

***Essential Actions After the Election, Pt. 2***  
***2 Timothy 4:1-8***

This Sunday we conclude the brief sermon series, “Election Essentials,” where we have considered a number of topics related to the coming election. During this series we have examined:

- ✓ The role and responsibility of government — what should governments do and what should their leaders be like?
- ✓ The responsibility of the believer to the government — what should our actions and attitudes be towards the government and governors over us?
- ✓ How to train our consciences to vote with wisdom in the election
- ✓ The kinds of attitudes we should cultivate prior to the election (unity, gracious words, and confidence in our eternal hope)
- ✓ The essential issue in the election — God’s sovereignty over everything, which should stimulate our trust in Him
- ✓ Essential actions to practice after the election, which focused primarily on enduring in Christ and teaching the Scriptures because we are confident in God

This final sermon in the series is a culmination of last week’s message, “Essential Actions After the Election” (Pt. 2). The message is taken from Paul’s final words of counsel to his protégé, Timothy, in 2 Tim. 4:1-8.

The theme of that passage and this message is:

***WHEN LIVING IN DIFFICULT DAYS, BE FAITHFUL TO YOUR CALLING FROM GOD.***

It’s easy to be overwhelmed and discouraged by the degradation of these days; but our calling from God has not changed and opportunities for gospel ministry have never been greater.

What will we do when it appears that our world is disintegrating morally? Here are five priorities for every believer in the last days (and all believers have always seemed to be in the “last days,” 3:1) —

- 1. Preach the WORD (vv. 1-4)**
- 2. Endure HARDSHIP (v. 5a)**
- 3. Evangelize UNBELIEVERS (v. 5b)**
- 4. Fulfill Your MINISTRY (v. 5c)**
- 5. Anticipate Your REWARD (vv. 6-8)**

## 1. Preach the **WORD** (vv. 1-4)

- There are five imperatives in verse 2, but one of those commands stands above the others as the theme of the first four verses — **Preach the Word**. The word **preach** means to declare, proclaim, and broadcast. It is a herald standing in a prominent place in the village, calling people to action.
  - ✓ And notice that this is a command. **Preach**. Preaching is not optional. It is essential. It is vital.
  - ✓ To preach means to make a declaration. The preacher is not philosophizing or arguing. Like the Old Testament prophets, he is declaring the truth of God. He doesn't preach *his* message (which will be fallible); he preaches the inerrant, eternal, and omnipotent Word of God.
  - ✓ Notice also that this is not the only place where Paul has made this exhortation to Timothy. Much of this book (and the other two pastoral letters also) is focused on this theme (1:6, 8, 13-14; 2:2, 15-16, 24-25; 3:14ff).
  - ✓ And while preaching is a fundamental task of preachers, it is not exclusively the work of preachers. Declaring the truth of God is what all believers do — consider Mt. 24:14; **Lk. 8:39; Rom. 10:14-15**.
  - ✓ Preaching is what we do. We are heralds and proclaimers of God's truth.
  - ✓ But we dare not preach whatever we want. We must preach one thing and one thing only. We preach **the Word**. We preach the message of Christ (gospel & writings, **3:15**; cf. also 1:14; 1 Tim. 6:20). We preach the Word of God because it is the only God-breathed, authoritative, life-giving message. Only Scripture can do what is promised in 3:16-17 so Scripture is our only message.
  - ✓ Will we change our message just because times are tough? No. Because times are tough this singular message needs to be heard with more and greater clarity.

### • Preach the Word because you are accountable to God (v. 1) — *why* preach?

- ✓ Paul has one primary message for Timothy (**preach the Word**), but as a preface he writes that the command comes under a four-fold authority:
  - **in the presence of God** = I.e., the command that follows is given under God's authority Himself. God has commissioned Paul to convey this message to Timothy.
  - **in the presence of Christ, who is to judge** = Paul commands Timothy to preach knowing that He will be judged by Christ under the authority of the Father (Jn. 5:22; 8:16).
  - [ASIDE: There are three judgments of Christ, all of which are still future — ]
    - ... separation of believers from unbelievers (sheep & goats; Mt. 25:31-33)
    - ... unbelievers into eternal hell at Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11ff)
    - ... believers for reward (1 Cor. 3:12-15; 2 Cor. 5:10); this is in view here.
  - **by the appearing of Christ**, i.e., He is coming *soon* and He will come for judgment (Rom. 2:16)
  - **by the kingdom of Christ** = He is coming as King to establish His Kingdom; and kings judge.

- ✓ When anyone declares God's truth, it is with this thought in mind — "I stand in the presence of God, under the authority and evaluation of Christ Himself, who is coming for the people that this Word is designed to prepare for holiness. Will I be used by Him to prepare them?" We must be serious!! (4:5)

**1 Pt. 4:7** *The end of all things is at hand; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.*

- ✓ When a preacher preaches, Heaven and Hell hangs in the balance! So preach and teach with the understanding that this Word is of greatest importance. Whatever your teaching/declaring ministry, you have no more effective tool than the Word of God.
- ✓ Be concerned about God's evaluation; we speak to an audience of One and He alone will judge our messages and He *will* judge them (1 Cor. 3:13-15; will our preaching and ministry endure the fiery test of God's evaluation?).

- **Preach the Word whether it is convenient or not (v. 2b) — *when* will we preach?**

- ✓ ***Be ready in season...out of season*** means when it is popular or unpopular, convenient or inconvenient, easy or hard. We have a command here, and it is to stand at our post and be "on duty" at all times, ready to administer the Word of God. Engage in your primary task and stay engaged.
  - Just as sin and sinners are always "in season" on earth, so also the Scriptures are the only antidote to sin, whether Scripture is viewed as "in season" or not.
  - Many now see God and "religion" as the problem, not the solution. After the shooting in San Bernadino about a year ago that killed 14 people, a NY newspaper headline declared, "God Isn't Fixing This." Those who teach the Bible will be mocked and they can expect to be persecuted for their faith, even suffering death (3:12). When the Bible is not popular, what will you do then? Let us follow the example of Peter and the apostles (Acts 4:19-20; 5:28-29). Why would we keep preaching then? Because the Word and the gospel are men's only hope (Acts 5:31).
  - It has been said that, "when it comes to religion, the crowds are always wrong." Preach what the crowds want and you won't preach the gospel. Preach what the crowds want and God will not judge you to be faithful.
  - If we wait to preach until it is popular to preach, we will never preach, because the Bible will never be popular with everyone. We must be bold and unflinching in our preaching.
- ✓ When will you preach? You and I will preach when it is acceptable and when it is unacceptable. We will not let others dictate our message or when our message is given. We must be uncompromising in our commitment to gospel proclamation.

- Preach the Word for transformation (v. 2c) — *how will we preach?*

- ✓ Paul has three more commands in verse two — **reprove**, **rebuke**, and **exhort**. They have different meanings, but they all are involved in one process — the process of transformation & sanctification.
  - **reprove** and **rebuke** have very similar connotations: speak truth in such a way that it produces conviction and confession.
  - The word **reprove** means “to convince,” “reveal” and “expose,” but even more, “to set right.” To reprove someone points him away from sin and to repentance. It implies education and discipline.
  - To **rebuke** someone means reprimand and correct; it is to identify the sin clearly and not hesitate to call the sin, sin.
  - A preacher cannot minimize sin and its effects. If sin is minimized, the soul of the hearer is not guarded, but condemned! We minimize sin when we are fearful of what they might say or because we don’t want them to “feel bad.” But when we do that we entice them to continue in their sin. And if they continue in their sin and do not repent, they will go to Hell.
  - When we observe sin, we need to have the fortitude to say, “Stop! There is freedom in Christ...”
  - Thomas Watson wrote, “Either sin must drown or the soul burn.” You must kill sin or sin will kill you. You cannot love both sin and Christ. There is no unity between darkness and light. If people are going to honor God and thrive spiritually, then they must be pointed away from sin and toward Christ. They must know a life of ongoing repentance and transformation.
  - This is at the heart of what it means to shepherd God’s people (**2 Tim. 2:24-26**)
- ✓ The final command Paul gives in this verse is **exhort**. It is a word that means, “encourage” or “challenge” — it is to get someone ready for battle.
  - It is to come alongside and remind the hearer of all that God has provided to make me strong.
  - Consider Paul’s example — 1 Thess. 4:1; **Tt. 2:15**
  - When preaching, ask, “what truth can I expound that will equip them to grow in faithfulness?”
- ✓ These three commands — **reprove**, **rebuke**, and **exhort** — instruct the preacher to help his hearers battle against sin in their lives. Sin is the great enemy of the soul.
- ✓ And the great hope as we proclaim the Word of God is that people will be changed; as they believe Christ, fight against sin, practice holiness by living under the power of the Spirit, they will be changed (3:16-17). It’s our job to help them change. And only the preached Word can change them.

- Preach the Word patiently (v. 2d) — *how will we preach?*

- ✓ Preach and teach **with great patience and instruction**.
  - We preach patiently (over and over) and with doctrine (instruction), because growth comes slowly (and with 3 steps forward, 2 steps back...). The infiltration of truth takes time.

- The fight against the flesh is long and slow and unending. We *can* expect progress in others and ourselves, but we cannot expect perfection. We are patient because we expect the progress and we are patient because they are not yet perfect.
- Again, this was Paul's example and calling for pastors — cf. **2:24-26**.
- And this is the testimony of much of Scripture:

- *2 Cor. 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.*
- *Gal. 4:19 My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you —*
- *Eph. 2:21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,*
- *Eph. 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*
- *2 Pet. 3:18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

- ✓ It is popular to preach and painless and easy Christianity and instant holiness and sanctification. Sanctification is a process. It takes time. Be patient with the people you are discipling, mentoring, teaching, and counseling.

• **Beware of the Danger of Not Preaching Christ's Word (v. 3-4) – what if we don't preach?**

- ✓ A further reason that Scripture should be preached patiently — people (in the church!!) don't naturally want to hear it. And when they deny the authority and necessity of Scripture, they will turn to anything else instead of Scripture.
  - ***they won't endure sound doctrine*** — The word ***sound*** refers to that which is healthy — that which promotes spiritual strength. And they reject it. Like a man who knows he is sick with cancer and refuses to go to the doctor, these people refuse to listen to the truth. They prefer blindness to light. They don't want to have to think. They don't want their sin and true spiritual condition exposed (Jn. 3:19-21).
  - ***wanting to have their ears tickled*** — Like an animal that likes to have his ears scratched so that he feels good, so these want a novel, fun, intriguing story that makes them feel good — and helps them avoid the truth of their condition.
  - ***accumulate...their own desires*** — Paul always uses ***desires*** in the Pastorals to refer to sinful, fleshly lusts (1 Tim 6:9; 2 Tim 2:22; 3:6; 4:3). They want to indulge the flesh and they do not want anyone to correct them, so they will gather teacher after teacher after teacher (***accumulate*** means "heaping up, one on top of another") who will tell them what they want so that they can continue in their sinful patterns without judgment and feelings of guilt.

- **turn aside to myths** — Paul is clear — they reject **the truth** — the singular truth of God for **myths** (stories and speculations; 1 Tim 1:4; 4:7). They are willing to exchange the truth for any new idea. They don't just consider these ideas, but they **turn aside to them** — they follow them, obey them, and begin a new pattern of life. They reject life with Christ for these new ideas that make them feel good and don't correct their sinful behaviors and inclinations.
- ✓ Here is the great danger — the natural man is repulsed by truth and the redeemed man, if he allows his flesh one opportunity, will slide back into the abyss of the sinfulness of sin.
  - Men are prone to laziness and ease in life — and especially in spiritual life. So we don't ask them what they want (the flesh doesn't want the truth); we proclaim to them what they need.
  - What makes me comfortable ultimately is not to hear about my sin, but to hear about my sin and repent of it. Jn. 8:32 — “the truth will set you free.”
- **SUMMARY:** Many years ago one pastor (R. A. Torrey) wisely said, “Preach any Christ but a crucified Christ and you will not reach men for long.” We might say something very similar. The preacher and pastor has a mandate that is simple and clear. Preach the Word. Preach any message but the message of God's Word and you will not reach men for long. You are a proclaimer of God's truth.

## 2. Endure **HARDSHIP** (v. 5a)

- In verse five, Paul gives four more commands to direct the ministry of Timothy; these serve as the basis for the final priorities of the believer in hard times.
- Be serious about your participation in the church body
  - ✓ Paul says, **be sober**. That means to be awake, alert and attentive. It is to “keep your head” in every situation. The one who is sober takes life (and death) seriously. It implies that he/she is active in the life of the body, looking for and recognizing needs, unafraid to apply vv. 1-4, because time is short — cf. 1 Thess. 5:6, 8.
  - ✓ Why should we be sober and involved? This passage gives us two reasons:
    - Because we are accountable to God (v. 1)
    - Because Hell is at stake (v. 2b)
- And in conjunction with being sober, Paul exhorts Timothy to **endure hardship**. The word originally meant, “suffer evil.” Cf. 1:8; 2:3; 3:12. We spoke of this last time in 3:10-13, so we won't repeat that.
- We believe we are meant for a life of ease and simplicity. But that is not the calling of the gospel. While the gospel means freedom from sin, it doesn't mean freedom from difficulty. In fact, the gospel generally means life will be difficult — we will fight against sin much more and we will endure far more injustices and hatred from the world. It was that way for Christ and it will be that way for His people. He promised that to us (Jn. 15:18ff).

### 3. Evangelize **UNBELIEVERS** (v. 5b)

- To **do the work of an evangelist** does not mean that you must have the gift of evangelism.
- It does mean that you must be intentional about keeping evangelism the cutting edge of life.
- What is an evangelist? It is someone who proclaims good news. He doesn't save the person, he just presents the good news of Christ. Paul doesn't say, "be a successful evangelist." Just, "do the work (and leave the results to God 1 Cor. 3:5-9). One author rightly commented, "even if an evangelistic effort doesn't lead to a gospel conversation, evangelistic failure is better than not trying evangelism at all." [Mack Stiles, *Evangelism*]
- Friends, our culture is going to pieces, but it won't be saved (3:13). God has no redemptive plan for America like He does for Israel. We don't need to worry about saving the culture because God doesn't save cultures. But God does save individuals, and the only way they will be saved is if they hear a "preacher" (Rom. 10:14-15) who is faithful to proclaim the gospel of salvation.
- American churches and believers have spent far too much time trying to save the culture and not enough time sharing the good news of Christ's redemption with friends, neighbors, and co-workers. Are we as concerned about the salvation of the lady who takes our order at Subway or rings up our groceries at Kroger or the mechanic who fixes our car or the neighbor kid who watches our dog when we're on vacation as we are about "the state of the culture?" Until we are, we won't evangelize. When we don't care that they are enslaved by sin and that they are going to Hell, we won't do the work of an evangelist. But when we do care, we will be far more inclined.

"If the greatest privileges that can be bestowed on an individual in this world are the forgiveness of sin, justification and reconciliation with God, adoption into his family and the assurance of eternal glory — then there is no more highly privileged duty, no more dignified position in the world than that of the minister of the gospel who is given the task of opening the kingdom of God to those who believe." [William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying*.]

- Evangelism was the fuel that stoked the fire of the early church —

- *Acts 4:1-2 As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.*
- *Acts 4:18 And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.*
- *Acts 11:1 Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.*
- *Acts 11:19-20 So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who*

*came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus.*

- *Acts 13:5 When they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper.*
- *Acts 13:44 The next Sabbath nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of the Lord.*
- *Acts 14:1 In Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks.*

- It is possible to get in the “cocoon” of the saved community and forget the lost who are perishing.
- Let me give you three suggestions to help you cultivate evangelistic desires:
  - ✓ *Pray for opportunities every day* (Eph. 6:18). You may not get them every day, but you will be more conscious to look for them (and you will be cultivating a conscience sensitized to evangelize). [Pray for specific people as you find out their spiritual condition (e.g., places you frequently go).]
  - ✓ *Pray for bold gentleness* (Col. 4:5-6; 1 Pt. 3:15). We need to be unashamed and wise and kind with our words — unbelievers who are floundering in sin don’t need the anchor of angry condemnation, they need the lifeline of God’s liberating grace.
  - ✓ *Meditate on Hell and the gospel* (memorizing Scripture will help) — when we recognize that we deserved the same wrath these are destined for, we will be more inclined to help them.

#### **4. Fulfill Your MINISTRY** — Use your spiritual gifts for the spiritual benefit of others

- ***fulfill your ministry*** = God has placed you in a particular place in the body with a particular set of gifts and abilities so that others will be equipped to be like Christ.
- This is a return to one of the first statements of the book: cf. **1:6**.
- God has entrusted His ministry to His people (2:21ff). Like the Boy Scout who looks for a daily good deed, so we need to look for daily opp’s to fulfill our calling to stimulate one another to love and good deeds... (Heb. 10:24-25)
- The way Paul writes this also suggests that there is urgency to this — we can’t wait. It needs to be done *now*. It has a similar tone as another of Paul’s letter’s to the Ephesians (Eph. 5:16-17). We have work to do for Christ and it must be done to its full extent and with haste (e.g., Col. 1:25ff).
- Do you want to hear “well done, good and faithful servant?” when you stand in God’s presence?
  - ✓ How are you “preaching?” Are you being faithful to administer the Scriptures to all those who are under your influence? Are you resting on the authoritative power of the Bible?
  - ✓ Are you joyfully enduring?
  - ✓ Are you doing the work of an evangelist?
  - ✓ Are you doing all you can to complete your ministry so others are built up into the image of Christ?
  - ✓ This is the kind of life and ministry God rewards.

## 5. Anticipate Your **REWARD** (vv. 6-8)

- We've spoken several times in this series about remembering our eternal citizenship and home (1 Pt. 5:10). So we don't need to belabor Paul's example in these verses, except to note these essentials:
  - ✓ Paul pictured his life as a total sacrifice to Christ — ***I am already poured out***. He was ready and happy to be used up for Christ. And he had been. Cf. Phil. 2:17.
  - ✓ His sacrifice now resulted in his ***departure*** — i.e., his death. Because of this, death was no sting to him — 1 Cor. 15:53-55; in fact, it became a joy (Phil. 1:21, 23).
  - ✓ What sustains us in serving others is a joyful willingness to be "used up" for God's glory; whether I survive is not pre-eminent, but whether I have been faithful in my service is.
  - ✓ Can you imagine standing before the Lord at the examination day (4:1) and have the One who died for you say, "why were you unwilling to give to someone else for Me?"
- So Paul offers three different pictures of the spiritual life and ministry: a ***fight***, a ***race***, a ***trust***.
  - ✓ But these weren't unique for Paul; every believer is faced with these same battles.
  - ✓ Each of those pictures contains the potential for difficulty and hardship. But that doesn't mean we have an excuse to "give up." This life is made up of trials and trouble. And that is especially so for the believer for at least two reasons:
    - Suffering enables us to experience the power of Christ in ways that ease never will (1 Cor. 12)
    - Suffering keeps us from being attached to this world and keeps us looking for our eternal home.
- And that was why Paul was so willing to be used up in serving God — ***the time of my departure*** is no regret to Paul because he lived with anticipation of the ***crown of righteousness***.
  - ✓ Paul lived and was driven by confidence in God's reward (1 Cor. 9:27).
  - ✓ This reward is the fullness of righteousness that was given to us through Christ's death. Now it is progressive, though always incomplete. Then it will be fully complete.
  - ✓ This reward is for everyone (not just Paul) who loves God — a synonym of genuine faith.
  - ✓ Notice also that these rewards motivated Paul — it's not only acceptable to anticipate reward, but it's an essential motive for our service. If we don't anticipate Christ's reward we will be tempted to work for some lesser (ungodly) reward and we will lose the ultimate reward. So pursue the treasures and rewards that God has promised to us (e.g., Jesus' command, Mt. 6:19-21).

**CONCLUSION:** What will we do after the election?

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| ✓ We will preach the Word.            | ✓ We will fulfill our ministry calling. |
| ✓ We will endure hardship.            | ✓ We will anticipate our reward.        |
| ✓ We will evangelize the unbelieving. |   |

The election may not produce our desired results, but we will have ample ministry opportunities after the election and that is our joyful duty to fulfill.

**BENEDICTION:** 2 Timothy 4:16-18