



BUT AS FOR YOU...

LESSON SEVEN: PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL

The Message of II Timothy

TEXT

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; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 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. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (4:1-4)

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. (4:5-8)

What is it about our fallen nature that is the same as Timothy's which made it "necessary" for this passage to be included in the bible?

EXPLANATION

Paul's Charge to Timothy: The Basis of the Charge (4:1)

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...

It would be impossible for Paul to use any more serious language than this as gives to Timothy the final charge of this letter, indeed the final charge as Timothy's long time mentor and colleague. The component parts of the charge (it being given before God and Christ's eventual return as judge) emphasize the serious nature of the charge but also the faithfulness of God in helping carry it out.

In effect Paul is saying, "Before the God of the Universe, before our Ultimate Master who is also now our brother—Jesus—the one who will one day come and complete the work of making his kingdom realized (which is the same task that you and I have worked at), before this might witness I now give you this solemn and emphatic command..."

Paul's Charge to Timothy: The Nature of the Charge (4:2a)

...preach the word...

Having laid out the basis for his charge to Timothy (namely God's constant vigilance and eventual return to see his kingdom initiated), he now gives him the substance: *preach the word*. The good deposit, the sound teaching, the truth, the faith, these Old Testament scriptures that God breathed out, the teachings of the apostle which Timothy has followed, learned and firmly believe—all of this is the substance of "the word."

Timothy is not to just hear it, or suffer for it, or guard it, or pass it on, but he is to publicly make it known, to proclaim it to all sinners, to show them how the gospel intersects with their lives.

Again to paraphrase, "My dear son Timothy. No matter what happens to me in Rome or to you in Ephesus—preach the word. No matter what situation you find yourself and your church in—preach the word. No matter what opposition you encounter or how successful the oppositions seems—preach the word. By all that is holy and right and true in this world and in the next—preach the word.

Paul's Charge to Timothy: The Means of the Charge (4:2b-4)

...be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 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. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

At this point, we may be inclined to say, "Ok. I get it. Preach the word. But, well... How exactly do I carry out this charge?" Paul now fills out the means why which Timothy is to carry out this sacred calling.

...be ready in season and out of season... refers to life of the teacher more than the life of the student. To *be ready* means to "stand by, to be on hand" so that any time there is an opportunity we are ready. Paul is saying in effect, "Timothy, be on duty to preach the word at all times, convenient and inconvenient (cf. NEB translation)."

...reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching... further tells us what we must be ready to do when we preach the word at any opportunity. To *reprove* means to prove with demonstrative evidence, to convict, to challenge someone in such a way that they become convicted of their sin, that they

have seen their need or error clearly. To **rebuke** carries with it the idea of censure, or sharply rebuking. To **exhort** is to encourage, to admonish; having shown people clearly their need, having spoken the truth that their need places them under God's condemnation, the godly teacher is to now encourage, to plead, to cheer them on to turning toward God again. Regardless of the action this is to be done with **complete patience and teaching**, without harshness or verbal violence sound, correct doctrine must be given, must be taught. We are not to resort to human pressure, techniques or strategies that attempt to "force" a decision on someone.

Paul now goes on to point out that as time goes by this will become more and more difficult. People will become unable to stand the truth and refuse to listen to it. As Stott notes, what they reject is sound teaching, the truth (**people will not endure sound teaching... and will turn away from listening to the truth.**). What they prefer is their own likings, myths (**but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions... wander off into myths..**).

In contrast to this (the fourth "But as for you...") Paul gives Timothy four stout commands: **always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.**

Summation of Stott, p. 111-112:

- Because people will be unstable in mind and in their conduct, Timothy is to **always be sober-minded**, to be from every form of mental and spiritual "drunkenness."
- Because people will not listen to sound teaching and heed Timothy's message of the gospel, Timothy must **endure suffering** because he is unwilling to either compromise or cease proclaiming his message.
- Because people are woefully ignorant about the true Good News, the gospel, Timothy must **do the work of an evangelist**. The gospel isn't just to be preserved without error, it is to be sown, error free, into the fields of humanity.
- And finally, because, some people will forsake Timothy's ministry, the message of the gospel that he proclaims, because of the teachers that tickle their fancy, Timothy is to **fulfill your (his) ministry**. In the face of opposition, and the rise in popularity of those who proclaim something other than the gospel, Timothy is to carry out his calling until his dying day.

Paul's Final Encouragement to Timothy (4:5-8)

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

One can almost see Paul, grubby, hungry, cold and without the comfort of fellow believers as he languishes in his dungeon. Knowing that this first appeal has gone poorly, it is only a matter of time for the aged, faithful apostle. Hence he can say with honesty... ***For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.*** Paul takes two common images of Roman life, the pouring out of wine or oil as a sacrifice to the gods and the sailing of ship, to indicate that the end has already begun.

Looking back on his many years of ministry, the way he has been opposed and has suffered as well as his conduct, his preaching, his passing on of the faith, Paul is able to say with a clear conscious, ...***I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.***

Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. Is the comforting thought of a dying man who has spent his life doing the bidding of another. Paul clearly is not teaching salvation by works here, but rather is looking forward to the reward which Christ has won for him and which will be his soon because his life, his service, his race is ending. To those who know Christ as their savior, the time when we will finally meet him face to face is a time that is greatly anticipated.

The Letter Completed (4:9-22)

Do your best to come to me soon. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus. Do your best to come before winter. Eubulus sends greetings to you, as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brothers. The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

TIMOTHY'S CHALLENGE (AND OURS!)

Take a few minutes now to think back over what you have been learning through II Timothy (you may want to look at the summation page to refresh your memory) and then try to answer the following question?

In light of Paul's charge(s) to Timothy in this book (and to us!) where do you feel like God is asking you to become more engaged with what he is doing at NPC?

What are you personally doing to guard the good deposit?

How are you preaching the word through your life, service and counsel?

What part should you be playing in seeing that the gospel is passed on to future generations?

Where do you need to be a better soldier, athlete, farmer, approved worker, clean vessel, or house servant to see that the kingdom grows and that the gospel is passed on?



*Consider dropping me a line to let me know what you are thinking about—PatricKnaak@npchurch.org
I'd love to get together with you and talk about how God might be directing you.*

THINGS TO REMEMBER

Paul, languishing in a Roman dungeon awaiting his final trial which will lead to his execution, is writing to his beloved “spiritual son” Timothy. Timothy had traveled with Paul for about 15 years and had been sent as the pastor/bishop to Ephesus, a strong church that had fallen on hard times.

Paul’s charge to Timothy is Paul’s last letter in the NT.

Chapter 1

- Reminding us of our need for strong, spiritually centered relationships, Paul opens his letter greeting Timothy as his beloved child and reminds Timothy of his spiritual heritage through his mother and grandmother.
- Paul exhorts Timothy to use the gift of the Holy Spirit constantly and to great effect in carrying out his duties. Doing this will entail or result in:
 - Not being ashamed of the gospel
 - Suffering for the gospel
E x t e n d e d e x p l a n a t i o n o f t h e g o s p e l
 - Following the sound teaching of the gospel
 - Guarding the purity of the gospel
- Paul concludes the chapter by citing the example of Phygelus and Hermogenes who have turned away from the gospel demonstrating that it can happen. He also cites Onesiphorus as an example of one who has held on to the gospel as seen in his aid and comfort to Paul.

Chapter 2

- Paul further instructs Timothy that in contrast to those who have fallen away he must be strengthened by God so that he can pass on the gospel that he is to guard (follow, and suffer for) to future elders, who will also teach others. Doing this will require that Timothy be single-minded even in the face of danger (soldier), that he discipline himself according to the principles of the gospel (athlete) and that he be patient and diligent knowing that growth takes time (farmer).
- Paul then cites examples for how to pass on the gospel from Christ’s life (his person and his work) where there is power, his own life as Paul continues to serve and preach the gospel, and the common experience of believers as we experience God’s care and steadfastness toward us.
- Paul concludes chapter 2 by instructing Timothy that his teaching (which is to be passed on) needs to get it right (like the approved workman who rightly divides), should impact our moral conduct and not just our intellectual curiosity (causing people to become clean vessels) and should model Christ’s in his response to others and point to the main thing (the way a servant should model his master’s conduct).

Chapter 3

- Paul begins Chapter 3 by reminding Timothy although there will be seasons of more and less intensive trials, there exists a permanent condition of opposition between those who follow Christ and those who do not. Stemming from a love of self, money and pleasure rather than God, this tension will even work its way into the church. We are to be aware of this.
- Paul concludes Chapter 3 the despite the opposition and persecution Timothy his facing he needs to remain true to Paul’s teaching—which Paul himself let shape his entire life and for which Paul was willing to suffer. Suffering will come to Timothy and to us as we follow Christ. Nevertheless, we are to continue in the gospel because it is God’s message contained in his “breathed out” Word.