

October 30, 2011 by Steve Brandon



Preach the Word

2 Timothy 4:1-5

1. The Gravity (verse 1)
2. The Charge (verse 2)
3. The Reason (verses 3-4)
4. The Resolve (verse 5)

A major focus of my work each week comes right here on Sunday morning, when I stand before all of you and preach God's word. I have spent many years training for this moment each week. The Master's Seminary, where I attended, has one aim: "To train men of God to preach the word of God. In my 10 years at Rock Valley Bible Church, I have stood before you all and have preached nearly 500 weekly sermons. In fact, I went to the website, where all of my messages are posted, and counted how many messages I have preached here. This is sermon #496, for those who are counting. Preaching is a major portion of my work. Nearly every week of my life is spent in a portion of Scripture. I pour over the text, seeking how best to open it up for you. And then, on Sunday mornings in this place, I seek to proclaim the word with clarity, passion and in accordance with the truth.

I do this work each week of my life because of commands given in the Scripture, such as the one that we will look at today. Paul tells Timothy to "preach the word." In the midst of all of his struggles in the church in Ephesus, Paul commands Timothy to place his efforts at preaching the word. As you consider the text below, look for Paul's command.

2 Timothy 4:1-5

I solemnly 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, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

My message this morning is entitled, "Preach the Word", because, that's the main point of this text (as is found in verse 2). Look there at verse 2. It says, "Preach the word." Everything else in these verses centers around that one command. As a result, we will spend the majority of our time today in that verse. More particularly, we will spend the majority of our time in that one phrase, "Preach the word."

But, before Paul gets to the command, he spends an entire verse building up the seriousness of the command. Or, what I have called in my first point, ...

1. The Gravity (verse 1)

That is, the seriousness of the charge to Timothy. He says, "I solemnly 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." Paul is piling on weight upon weight to this charge to "preach the word" that's coming in verse 2. Six phrases in all. With every phrase, the solemnity increases.

It would have been enough had Paul simply told Timothy, "I charge you -- preach the word." This would have been enough for Timothy. Paul had great influence and authority in Timothy's life. He was greatly respected. He was greatly loved. And as Paul wrote his instructions to Timothy, I'm sure that Timothy took each of them very seriously and gladly followed Paul's counsel. But, the gravity of this call impelled Paul to pile on more weight.

Paul said, "I *solemnly* charge you, ... preach the word." This would have been enough for Timothy to take heed. It would have lifted this command to Timothy above the others. "Timothy, I have given you much counsel in this letter. But, of all the things that I have told you, this is of utmost importance. Timothy, I solemnly charge you." But, Paul went further than this. He added further weight to his charge, invoking the presence of God.

He wrote, "I solemnly charge you *in the presence of God*." This brings a heavenly witness to the gravity of the call: God, Himself -- the One who created the world, the One who saved his soul, the One before whom all of us will give account. "This is serious business, Timothy. This demands your utmost attention." Had Paul said that, it would have been enough.

But, he went on. Paul wrote, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and *of Christ Jesus*." At this point, Paul tips the scale into the most solemn command of the entire book, topping the command given in chapter 2, verse 14, where Paul wrote, "Remind them of these things and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words." Here, he brings two members of the Trinity into the equation -- God, the Father, and Jesus, the Son. Again, it merely adds weight to this charge to Timothy to preach the word. But, Paul isn't done. He begins to expand on Jesus.

Paul says, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, *who is to judge the living and the dead.*" Here Paul brings into view the great judgment of all who ever lived. Whereas that may have been implied when he mentioned "God," earlier, here it is explicitly explained. "Timothy, my solemn charge is coming to you in light of the fate that we all must face and that is Jesus Christ, the judge of the living and the dead." Paul could hardly have given more weight to his command. But, he does.

He says to Timothy, "I solemnly 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.*" With these words, Paul is bringing world history to its ultimate climax. Jesus is not only the Judge of the world. He will also be the King of the world. "When He appears again (at His second coming), He will establish His kingdom. We will be under His reign! And in that day, nothing else will matter, except for the truth of God, which we have come to believe. So, spread this word. Don't let anyone else detract you from this one thing. Keep spreading it until your dying day. Eternity is at stake. And ultimately, only eternity matters."

And now, the stage has been set for what is my second point...

2. The Charge (verse 2)

Here comes the charge: "Preach the word." This is the natural conclusion of everything that Paul had been leading Timothy toward in chapter 3.

2 Timothy 3:1

Realize this that in the last days, difficult times will come. Wicked men will come into the church and seek to pull people away.

2 Timothy 3:14-15

You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, ... from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

"Timothy, keep the course. The scriptures of old have been your guide. They have led you to faith in Jesus. You can trust the Scriptures."

And then in what we read last week in chapter 3, verses 16-17, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." The words of Scripture are inspired and without error. They are powerful to change lives. They are sufficient for your ministry.

"So, Timothy, lean on the Scriptures. Preach the truth that they contain. I solemnly charge you to preach the word." Note the simplicity. "Preach the word." "Preach the message." "Preach what you have come to know and trust." "Let this be your drive in life." The reason why Paul charges Timothy with these things is because he knows that this is the best advice that he can give Timothy regarding the success of his ministry. It's why I spend so much time of my life studying and thinking and praying and preparing that I, too, might join Timothy in preaching the word.

The apostles knew how important preaching was to their calling. In Acts 6, we read about how the apostles were busy in the ministry. Among other things, they were serving food to the widows of Jerusalem. Their deeds were noble, but they were pulling them away from their call to preach. Remember what the apostles said to the congregation? "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables" (Acts 6:2). Such a statement makes a statement of the priority of preaching! And that's what the apostles did!

When you read the inspired history of the early church, you are immediately struck by the primacy of preaching! When the Holy Spirit came upon the church at Pentecost, Peter stood and preached. And almost all of Acts, chapter 2, records his sermon. Three-thousand souls were saved that day. When Peter and John healed the lame man, Peter again stood and preached to the multitudes. Almost all of Acts, chapter 3, records his sermon. Soon, there were 5,000 believers in the church. Throughout the entire book of Acts, practically all that you read is sermon after sermon after sermon that is preached to various groups of people.

When given an opportunity, Stephen preached to the Jews. You can read his sermon, which covers all of Acts, chapter 7. When the gospel first came to the Gentiles, Peter preached to the house of Cornelius. Acts, chapter 10, records what he said. When Paul and Barnabas went on their first missionary journey, their first arrived at Psidian Antioch. Much of Acts, chapter 13, records the words that he preached to the synagogue there. Half of Acts, chapter 17, records Paul's message to The Areopagus. Acts, chapter 22, records Paul's preaching to the Jews, just after he was arrested. You can read his entire message to them. It practically fills the entire chapter. Acts, chapters 24 and 26, record messages that Paul gave to Felix and Agrippa.

And that's just the specific sermons recorded. Over and over and over again, you hear summary statements regarding the activity of the early church. Acts 5:42 says, "And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ." Acts 8:35 records, "Philip opened his mouth, and ... he preached Jesus to him." Acts 11:20 says, "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 15:35 tells us, "Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord." And in Acts 28:29-30, "[Paul] was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered."

You can't read the inspired history of the early church and fail to see the importance of preaching in the growth of the church. And what was true of early church is equally true of the church of Jesus Christ ever since. Down through the centuries, the church has grown through the preaching of the word. Down through the centuries, the church has been strengthened through the preaching of the word. Church history is littered with faithful preachers of God's word. Chrysostom, Augustine, John Huss, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, John Bunyan,

Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, Charles Spurgeon, G. Campbell Morgan, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and on and on and on and on we could go. God has always used men who proclaimed the word of God to build His church. There is nothing else that God has given to the church to help so much as proclaiming the word of God.

What Paul was telling Timothy to do, "Preach the word" was his passion in life. He was converted on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). "And immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues" (Acts 9:20). He went on multiple missionary trips, preaching Jesus. At times, he settled in a place for several years, preaching Jesus. He was in Corinth for 18 months, proclaiming the word of God (Acts 18:11). He spent three years in Ephesus "solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). He knew that Christ had sent him "to preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 1:17), a task which he wholeheartedly embraced. He loved preaching Christ. He lived for preaching Christ. To those in Rome, he said, "I am eager to preach the gospel to you" (Romans 1:15). While spending 18 months in Corinth, he said, "I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). At one point, he even said, "Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:16).

And Paul is passing this on to Timothy, saying, "Preach the word." The word here for "preach" is the word which means, "to herald, or proclaim." The idea is that we have a message from the king. We have been sent to announce His message. It doesn't matter whether people receive it or not. What ultimately matters is whether or not we deliver the message. Paul is telling Timothy here to "deliver the message." "Preach the word."

The illustration of the mailman is appropriate here. What's his job? His job is to deliver the mail. He has received the envelope with the mail inside. He isn't to open the mail and read it and edit it and then deliver it. No. He is to deliver the envelope, just like it was received by him. So also are we called to deliver the message of King Jesus to the world. The message is that Jesus, God in the flesh, has come to be among us. He has come to rescue us from our sin. He came in fulfillment of all the Old Testament promises. He was born of a virgin in Bethlehem; born under the law, just like all of us. And yet, He lived above the law. Though tempted by Satan, and provoked by the religious leaders of His day, Jesus never sinned. He never said a swear word. He never thought an evil thought. He never did an evil deed. He was the Superman who was able to save. He fed the poor. He healed the sick. He taught us about God. But, the Jews hated Him and hung him upon the cross, which merely fulfilled another Scripture, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a cross." Jesus became the curse for us, that we might know the blessing of God. He was the ultimate substitute. He died, so that we might live. He was punished for our sin, so that we might go free. Through faith in Him, not only can we know God, but we can have eternal life in His presence, enjoying pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11)!

That's the gospel. That's what we are called to proclaim.

Lest you think that this is only a call only to preachers, think again. Like so much of 2 Timothy, what has primary application to Timothy, and primary application to pastors, also has application to all of us, to all of us who believe in His name. Our mandate, given to us from the Lord Jesus, Himself, is this: Go into the world and make disciples of all nations, Baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you (Matt. 28:19-20). Jesus said, "It is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations" (Luke 24:46-47).

And though the primary responsibility of this will fall on those who lead the church, we all are called to do this in whatever ways we can. We are to proclaim the good news to our children. We are to proclaim the good news to our relatives. We are to proclaim the good news to our friends. We are to proclaim the good news to all we come in contact with.

Now, I want for you to notice something very subtle, and yet, I believe, very important. We are told to speak. We aren't told to show people a package. We are commanded to tell people a message. We aren't told to give people something to see. We are told to speak to people and let them hear. Biblical Christianity is a religion of the ear. It's not a religion of the eye.

There are religions that are religions of the eye. Roman Catholicism is a religion of the eye. There is a reason why there is a crucifix at the front of every Catholic Church in the world -- Jesus dying on the cross. They want for you to see. They want for you to see Jesus. And in seeing, they want you to believe. There is a reason why Roman Catholicism has religious shrines around the world where some miracle took place. They want you to go and see. And in seeing, they want you to believe.

Biblical Christianity is different. It's a religion of the ear. How many times does Jesus say, "He who has an ear, ... let him hear"? In Romans 10, Paul takes us through the syllogism, ...

Romans 10:13-15

For "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved." How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent?

People need to hear! People need to be sent to tell them the news! Biblical faith isn't "seeing is believing." Biblical faith is "hearing is believing." When Thomas was able to see the risen Lord, Jesus said, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed" (John 20:29). That's us! We haven't seen the risen Lord. We have only heard about the risen Lord. But, believing, we are blessed.

And so, it is no accident that Paul here tells Timothy to open his mouth and speak. "Preach the word." "Preach the message." The gospel is to be our consuming desire. It was for Paul. It was to be for Timothy.

Look at how consumed Paul called Timothy to be with this word he was to preach. We see it in 1 Timothy 4: "Until I come, give attention to

the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching. ... Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you" (1 Tim 4:13, 15-16). In our text today, Verse 2 says, "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke exhort, with great patience and instruction" (2 Tim 4:2).

You see that Timothy has to be ready with the gospel all the time. When things are going well and people want to hear it, when things are going poorly and nobody wants to hear it, it still needs to be the note that you sing.

In preparing this message, I was listening to a pastor in California preach on this text. He was going through 2 Timothy 10 years ago, during the terrorist attacks on our nation. From best that I could tell, his message was about a month after September 11, 2001. In his message, he spoke about the rise in attendance at the church. He said that normally, they had been averaging about 2,200 people in attendance at church each Sunday. But, in the past few weeks (after the terrorist attacks), they were averaging about 3,500 people in attendance! It was a time when people in our nation were looking for God. People wanted answers. How did this happen? Where was God? Where do we go now? They were coming in droves to church to hear a word from God. It was a time when people were eager to hear. To this man's credit, he merely continued on in his exposition of 2 Timothy, being sensitive to the increased attendance, for sure. But, he was faithful to his message.

In good times -- in season -- we need to be about the business of preaching the word. But, when things are bad -- out of season -- we need to be about the business of preaching the word.

I received an email this week from a pastor friend of mine. He is a faithful man in a difficult situation. Among other things, he wrote, ...

I would ask for your prayers for [our church] and the leadership team. Without going into all the details I have come under intense fire lately by various members (or former members). The disgruntled members are beginning to find each other.

He then listed a few of the reasons why people were disgruntled. They were disgruntled because he was pointing out obvious sin to people who had sought counsel with him. But, they have refused to hear it and have fled to other churches in town. In one instance, one of the former members has been very vocal about her displeasure with him on Facebook. My friend continues, ...

Mature congregations would see all of this for what it is and respond by praying for those who are in sin, support the leadership, etc. Unfortunately our fellowship is full of immature members. The public slander and private gossip is beginning to have its impact on an already fragile church situation.

For him, the word is "out of season." I'm praying for him that he would be faithful to "preach the word." Pastors need to be consumed with one thing: preaching the word. I love John Piper's quote, ...

You don't have to know a lot of things for your life to make a lasting difference in the world. But you do have to know the few great things that matter, perhaps just one, and then be willing to live for them and die for them. The people that make a durable difference in the world are not the people who have mastered many things, but who have been mastered by one great thing. If you want your life to count, if you want the ripple effect of the pebbles you drop to become waves that reach the ends of the earth and roll on into eternity, you don't need to have a high IQ. You don't have to have good looks or riches or come from a fine family or a fine school. Instead you have to know a few great, majestic, unchanging, obvious, simple, glorious things-or one great all-embracing thing-and be set on fire by them. [\[1\]](#)

That's what Paul is telling Timothy: don't be distracted; stay the course; be consumed with one thing; let the truth of the Scriptures always flow off your lips. And be so on fire with it that you change those around you. This is how you change those around you -- you reprove others, you rebuke others, you exhort others. That's what Paul writes at the end of verse 2.

This sounds a lot like verse 16, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness." And so, as the truth of God flows from your lips, God's word will do its work. You just need to let it loose.

Last week, I exhorted you to "take up the book." It is sufficient to guide your life. This week, I'm exhorting you to "let it loose."

Charles Spurgeon is famous for saying, "The Word of God is like a lion. You don't have to defend a lion. All you have to do is let the lion loose, and the lion will defend itself." Spurgeon's words were addressed to those who think that you need to prove God's word to people before will hear what it says. But, Spurgeon says that God's word doesn't work that way. He says that God's word will do its work in the lives of people; you just need to let it loose.

"And so, Timothy, let the word of God loose." "Let it loose" What's Timothy supposed to do?

He is to use God's word to reprove. Use that word to show people where they are wrong. "There is a God in the universe. Only the fool will say in his heart, 'There is no God.' (Ps. 14:1)" "Hell is a real place, with real suffering, weeping and gnashing of teeth." "Jesus is the only way to God." And as God's word gets out and into the hearts of people, it will have an effect. "So Timothy, let it loose."

Use God's word to rebuke. Use that word to tell people how they are sinful. "Your relationship with your boyfriend is wrong." "Those words that you often use are sinful words." "Your actions are not pleasing to the Lord." And as God's word gets out and into the hearts of people, it will have an effect. "So Timothy, let it loose."

Use God's word to exhort. Use that word to direct people to the right way to live. "Speak kindly to your children." "Hold your possessions loosely and give to those who are in need." "Show humility toward others." "Preserve the unity in the bond of peace." And as God's word gets out and into the hearts of people, it will have an effect. "So Timothy, let it loose." Lest you think that we need to be like a lion in our action of letting the word loose, think again. We are those who open the cage, and let the lion loose. And, in opening the cage, we need to be careful.

Look once again at verse 2, "... reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction." Too often people think that change in others must be instant. You tell them what's right, and they should obey right away. Too often, when people don't change quickly enough, frustration sets in. Anger sets in. Tension in your relationship sets in. But, that's not the way that God's word works. Sanctification is slow. You know it in your life. Aren't you thankful that God is patient with you? You need to be patient with others. You need to let God's word have its effect in others, and give it time.

God's word is often like a seed that is thrown into the ground. It doesn't usually grow immediately. In the ground, it begins to germinate. It begins to grow, but it does so slowly. In the right environment, the seed sprouts roots and begins to break through the ground. Slowly it sprouts. Slowly it grows. Slowly it bears fruit. So it is with people. So, be patient with others.

I've preached almost 500 sermons at Rock Valley Bible Church. That's a lot of hours of instruction for all of us. That's many, many exhortations. How are we doing? I'm patient. I know that God's word will take effect in His time, and in His way.

Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that I'm satisfied with our remaining sin. Not at all. I greatly rejoice when I see others grow in their faith. When others put forth signs of love to Christ, my heart leaps for joy. But, I understand the struggle and will be patient with all of you. May God do a work in us to grow us in Christ!

There's The Charge (verse 2) We come now to my third point, ...
3. The Reason (verses 3-4)

That is, the reason for the charge.

2 Timothy 4:3-4

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

This is the reason why pastors need to be about preaching the word in season and out of season. Because, many people won't want to hear it. And it's precisely at those times when they need to hear it. They need to be confronted regarding their sin.

When God called Isaiah to go and preach, He said that the people wouldn't hear his message. Their hearts would be dull and their eyes would be dim and they would have no understanding in their hearts (Isaiah 6:10). But, he was to go and keep on preaching. Yes, many would come to hate his preaching. But, there would still be a remnant who believed. And Isaiah was to preach in such a way as to bring forth the remnant from Israel.

When Jeremiah preached of the coming judgment that was coming from Babylon, the people didn't want to hear it. And so, they threw him into a cistern to try to silence him. In his place, they listened to the false prophets of his day, who were saying, "Peace, peace," when there was no peace (Jeremiah 6:14). Jeremiah lamented, ...

Jeremiah 5:30-31

An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule on their own authority; And My people love it so!

What a picture this is. When people don't like your message, they will find someone else to tell them what they want to hear. People didn't want to hear Jeremiah's message of judgment! They wanted to hear the false message of "peace." What was true in Jeremiah's day was true in Timothy's day and is true in our day as well.

This is the story of mainline denominations that have gone liberal. People have drifted into sin. They don't want people to tell them about their sin. And so, they bring in story tellers who will be a delight to hear. Eventually, they come to deny much about the Bible, saying that much of it is not true. Look at the steps here in verses 3 and 4.

2 Timothy 4:3

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.

Sound doctrine is that which teaches and reproves and rebukes and corrects and exhorts and trains in righteousness (3:16; 4:2). But, people who love their sin will despise such teaching. They won't sit under such teaching.

But, they have land and they have a building. Rather than leaving, they work hard to remove the pastor. Then, they will work hard to bring in a soft preacher, who will not bring "sound doctrine" and the confrontation of sin that will result. They want a different sort of preacher.

2 Timothy 4:3

... but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires.

These people don't want to hear what's good for them. No. They want to hear what makes them feel good. And there is a world of difference between the two. One will be faithful to God and His word. The other will be faithful to the whims of those signing his paycheck.

Notice how verse 3 puts it forth. They will gather the teachers "in accordance to their own desires," thereby rejecting the sound doctrine of the word of God. This is the story of my pastor friend who is dealing with difficulties in his church right now. He has come into this church recently, after years of ear-tickling preachers. As a result, there is some discomfort among the people. They aren't hearing what they want to hear. They want to hear the stories. They want to hear what will be a delight to them. They don't want "sound doctrine."

The end result is churches that have lost the truth of the gospel, ...

2 Timothy 4:4

... And will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

That is, they will turn aside to those things which plain aren't true. They deny the truth of the Scripture. They deny the reality of the final judgment. They deny the virgin birth. They deny the miracles. They deny the full deity of Jesus Christ. They deny the wrath of God. They go soft on the sinfulness of man. They focus all of their attention on the love of God. And they lose the gospel in the process.

That's exactly what Paul is talking about here. People don't want the truth. But instead, they want to feel religious. So they seek something else that will satisfy them. It has happened time and time and time again throughout church history.

I see a microcosm with this in counseling others. On many occasions, I have found that when people come to me for counsel, they aren't looking for counseling. No, they are looking for agreement. And if they happen to agree with what I tell them, they are happy. But, if they disagree with what I tell them, they will be unhappy, and will seek another counselor who will agree with them.

I think that there is also something to say here for the many in our day who go "church shopping." When you go shopping, you look for the items that you like. You find something, and you purchase it. If you don't like the product, you let it be and search for another that you like. Today, churches put their product before people. If people like the product, they stay. If people don't like the product, they leave.

Now, I know that we don't have it all together at Rock Valley Bible Church. And I know that we can't meet everyone's needs. So, we don't fit for everybody. I'm fine with that. And I also know that there are people who have found difficulties at their church for some reason or another, and are looking for a body where they can fit in and serve. And in so doing, they are "church shopping." I'm OK with that. It's the reality of pasturing a church in America.

But, I do know enough about our message of Christ crucified, that there are those who come and visit us on a Sunday morning and want nothing to do with us. They aren't looking for "sound doctrine." They are looking for something to tickle their ears. All we have as a church is the word of God and each other. That's it. But, that's enough.

When people leave Rock Valley Bible Church, it's certainly discouraging. But, most often, when people leave Rock Valley Bible Church, they go to another good church. And when that happens, I'm encouraged that something just didn't quite fit for them at Rock Valley Bible Church. They are needing some different demographics. It might be that we have all of these kids. They don't have kids. They feel left out. Maybe they are in need of some programs that we just can't offer them. I'm fine with that.

But, when I hear that people have left a good church also in search for another, I'm worried for their souls. Will anything ever satisfy them? I'm fearful that they are intoxicated with the itching ear syndrome. They want the new. They want the exciting. They want that which will stimulate them each week. Here's what I have observed: often, they never find it. They are looking for something that they can't quite find.

Quickly, let's move on to my last point. We come to ...

4. The Resolve (verse 5)

This is what Timothy is to be.

2 Timothy 4:5

But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

The verse begins with a contrast, "but you." "Timothy, as a man of God, you are called to be different. They may have itching-ear syndrome. But, you must be different. They may despise sound teaching. But, you must be different." Paul puts forth four things that must be true of every faithful pastor.

He must, ...

1. Be Sober
2. Endure hardship
3. Do the work of an evangelist
4. Fulfill his ministry.

Let's just take these one at a time.

1. Be Sober

Unlike those who are intoxicated by the itching-ear syndrome, the faithful pastor must be sober. He must think rightly. He must not be swayed by the whims of the people. He must not be persuaded by his own craving for approval. Rather, of anyone in the congregation, he needs to be the sober one who is thinking rightly.

This means that he preaches the word of God faithfully. He is kind and not quarrelsome (2:24). He is patient when wronged (2:24). He carries himself with gentleness (2:25). He always stands on the truth of God's word (3:16). He is sober.

2. Endure hardship

The faithful pastor must embrace the suffering that comes with the territory of being faithful to God's word. The faithful pastor must be willing to face suffering. The faithful pastor must be able to face suffering.

This is the call of 2 Timothy. It's a call to suffer. We see it in several verses. "Join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Tim 1:8). "Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 2:3). "Difficult times will come" (3:1). "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (3:12).

These verses come with the backdrop of Paul's suffering. He was in prison when he wrote these words. He was about to die (1:8). He was suffering for the gospel (1:12). He had faced the trials of the ministry -- people deserting him (1:15; 4:16), being treated as a criminal (2:9), people doing harm against him (4:14), being the target of evil deeds (4:18) Timothy, was to endure this hardship.

3. Do the work of an evangelist

This call to "preach the word," isn't only to take place in the four walls of the church. It's to go out as well -- Into the neighborhoods, into the public forums, wherever people don't know Christ -- and tell them of the mercies of God in Jesus Christ.

This is one of the reasons why I have begun the Kid's KLUB. This is a very evangelistic ministry. We have children in our neighborhood who are from homes where the gospel isn't. They need Christ. And so, slowly over the months, I'm going to have an opportunity to present Jesus Christ to them. My hope and prayer for these kids is that they would believe. I seek to be faithful with this as I have opportunity.

This week, I met a guy who talked about going to church. But, when I saw him, he had a Buddha strapped to a necklace, which he wore. So, I asked him about it. I said, "You said you went to church this morning?" He said, "Yeah." Then, I said, "Tell, me what's up with this Buddha necklace" as I flicked it with my finger. He told me that he's going to a Unitarian Universalist Church. He was excited about it because of the religion they taught. I responded by telling him how the church has lost the gospel, which I explained to him. I want to do the work of being an evangelist. I have to work at it.

4. Fulfill his ministry.

This will lead us to next week (in verses 6-8). Paul says, ...

2 Timothy 4:6-8

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 course, I have kept the faith; in the future 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.

Paul was on the back end of his 30 years of ministry for the Lord. Timothy was on the front end. He had years ahead of him to fulfill this command. This ought to be the ringing melody for all in ministry: "Fulfill your ministry."

What was true for Timothy is equally true for all of you as well. You as well should Be Sober, Endure hardship, Do the work of an evangelist, and Fulfill [your] ministry.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 30, 2011 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] John Piper, "Don't Waste Your Life".