

Keep Going in the Faith

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[0 : 00] In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge.

Preach the word. Be prepared in season and out of season. Correct, rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine.

Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather round them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardships, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. Amen.

Whoops, let's pray as we begin. So, our Father, we come to you this morning as people who are grateful to receive your word.

[1 : 06] Please, won't you feed us now? Please help us. Help me to be faithful and clear in preaching your word now. Trusting that you're able to do so much more than we could ever ask or imagine.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, do look up there. So, I'm heading off, but that's not the end. You will get a new associate pastor at some time.

And that's something very exciting to be looking forward to. And you might ask yourself, what would you most want from them? What is it you want them to do?

What kind of new associate pastor will you want? And it could be that you might want someone who's got a real passion for the homeless and social justice issues.

Maybe you want someone who's a dynamic leader, who speaks impressively, is dressed really smartly at the front, who gets things done. Maybe you want someone who's culturally in tune with everything, who's good with students and knows all the latest trends.

[2 : 14] And although many of these things are good things to look for in church leaders, what we see in our reading this morning is the most important quality that we should look for in our church leaders.

And we should be looking for in your new associate pastor. And this is really the thing that this letter is building up to, the letter of 2 Timothy. And it comes there right at the start of verse 2 of our reading.

So, do keep your Bibles open. Do encourage me there. And that would be great. This is what Paul says. Preach the word. Paul says, when you look for your associate pastor, get someone who will preach the word.

And the letter is written in the 50s AD. And it's a letter of the apostle Paul, someone who met Jesus supernaturally. And he is in prison for preaching the word about Jesus.

And he is about to die. And he's writing to his young curate, his old associate, Timothy, in Ephesus. And it's a warm fatherly letter. At the start of the letter, he says, Timothy, my dear son.

[3 : 23] And it's his last word, an exhortation term. And we see that in the letter, Paul is telling Timothy how to do the work of ministry.

And the picture of ministry that he gives, of what it is, is of building a house of Timothy as a laborer on a building site. And he's building a house.

And the house is God's people that are being built into a glorious temple filled with God's spirit that God will come and live in. And the pattern that he has to use is the Bible.

The Bible is the pattern. And so Timothy is to look at the blueprint. He's to look at the pattern. And then build the house. Build the house. And God will build the house. And Timothy is a laborer or a

tool in God's hands as he builds it.

Timothy is to keep to the pattern of sound teaching. And teach about Jesus. But it's not simply written to Timothy. We're not off the hook. So if you turn over, you look right at the bottom, verse 22 of our chapter 4.

[4 : 27] You read, The Lord be with your spirit. Grace to you, plural, all. Grace to you all. It's something for us all to hear this morning. And so we're all called to help and be laborers on this building site.

Working under God, the architect. Building the house of God's people in which God's spirit will live in. So fathers, we do this as we teach and disciple our families at home.

Mothers, as we care for and teach and spiritually nurture children and our friends around us.

Housemates, as you do life together in your digs, opening the Bible up, reading it with others.

Work colleagues, as you go to work and you try to model to people what it looks like to live according to God's pattern. And by preach here, and preach the word Paul means speaking and teaching about Jesus clearly and truthfully to one another.

And that could be in lots of different ways. Yes, up front teaching, but also in small groups, midweek small groups. It could be over lunch, in the picnic afterwards. It could be simply going out with a coffee and pointing someone to the scriptures.

[5 : 45] And the word that Paul has in mind there is the Bible. And he's referring back to what he said about scriptures earlier, right at the end of chapter 3, verse 16 and 17.

All scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, training in righteousness. And so that the servants of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

And if you open up your white sheet that you got handed in, these are the points there. And the first thing that we see that Timothy is to preach the word because Jesus is coming back.

Verse 1 and 2. So just look down at verse 1 of our reading again. In the presence of God and of Christ who will judge the living and the dead, and in the view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge.

Preach the word. And Paul is, he's summoning Timothy out. And he's giving him a battlefield commission. And he reminds him of where Timothy is spiritually, that he is in heaven.

[6 : 49] And he's standing before God Almighty. And Paul says to him, gives him his charge, preach the word. As God is my witness, you preach the word.

Discharge your ministry. And the reason is, right in the middle of verse 1, in the view of Jesus' appearing. Jesus is coming back.

And so 2 Timothy is bookended by these two appearances of Jesus. Right at chapter 1, verse 10, we read how Jesus appeared in grace and forgiveness and mercy.

And how that has been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who's destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

And here, Paul, and in chapter 4, and there, Paul, in chapter 1, Paul says that Timothy... And here, in chapter 4, Paul says, preach the word, because Jesus is coming back, not as a Savior, but as a judge with power over life and death.

[7 : 59] And of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead in view of his appearing. And so in chapter 1, we see how Jesus appeared as a Savior and destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

But in chapter 4, we see Jesus as coming back as a judge with power over life and death. And where Timothy was in Ephesus, the pagans, the locals there, they believed in Artemis.

They thought Artemis visited them, appeared to them, and promised life and glory. And Artemis was the goddess of childbirth, of giving life. And the false teachers within the church that Timothy was ministering in, they simply mimicked what they heard around them.

And they said, no, listen to us. We've got the real gospel that will give you life, life to the full. Glory, glory, glory now. You don't have to wait. You can have it all now.

But Paul says, no, Jesus is coming back. And when he does, he will come as a judge with power over life and death.

[9 : 13] And to be honest, 2,000 years, not much has changed. And so if you walk around Glasgow, you see many idols that people believe in that will promise life.

And so Glasgow's motto was, let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of his word. And now it is. What's the thing that's going to give life? People make Glasgow.

People will give life. The world is not centered on God, but on ourselves, on people. Look to yourself to find your meaning in life.

And just similarly, there are many false teachers around us in Glasgow. We're a very spiritual city. And lots of them will promise life, life to the full, and prosperity.

You can have it all now. You can have your best life now. Whatever you want. Just dream it, and it's yours. But Paul says, no. Remember the pattern of sound teaching.

[10:13] Preach the word. Jesus is coming back. He destroyed death then and brought life in the gospel. And he will return as a judge with power over life and death when he returns.

But the problem for Timothy was, and the problem for us is, that if we follow Jesus, it looks like death now. It looks like death now. Paul's in prison.

He's about to die. Timothy is on the verge of cracking, of giving up. And his message is being opposed on all sides around him. No one wants to listen to him.

Paul's been abandoned. It looks like death. But Paul says, preach the word. Jesus is coming back. It might look like death now.

But when he returns, it will be life and glory. So preach the word. Stick to it. And the main charge there is preach the word, the start of verse 2.

[11:15] And then he goes and unpacks what that's going to look like in the rest of verse 2. So preach the word. Be prepared in season and out of season. Correct, rebuke, encourage with great patience and careful instruction.

So preach the word in season and out of season. When it's popular and when it's unpopular to preach the gospel. And Timothy, let's face it, was facing very unpopular times to preach the gospel.

He was being opposed actively. We might feel that it's quite unpopular to speak about Jesus now.

But it was a lot more unpopular in Timothy's day. But Paul says, preach the word.

He might have been tempted to keep his head down. Play it cool. Wait for the times to change. And then start up again. But Paul says, preach the word. And then he says, correct.

And the word there could be convinced. And I think of a friend at Jamie, at university. Jamie, he was one of those annoying Christians. He was just constantly smiling. Genuinely, sincerely, he was a lovely guy.

[12:20] And he had boundless enthusiasm for Jesus. And he studied earth sciences. And so he made it a point to find out everything about evolution and biology that he could.

And so that when he went to class, he could speak to his friends winsomely about Jesus. And how Jesus was the creator. And how they should turn to Jesus and accept Jesus as their savior.

And he would explain about Jesus from the scriptures. He would preach the word very simply, very naturally, very winsomely. And then Paul says, rebuke.

Rebuke. And the word there means to come alongside someone patiently, tenderly, to refute them, to argue with them, to discuss, to carefully present to them why you think what they're doing and their current course of action is wrong.

And when we go and speak to our friends and we try to point out from the Bible why we think they're going off track, that can be very risky. But it's a very necessary thing to do.

[13:29] It's risky, but our friends might be in great danger if they continue on their course. And so I think of a friend, Warren, and a slightly sensitive topic.

But Warren had a friend who started going out with someone who was not professing, not believing in Jesus yet. And Warren went to his friend who was a Christian.

And he said, well, he felt it was his responsibility to go and speak to them about this. And he went and very winsomely, very nerdily, he's a bit of a nerd, presented his case.

And his friend says, okay, great. I'll take that under consideration. But nothing changed. And then six months went by and Warren's friend came up to him and said, I'm still going out with that lovely but not yet believing girl.

And what's more is we've decided to move in together. And Warren was a bit taken aback and he said, well, brother, I care for you. Are you sure that's the right course?

[14:32] Have you considered these passages in the Bible? And his friend said, I'll take that under consideration. But nothing much changed. And then a little while later, his friend said, we're getting married.

And it's going to be brilliant. Won't you come to the wedding? You could do the prayers. And again, Warren said, brother, I love you. But I'm deeply concerned. And again, his friend said, that's okay.

I'll take that under consideration. But nothing much changed. All the while, Warren was preaching the word to him gently and winsomely. And throughout that time, it felt really hard for Warren. But then about six months into their marriage, Warren got a call from his friend. He said, we've been thinking about everything that you said and how you came alongside us, alongside my wife and I. And we'd love for you to come and explain the gospel to us. Why it is that you believe what you believe, if possible. And sure enough, Warren, over a couple of months, explained the gospel with them.

[15 : 35] Unpacked the gospel. And sure enough, the wife became a Christian and believed the good news. Life entered that household. And the husband recommitted himself to follow the Lord.

All because Warren was brave enough to do the work of preaching the word. Of coming alongside people gently, refuting, standing up for what the Bible says in difficult topics when it is dangerous. And then Timothy is exhorted to encourage, to exhort as he preaches the word. He's to remind people of the hope that they hold that Jesus is coming back.

And when Jesus returns, he'll reward those who have persevered in listening to him. Timothy is to remind them, don't lose heart. Even though it looks like death now, it will be worthwhile because Jesus is coming back and he'll bring life.

And all the while, that's got to be done with great patience. Being patient with careful instruction. Not overstating, but carefully considering what the Bible is saying.

[16 : 46] And working that through with friends. Working that through in your own heart. And Timothy is to do all this. He is to preach the word because Jesus is coming back.

And he'll bring life. And Timothy needs to hear this. Because following Jesus now looks like death. It looks like defeat. And we see that in our next point there.

So point two of our sheet. Preach the word despite rejection. Verse three and four. So just look down at verse three. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine.

And what Paul is saying that people will hear the truth. They'll hear Timothy's preaching. And they will reject it. They will say, that's not for me. They might even come from within the church.

Within the church family. Or within the denomination. That Timothy is pastoring in. They might be ministers themselves. And what is surprising here is not that they don't understand the message.

[17 : 52] They understand it. But they reject it. Because of what the message says about how they should live. About how God wants us to live.

So just look at verse four. To suit their own desires. They'll gather around them a great number of teachers. To say what their itching ears want to hear.

They've got an itchy ear. They want to hear the things they want to hear. They want to be affirmed in their own desires. Going their own way. They understand the message. They hear what God says.

About how they are meant to live. And they simply say, that's not for me. No thanks. The agenda is not set by what God wants. But by what they desire.

In their hearts. So maybe you discover a friend. Who's caught in a sexual sin of some sort. And you go and you speak to them graciously about this.

[18 : 51] And you warn them from scriptures. Of the great danger that they're in. And the response that you might get is. That's not for me. No thank you. Or someone might say.

It feels so good. How can it be wrong? God would not allow it. If it was wrong. God would not allow me to feel like this. If it was wrong. You must be wrong.

And what you're saying from the Bible. Must be wrong. That's not for me. No thanks. And the shock here is. Not that they abandon the faith. And walk away from church entirely.

They simply move on. And find people. And find teachers. Who will teach them. What their itching ears. Want to hear. And there's lots of them. Look at the great number.

Of teachers they're surrounded by. They'll gather around them. A great number of teachers. To say what their itching ears. Want to hear. I'm not on TikTok.

[19 : 48] But apparently this is a big thing on TikTok. You'll find anyone on TikTok. Who will teach you. And say to you. Whatever you want to hear. Is that right? Maybe. Some nods.

Hopefully. Right. So watch out. Watch out. Stick to the scriptures. Stick to the Bible. They have their Bibles open. But they simply redact out.

All the bits that are uncomfortable. It's all blacked out. All the bits. They don't like. But just note here. The desires. Might not be following fleshly desires.

But it could simply be. The desire of wanting to appear. More relevant. Or in step. With culture. And have an apathy. Towards hearing the word preached.

So look at verse 4 there. They'll turn their ears. Away from the truth. And turn aside to myths. Literally. Fanciful stories. Whatever the latest fad.

[20 : 42] In theory is. That's the thing. They're going to follow. So I've got some. I had some dear friends. They're still dear friends. And I was speaking to them. On the topic of small groups.

I feel that's the one topic. That all Christians have lots of. Church music. Small groups. Those are the big topics. That Christians like to talk about. And the comment was. That they said was.

Why are we looking at the same passage. That we looked at. At sermons. Midweek. That's boring. We know this already. Can't we do this or that. And whatever the latest. Fad is.

And just to be clear. I've got nothing to do with growth groups. That's the silence. I don't know what. What goes on there. But. To be honest. I could kind of see their point. You know. If the preacher is clear.

And applies it well. And. What do you get to talk about. All the hard work's. Been done. But. Here is the thing. The issue is not with following the sermons.

[21 : 40] In their midweek times. The issue was with preaching the word. Of having that word. Applied to their hearts. And lives. Of having it.

Worked in. And worked out. In how they lived. With one another. And with their friends.

Intellectually. They got it like that. They were both top of their class. Bright as a spark.

But emotionally. And spiritually. They struggled. To apply. And hear the word. And have that applied. Worked into their hearts. And lives.

And whenever the attempt. Was made to do that. In small groups. To think through. What they'd heard. On Sundays. And to apply that. To their hearts and lives. They said. No thanks.

That's not. For me. And they were in danger. Of turning. From the word. Of from hearing it preached. And applying it to their hearts. And instead. Talking about anything.

[22 : 34] And everything else. They wanted to. Instead of that. But that was the thing. They most needed. If you knew them. If you looked at their lives. And the temptation for us.

Is if we've been. Going as Christians. For a while. Is to give up. On preaching the word. To one another. To give up. On hearing the word. Preached to us. We feel as if we know it. We feel as if. It's the minister. Saying the same thing. Over and over again. And we say. That's not for me. Don't you have something new. When rarely. We should have the same attitude.

As Oli Leroux. You're all saying. Who's Oli Leroux? I know. Oli Leroux. Childhood hero of mine. He was the prop forward. For South Africa rugby team.

And he was about six foot high. And he was about this wide. And he got sponsored. By a steakhouse. As it were. Obviously. By a steakhouse. And his billboard was everywhere.

[23 : 31] And it was piles of steak. And piles of food to eat. And chips and that. And the strap line. Was come hungry. And he just looked hungry. And so when we.

When we have opportunities. To hear the word preached. In small groups. On Sundays. Our motto should be. Come hungry. Have an Oli Leroux mindset.

Come hungry. Prepare our hearts. Be hungry for the word preached. And applied. In our lives. And not everyone will be hungry. Many will say. No thanks.

That's not for me. And Paul says. Don't be surprised by that. Don't be discouraged. Don't be discouraged. If Sunday services are empty. But the church down the road.

Where they say. You can have it all now. Is packed to the rafters. Don't be discouraged. If you meet midweek. And only half your small group. Turns up.

[24 : 26] Don't be discouraged. Timothy. You preach the word. You keep preaching the word. Keep guarding the gospel. Keep working hard. At keeping the pattern. Of sound teaching.

Teaching. What you have been given. And taught. By Paul. And others. And instead. Paul tells Timothy. And this is our third point. To not lose his head.

To preach the word. As a calm. Hard working evangelist. In Jesus' kingdom. Verse 5. So just look down. At verse 5. But you keep your head.

In all situations. Endure hardship. Do the work. Of an evangelist. Distarge. All your duties. Of your ministry. Keep your head.

Be steady. Be unflappable. As a marine. The most. Valued attribute. That you can have. Is to be unflappable. To keep your head.

[25 : 22] In all situations. You never know. What's going to happen. And so. Paul says to Timothy. As someone who's preaching the word. Who is facing opposition. Keep your head.

Be unflappable. Remember. Jesus is coming back. And so. Despite rejection. Keep preaching the word. Keep your eye.

On the prize. Keep your head. And it can be very upsetting. When people do reject you. For being. For preaching the word.

When your friends and family. Reject you. Through no fault of your own. They think. They've opened their bible up again. That's ridiculous. Why are they doing that? That's. Give it a rest. Won't you? Or. Your in-laws. Look down at you. For bringing your children up. In the law. In the Lord. Or when your friends. Seem to be advancing.

[26 : 18] In their careers. Getting bigger in houses. And bigger cars. And. Because you're trying to preach the word. And stick to the bible. You're giving up on those things. Because you're trying to live.

For Jesus coming back. You're giving up on those things. But Paul says. Don't be troubled by them. Keep your head. Preach the word. And it's not just.

Timothy. That Timothy must keep his head. He must endure hardships. And this is really. The theme that runs through this passage. And through. Much of 2 Timothy. 2 Timothy is a bit of a. Depressing letter. It's been a bit more. We've done it. I think. A bit more cheerfully. But if you read it. There is a lot. Of suffering. And sadness. In it. But it's a letter.

Written to encourage Timothy. To keep preaching. The word. And so. Paul. In his final charge. Tells Timothy. Endure hardships.

[27 : 14] Keep going. Don't give up. And so. We come to St. Silas on Sunday. And it's a great buzz. It's a good buzz. Lots of young adults.

Lots of families. There's a great student. Kids work next door. It's easy. It's brilliant. It's lovely. And it's easy to go with the flow.

To be a Christian. But the promise. That we get in this letter. That Paul gives Timothy. He gives him a promise in verse 12. He says. In fact. Everyone who wants to live a godly life.

In Christ Jesus. Will be persecuted. And so. It looks great now. But one day. Persecution. And suffering. Will come. And the question then is.

Will we endure through it? Will we keep preaching the word? Will we keep wanting to hear. The word preached. Or will we move on to something. That is easier.

[28 : 11] That looks more fashionable. More popular. And so. If we're going to keep going with Jesus. To follow him for the long haul. And stand before him. On that final day.

With confidence. Then we must steel ourselves. To endure for hardship now. Just for a little while. That we might stand with Jesus. In glory.

For eternity. Persevering and sharing. The word. Doing the work of an evangelist. Gossiping the gospel. Living out what it is to be a faithful follower.

Of Christ. And discharging all the duties. Of our ministry. Preaching the word. In it's absolute fullness. Not doing extra stuff.

Not other stuff that Timothy needs to do. But working out. What the Bible says. In it's entirety. And applying that. To our hearts and lives. Every aspect. Of our lives.

[29 : 06] Wherever we are. Every aspect. Of what it looks like. To live as a church family. So keep going. Preach the word. Let's close. In a word of prayer. Led this.

So father. We pray. That we would be. People who are centered. Around your word. We pray. That we would be working. As laborers.

On your building sites. Working according to your pattern. Your plan. To build one another up. Into a spiritual house. in which you would come and dwell and live.

Help us to endure. Help us to value word ministry. Help us to be sincere about working out what you have to say to us.

Please give us wisdom in applying that to our own hearts. Let's not think about the person next to us, but think about our own hearts and how we need to apply that command to preach the word to our own hearts as we go out the rest of today and the rest of this week.

[30 : 12] In Jesus' name, amen.