



# 2 Timothy

RBS  
2 Timothy 4:1-22

## Lesson 4: Preach the Word!

***“Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Timothy 4:2).***

***Doctrinal Focus: The fundamental duty of the pastor is to preach the Word.***

Read 2 Timothy 4:1-22.

Paul has defined Scripture as the product of God’s creative breath. It is his Word and it equips God’s leader for every good work. Confident of Scripture’s authority and sufficiency, Timothy must preach this Word!

### Verses 1-5

In verses 1-2, Paul charges Timothy to preach the Word. This charge is a solemn obligation placed upon God’s servant, the gravity of which is emphasized by its administration *“in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus”* (2 Timothy 4:1, cf. 1 Timothy 5:21). Timothy is accountable to God, who saved and called him to a holy calling, and to the Lord Jesus, through whom God will judge the world in righteousness, both the living and the dead (2 Timothy 1:8-9, 2:1, Acts 17:30-31). Final judgment awaits Christ’s *“appearing and his kingdom.”* The Lord will condemn the false teachers and vindicate his faithful servants.

Timothy must be ready to preach the Word *“in season and out of season,”* that is, during periods when it is received gladly and also when it is despised and rejected (2 Timothy 4:2). In whatever situation he finds himself, God’s servant must preach the Word. Faithful preaching includes reproof, rebuke, and exhortation. The gospel preacher admonishes his listeners to turn from error and ungodliness. He discharges this ministry *“with complete patience and teaching”* (2 Timothy 4:2). The gospel minister presents biblical truth in its fullness. As he seeks the salvation of sinners, he

strives to mortify his own sinful passions that rob him of godly patience (cf. Acts 20:27, 2 Timothy 2:24-26).

God’s servant will need patience because his listeners will lack it. Many will refuse patient instruction in the Word that saves and equips for every good work. Instead, they devote themselves to teachers who tell them what they want to hear (2 Timothy 4:3). Personal gratification, not sanctification, is preeminent in the minds of these spiritual drifters, who have abandoned gospel truth to *“wander off into myths”* (2 Timothy 4:4). Although the exact content of these myths is uncertain, what they generate is clear: speculative and divisive notions that are incompatible with biblical faith and a proper understanding of the Old Testament law (1 Timothy 1:4,7, 4:7, and Titus 1:14). In this volatile environment, Timothy must keep his poise and maintain his determination to suffer for the gospel. By doing *“the work of an evangelist,”* he will fulfill his ministry (2 Timothy 4:5). An evangelist is one who preaches the word, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### Verses 6-8

Paul’s directions to Timothy take on special urgency in verse 6. The time of the apostle’s *“departure”*—his death—is near. Imprisonment and trial are part of the process that will culminate in his death. Using sacrificial language from the Old Testament, he describes himself *“as already being poured out as a drink offering”* (cf. Numbers 15:1-10,

The Rafiki Bible Study Lessons in all forms is the property of the Rafiki Foundation, Inc. No portion may be reproduced or translated without the written permission of the Rafiki Foundation Home Office, U.S.A. ©, copyright© 2019 by Rafiki Foundation, Inc.

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®, copyright© 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Philippians 2:17). There is a finality to sacrifice. Once the contents are poured out, the sacrifice is complete, and nothing remains. In spite of his acute suffering, Paul is content. He reviews his life, and concludes: *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith"* (2 Timothy 4:7). With the devotion of a loyal soldier and the discipline of an athlete who competes by the rules, Paul has not wavered (2 Timothy 2:3-5). He has stayed the course to the very end, and stored up for him is the *"crown of righteousness"* that the Lord himself shall give him.

*"Crown of righteousness"* is the righteousness with which the Lord crowns his people. That righteousness awaits the glorified believer in the age to come, when the battle is won and the race is complete. The *"crown of righteousness"* is a gift bestowed by *"the Lord, the righteous judge,"* whose verdicts are altogether holy and perfect. He will vindicate his faithful servants. That *"the crown of righteousness"* will be given not only to Paul, but also to *"all who have loved [the Lord's] appearing"* is an encouragement to Timothy and every struggling believer. By faith he can see the awaiting victor's crown.

Righteousness is a precious word. In the present age, the believer is legally righteous before God because of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, which is received by faith alone. *"Justification"* is the biblical term for this judicial declaration of right standing with God (Romans 5:1,18). The believer is also growing in personal Christlikeness as, by the Spirit's power, he dies to sin and lives to righteousness (sanctification)<sup>1</sup>. But sanctification is progressive and incomplete in this life (Romans 7:13-25, Philippians 3:10-12). Perfection comes only after the believer's death, and glorification is the state of everlasting righteousness devoid of all corruption (1 Corinthians 9:25, 15:52). In the age to come, the believer is delivered from both the presence of sin and the desire to sin (Romans 8:30, Philippians 3:20-21, Ephesians 5:27).

### Verses 9-22

Verses 9-18 are among the most moving passages in the New Testament. Paul longs to see Timothy one more time, and urges him to come soon (2 Timothy 4:9). If Timothy delays, winter weather will set in, and the trip will become all but

impossible (2 Timothy 4:21). By spring Paul could be dead, his trial complete and sentence carried out. Come now, Timothy, Paul urges!

Paul awaits death, deserted by most of his companions. Demas, a former partner in ministry (Colossians 4:14, Philemon 24), has abandoned Paul and the gospel (2 Timothy 4:10). Demas, *"in love with this present"* life stands in stark contrast with Paul, whose eyes are fixed on judgment day and the life to come (2 Timothy 4:6-8). Other co-workers have moved to different fields of gospel labor: Crescens to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia, and Tychicus to Ephesus (2 Timothy 4:10,12). Only *"the beloved physician,"* Luke, remains with Paul (2 Timothy 4:11, Colossians 4:14).

Paul's incarceration is severe, and he asks Timothy to obtain from Carpus and bring with him a cloak to take the edge off the autumn chill, and *"the books, and above all the parchments"* for reading (2 Timothy 4:13). The writings most certainly included portions of the Old Testament Scriptures, and possibly Paul's own personal documents and other writings of interest to him. Even with death rapidly approaching, Paul did not give up his studies. His reading habits set an example for Timothy and for all who would minister God's Word carefully and accurately.

As Timothy continues to labor, he must never drop his guard. Men who will oppose the gospel and harm its ministers will always be lurking. One such man is Alexander the coppersmith (2 Timothy 4:14-15). If he is the same Alexander mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:20, then he harmed Paul and continued to trouble the church after his excommunication. Timothy must beware.

The outcome of Paul's initial hearing at the Roman court was disastrous from a human point of view. All who were with Paul abandoned him (2 Timothy 4:16a). But Paul understands human frailty, and sympathizes with the fearful. He forgives, *"May it not be charged against them!"* (2 Timothy 4:16b). He follows in the footsteps of his Lord and the martyr Stephen (Luke 23:34, Acts 7:60).

Deserted by his friends, Paul did not despair. When others would not stand up for him, the Lord did and strengthened him (2 Timothy 4:17a). The trial and delay of execution provided him an additional

opportunity to proclaim the gospel in Rome (2 Timothy 4:17b, cf. Philippians 1:7, 12-14). Paul is bound in chains but God's Word is not bound! (2 Timothy 2:9)

Paul understands that the stay of execution is temporary. Death is certain. But he is so confident of final victory that he can assure Timothy, "*The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom*" (2 Timothy 4:18a). Evil doers will not have the last word. In life and death Paul will honor Christ in the body (Philippians 1:20). In death, the Lord will deliver him. No longer within reach of his enemies, he will be safely home and wear the crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8). So, to the Lord belongs "*glory forever and ever. Amen*" (2 Timothy 4:18b).

In verses 19-21, Paul gives Timothy final instructions and information. He sends greetings from various members of the church in Rome. He informs Timothy of the whereabouts of two servants, Erastus and Trophimus. Always on Paul's mind are those who labor with him. Mention of Trophimus's illness reveals Paul's compassion for his fellow sufferers.

In the middle of these verses is one more plea, "*Do your best to come before winter*" (2 Timothy 4:21).

Most of Paul's second letter to Timothy contains instruction and encouragement for the young pastor. Yet this brief appeal is a strong personal desire that his beloved child in the faith come and be with him in his hour of intense suffering. Intimate and personal, this letter is the last written testimony of a dying man.

Second Timothy concludes with words that identify Timothy and the church's greatest need. "*The Lord be with your spirit*" (2 Timothy 4:22a). The Greek "your" is singular. To discharge his ministry faithfully and courageously, Timothy must experience deep within his inner man the ongoing and renewing work of the ascended Lord Jesus. A superficial acquaintance with the Lord will not be enough.

And for his congregation to receive the Word faithfully and obediently, they must experience the grace of the Lord. Thus, Paul concludes, "*Grace be with you*" (2 Timothy 4:22b). The Greek "you" is plural and includes the entire church Timothy serves.

Timothy must preach the Word! And he must never forget that the effective preaching and hearing of God's Word depend entirely on the Lord and his grace at work in both the preacher and the congregation.

#### Notes

1. Westminster Shorter Catechism answer 35: "Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness."

#### Suggested Commentary

*The Message of 2 Timothy* by John Stott (The Bible Speaks Today Series)



# 2 Timothy Lesson 4

## Questions for Discussion

---

Read 2 Timothy 4:1-22.

1. What is Paul's charge to Timothy? What does it mean to preach the word "*in season and out of season*"? According to verse 2, what are the elements included in faithful preaching? Evaluate your own church's life: does it labor at a time when preaching is received with receptivity or hostility?
2. Life and ministry is carried out "*in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is judge.*" How does this reality affect your gospel work?
3. In verse 3, what does Paul mean when he writes about listeners with "*itching ears*"? In your community, what are the indications that some "*will not endure sound teaching*"? What steps can you take to make sure you are eager and ready to receive the Word of God as it is preached?
4. In verse 6 Paul writes that he is "*already being poured out as a drink offering.*" How do those words fit Paul's situation? Why is the language of sacrifice suitable as a description for his entire life of ministry? Read Romans 12:1-2. In what ways are you presenting your life as a living sacrifice to the Lord?
5. In verse 7 Paul reviews his life in terms of "*the good fight*" and "*the race.*" Why do you think he chose those metaphors? In what ways does your Christian life exhibit a commitment to fighting the good fight and finishing the race? What does it mean to keep the faith?
6. What is the "*crown of righteousness*" in verse 8? Why should receiving this crown be your sole ambition?
7. Why does Paul seek Timothy's companionship? How do your friends encourage you in the Lord? In what ways do you encourage your Christian friends to remain faithful?

8. From the New Testament record, what do we know about Demas? What does it mean to be "*in love with this present world*"? What temptations do you face to put love of the world before love of Christ, his gospel, and his people?
  
9. Paul sent for his books and parchments (2 Timothy 4:13). What books are you reading? How are they helping you grow in your understanding of God's Word and world? Do you have a reading plan that identifies books that will help you grow in your Christian faith?
  
10. Paul identifies Alexander as someone who harmed him and who also puts Timothy in danger. Are there people who put you in spiritual danger? What are you doing to protect yourself, your family, and your church?
  
11. In this passage, how did Paul demonstrate a willingness to forgive? What is forgiveness? Are there people in your life you need to forgive? Are there people whose forgiveness you must seek?
  
12. What is Paul's confidence in verse 18? Many times God delivers believers from various trials. What are some of the trials the Lord has brought you through? Have you thanked him? Why is it important for you to think of the Lord's ultimate deliverance that will bring you into his heavenly kingdom?
  
13. The effective preaching and hearing of God's Word depend entirely on the Lord and his grace at work in both the preacher and congregation. How often do you pray for your pastor and congregation? What do you pray for? Do you ask for specific prayer requests?
  
14. How often do you pray for yourself, asking God to make you a faithful hearer of his Word preached?