

Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

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God's word in 2 Timothy Preaching God's word, ch.4:2

[Please note: New King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]

Introduction

In my Bible the heading of 2 Timothy 4 is, 'A Faithful Servant and His Faithful Lord.' This is speaking of the apostle Paul, and his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In Acts 9 we learn of Paul's remarkable conversion when the Lord stopped him in his tracks on the way from Jerusalem to Damascus. Paul was a hard lined Pharisee, and his heart was filled with anger and hatred. He was intent on the murder of the disciples of the Lord in Damascus. The Lord blinded Paul by a great light that shone from heaven, he fell to the ground and trembling he came to know the Lord as his Saviour. Paul then asked the Lord, 'What do you want me to do?' The Lord told him to, 'Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.' Paul was now blind, so he had to be led by the hand into Damascus. He was taken to the home of Ananias who was a servant of the Lord. There the Lord made it clear to Paul that he was a 'chosen vessel' and that he would suffer many things in his life as he witnessed for Christ. Paul without hesitation immediately began to preach Christ in the synagogues, teaching that Jesus was the Son of God. As he boldly preached, it wasn't long before he was tested. After hearing Paul preach to a group of Hellenists, they then attempted to kill him. Paul from this point until he writes this letter, probably his last one, and while he is in chains, had one desire, which was to never stop preaching the name of Jesus no matter the consequences of him doing so. Paul in this chapter acknowledges that throughout his life that the Lord always stood with him and strengthened him in every circumstance so that everyone would hear about Jesus. Paul was a faithful servant, and the Lord was faithful to him.

Maybe you are wondering what the Lord wants you to do. Have you ever asked the question? Be prepared, you might not like the answer, it may make you uncomfortable, but if you commit your life to the Lord, He will always stand by you, He will repay your faith, trust, and service for Him.

Key verse

The key verse in 2 Timothy 4 is verse 2.

'Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching.'

Preach the word was a something my grandfather always encouraged me to do regularly; he was always ready to give a word. What I mean by giving a word was not just from the platform at our church, or the open-air preaching in the street, which he was ready to do. But it was at the bedside of one who was ill, or with one who had lost a loved one, or with people he worked with and so on. He loved to speak the word and exalt the name of Jesus. Recently we were taught a song which highlights the desire and joy we should have as Christians to be ready to speak about Jesus.

'I just wanna speak the name of Jesus.
Over every heart and every mind.
Cause I know there is peace within Your presence,

I speak Jesus.
Shout Jesus from the mountains. Jesus in the streets.
Jesus in the darkness, over every enemy.
Jesus for my family.
I speak the holy name Jesus.'

Dustin Smith (1975 -)

Look up this song on the internet, it has lovely words which I hope will challenge and encourage you to speak boldly of the wonderful and powerful name of Jesus. Our responsibility is to convince others that they need to repent and have their sins forgiven. To teach others what the Bible says about the love of God and how He proved it by giving His Son to pay the price of our sins on the cross. We need to have the desire to be ready to always speak about Jesus. In doing so we must also speak the truth of the Bible in love.

In looking through 2 Timothy 4 I identified a lot of 'Be's. Not the type that fly around your garden in the summer but the verb, Be! Verse 2, Be ready. Verse 5, Be watchful. Verse 9, Be diligent. Verse 13, Be practical. Verse 17, Be dependant. And I would like to add one more, Be patient. Each one of these instructions are necessary in the preaching of God's word. The reason I have added Be patient is that we must realise that we cannot expect to see instant blessing. We are reminded in 1 Corinthians 3 v.6 that Paul planted the seed by preaching, Apollos watered the seed by praying, but God alone made the seed grow. Learning to be patient today is not easy, because we can almost get anything instantly. God's purpose will be done, in His time, and we will never alter that. Jesus will not measure us on results; we will be measured on the faithfulness of our lives. So, what can we learn from the 'Be's.

Be ready, verse 2

I was thinking about the armed forces who are always in a state of readiness. They continually train, do exercises, work together for the day when they are called into action. I ask myself, am I always in a state of readiness to preach the word? I must admit shamefully, I am not. So, how can I be ready? Verse 1 would give me the encouragement, or commission that I should be training and ready to go into battle in serving the Lord, in view of the day when the Lord will judge my actions as a believer at the Judgement Seat of Christ. Also, the desire to preach to those who are heading for an eternity without Christ and who will be judged at the great white throne because they reject the message of the gospel. We are also told in verse 3 that we must preach sound doctrine. We must stick to what the Bible says. It might not be what people want to hear, but it's God's word and we are responsible to speak the truth. There is a warning of teachers who will add and take away from the word of God to please their congregation. One example, although there are many, is the so-called prosperity gospel which is a religious belief among some charismatic Christians that financial blessing and physical well-being are always the will of God for them, and that faith, positive scriptural confession, and giving to charitable and religious causes will increase one's material wealth and financial success which is seen as evidence of divine grace or favour and blessings. This is not what the Bible says. You need to have an answer, you need to be ready, to be able to contra such teaching. So we need to know our Bibles to ensure that our preaching is sound, and there is no doubt as to the clear sound of the gospel of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Be watchful, verse 5

Be watchful in all things, or in the ESV translation it says, 'always be sober-minded.' Surely this a warning to us to never let our guard down. We must always behave ourselves in a manner that promotes the preaching of the gospel rather than causes offence to the gospel. How can we be listened to credibly if our behaviour is suspect? We must endure suffering if it comes along. Paul certainly knew what it was to endure suffering. The Lord Himself suffered at the hand of mankind, so we who belong to Him should expect to be treated the same. Suffering comes along in various forms, sometimes for a short while or sometimes ongoing. The Bible says if we suffer for the sake

of the gospel, it is a good thing. Experience helps us to understand sometimes where the suffering comes from. Sometimes we need against our own human feelings to show grace and mercy to those who would do things to us. God is the judge of all things, so we do not need to take things on ourselves. We are encouraged to do the work of an evangelist and fulfil our ministry. The work of an evangelist never stops. Evangelists have the work of the gospel always in their heart, they have a great love and compassion for those who are lost and heading for a Christless eternity. God has given you a ministry, do you know what it is? Ask God to help you to understand what it is. You may already be carrying out your ministry. It may be in your workplace, or with your neighbours, your friends or within the activities of your local church. Allow God to use you for His purpose and glory. Paul was always watchful; he had fought the good fight, and he had almost finished his race. His time on earth was coming to an end, he had run well, and he was ready to be with Christ. He was expecting the crown of righteousness, which is also available to you and me.

Be diligent, verse 9

Paul asks Timothy to do his best to come to see him soon. He then recalls some who had wavered in the faith, like Demas, and Alexander the coppersmith who seemingly did Paul harm. He mentions others like Titus and Tychicus who were serving elsewhere. It seems that Luke (who was a doctor) was the only companion that Paul had in Rome. Paul asks Timothy to bring Mark along with him. Mark was not always the flavour of the month with Paul, however Paul describes him in verse 11 as 'useful to [him] in the ministry.' Paul trusted Timothy, he was his son in the faith, he knew he would carry out his instructions. He knew he would get on with his requests right away, in every detail, and without hesitation. God requires us to be diligent when preaching His word. Diligence is to be hard working by being attentive, being consistent and doing the right things with care.

Be practical, verse 13

Paul asks Timothy to bring his books, the scriptures, and his writings; he also wanted his coat. This little section speaks to me of the practical side of preaching God's word. Timothy had been trusted by Paul with many things in the past, but now he was asking him to bring his coat. What a wonderful practical thing to be asked to do. Paul was feeling the cold and Timothy would tend to Paul's practical needs. The Lord often healed people's physical needs before He preached the word to them to heal their souls. A Christian should show practical care to those they rub shoulders with daily, this will bring along opportunities to preach the word. Then it is our responsibility to be ready to take the opportunity created for us. There are many believers who have a wonderful practical ministry. They are always ready and willing to serve the local church and the people around them. Their lives reflect the gospel without them even opening their mouths. It is good for us all to be as practical as we can be; to build up friendships, relationships and trust so we get opportunities to Preach the word!

Be dependant, verse 17

Paul, having reflected on his life of ministry, remembers those who had let him down, and he was disappointed with them. He recalls that no one came to stand with him at his first defence. He was not bitter! He did not want this to be charged against them, he had forgiven them already. But he remembered the times he suffered physically. Maybe he was thinking about the night in Philippi when he and Silas were falsely accused, beaten, chained, and cast into the innermost prison with their hands and feet in stocks. Or maybe the time that he was beaten and left for dead. Paul reflected on his friends', and his fellow servant's, loyalty; and he thought about the hatred of his enemies. As he reflected, he concluded, 'But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me', this for me is a highlight of the chapter. Paul had proved the Lord throughout his ministry. On every occasion that Paul was threatened or when there seemed no hope, the Lord stood with him. Remember the story in Daniel of the three Hebrews who were put into the fiery furnace. Who stood with them? The Lord stood in the fire with them, I quote, 'The fourth is like the Son of God.' Paul knew the assurance of having the Lord stand with him. Paul was kept, he was not freed from

trials and tribulations, he had to go through all these things so the gospel message was proclaimed clearly so that all the Gentiles might hear.

Be patient

I don't know about you, but sometimes we become very impatient when we feel that the Lord is not blessing His work immediately. Remember, Paul planted, Apollos prayed, but God alone gave the harvest. The farmer who goes out to sow his seed relies on two things: Firstly, that he has cleared the ground of anything that would choke the crop, so it was ready for the seed to fall into it. Secondly, that he must wait patiently for the Lord of the harvest to provide the growth through the sun and rain. God is in control; we are working to His time not ours. Think about it the span of our lives is a mere blink in time. God wants us to be faithful, He will measure us on this, He will not measure us on our so-called success as we may see it. To be patient does not mean that we sit back, relax, and do nothing. I cannot stress enough that we are living for a purpose, our Christian lives must serve the Lord in whatever way He has planned for us. So, let's view success from God's side rather than from our side. Let's serve faithfully in patience.

Conclusion and greetings

To preach is in reference 'to preach like a herald.' A ruler in Paul's day had a special herald to make announcements to the people. A loud clear voice was required so everyone could hear. He was simply a messenger with a proclamation to be heard and heeded. Timothy was to herald God's word with the authority of heaven behind him. Paul shared the gospel wherever he went. We are encouraged to preach the word with clarity and correct teaching. We have a great responsibility in proclaiming not just a ruler's word, but God's word, the God of heaven and earth, an all-powerful and awesome but loving God.

Paul sends his last greetings to his dearest friends and old companions. Priscilla and Aquila and to the house of Onesiphorus. Erastus remained in Corinth, where he was the treasurer (Romans 16 v.23). The Ephesian brother Trophimus (Acts 20 v.4) Paul had left sick at Miletus. Paul valued those who had fellowshiped with him in the Gospel. It is a wonderful thing to serve with others in the Gospel. Some occasions it needs to be a personal thing, but there are other times when we can serve with others of like mind. In my life I can truly say that I have been blessed and encouraged with the experience of the joy of serving with others in camp work. Yes, there are always the odd one or two that let you down, but I encourage you to be patient with such and help them. There is nothing more powerful than when the whole team are of one mind and purpose in striving to Preach the word!

Paul closes out his letter to Timothy with the words, 'The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you all. Amen.' Paul wrote this epistle knowing his departure from this world was soon. The faith of some Christians had declined, proven by the fact he had been forsaken. His faith was sustained by grace. His heart was broken by the weakness of others, yet his own testimony stood firm. He exhorted Timothy to continue in the example of his life of devoted service to the Lord.

It is easy to be discouraged as we look around at Christendom today. But let's be encouraged to serve individually, and along with others look for that glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We have a wonderful story to tell so 'Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season.'

May the Lord bless and encourage you today.

Thank you for listening to the Truth for Today talk on God's word in 2 Timothy, 'Preaching God's Word.' Talk number T1392.

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