[pauseeee]*

These people who don't endure sound teaching have itching ears, so they accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions. *[pause]*

To have 'itching ears' means to look for interesting and exciting bits of information.

It means that these people only want their ears tickled and scratched, but they don't want the message to go into their ears and to enter their brains and hearts.

They only like to hear pleasant things, like someone scratching their itch.

And so what they do is they look for teachers to scratch their itch, not make them feel worse.

But we all know that when you have a physical problem, scratching it won't fix it, but making it hurt worse by surgery ultimately makes it better in the end. *[pause]*

Yet these people just want itches, not cuts - pleasantries, not rebukes.

So what they do is they create echo chambers for themselves.

They find the teachers who will say what they want to hear, which will be in accordance with their own sinful passions.

Meaning, they aren't going to endure preachers who speak on their pride, so they go looking for a preacher who doesn't speak about pride.

This is why there are so many preachers who refuse to preach on sin, judgment, and hell because people with itching ears have accumulated them up. *[pauseeee]*

Yet here's the issue: when you only gather teachers that say what you *want* to hear, you will not hear what you *need* to hear.

And the result is disastrous, for as Paul says, they turn away from the truth and wander off into myths. *[pause]*

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<sup>7</sup> See Hebrews 4:12.

Their itchy ear syndrome has led them away from the truth.

In order to avoid hearing unpleasant things, they have only hurt themselves in the end.

*[pauseeee]*

Let me tell you, if you hear preaching that NEVER steps on your toes, corrects, or rebukes you: beware!

That's a clear red flag that should alert you to a problem. *[pauseeee]*

Now admittedly, this text is primarily for someone like me, right?

It's for someone who has the role of preaching, and who must do it faithfully.

But what about you?

How can you benefit from a passage like this? *[pause]*

Well it should cause you to ponder this question...

***Do you see the importance of the preached Word?***

It's one thing for me to faithfully preach the Word, but it's also important for each of you to see its importance. *[pause]*

I find that when people go looking for a new church, they don't consider the importance of the Word as the primary factor.

They just want their ears tickled.

They just want good music, lots of programs, and other more secondary items.

But what if every Christian thought, "But do they preach the Word faithfully?" *[pause]*

Or if a church is looking for a new pastor, do they use that question as one of the most important in selecting a new pastor?

Often it's not.

Often it's about his charismatic personality, his ability to be like CEO, or things like that.

But each of us should remember the importance of the Word. *[pauseeee]*

What about when it comes to you personally?

Do you strongly desire for the Word to be preached? Or do you just want your ears tickled?

Do you just want to be confirmed in how you live, or do you want God to mold you, correct you, and shape you into the image of Christ? *[pauseeee]*

See the importance of the Word!

For it is through the precious Word that we learn of Christ, the Son of God, who took on flesh.

He came to reconcile us to God, for we were in rebellion against Him and without hope in this world.

Yet he died for us, so that we could be forgiven, and he rose again, so that we could live. *[pause]*

And He uses His Word to correct and discipline us at times, but He also uses His Word to encourage and uplift us at other times.

But it's all good because it comes from the good God, who showed His utmost goodness in Jesus Christ.