

**THE CHARGE TO PREACH**

Second Timothy 4:1-5

No greater work to be done by any man than preaching. (A woman might do a greater work, that is, the rearing of her children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.) Elders are the overseers of the congregation, but, whether we like it or not, the preacher likely often wields more influence in the congregation than the elders. He stands before the congregation, speaking to it, more by far than any other. If he is worth his salt, he has a great influence.

That is one reason elders need to be sure their preacher is the right kind of preacher. They should want him to be a man of great influence in the congregation. If he is not, then he can't be of much benefit to the church.

But often both preachers and elders, as well as many other members of the church, forget just what the job of preaching really is. He may be a little league coach, an entertainer, a play-by-play announcer at football games, master of ceremonies at public functions, judge at a beauty contest, bus driver, a part of the decoration at social events . . . . Maybe there is room for some of these things in his busy schedule, but these are not a part of his work as a preacher of the gospel.

Those of us who preach would do well to read the letters to Timothy and Titus often, especially Second Timothy 4:1-5. This passage contains the charge to preach, and familiarity with this text will help us keep focused on what our work really is. One might say these verses contain the preacher's job description.

Let us analyze these verses.

**DISCUSSION****I. VERSE 1**

A. "I charge thee...." Means "to place a burden on." Paul lays a responsibility upon Timothy, and upon all who preach.

1. The judge charges the jury (lays a burden on the members thereof).
2. The preacher gives a charge to bride and groom (lays a responsibility upon them).
3. Do you feel the responsibility?

B. "therefore...." This charge is the natural outgrowth of what has just been said.

1. Second Timothy 3:15-17: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

2. Is that not reason to feel a burden of responsibility?

C. "before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ...."

1. These are witnesses to the charge given.
  2. We could never deny our responsibility; the witnesses are too great and reliable.
- D. "who shall judge...."
1. Judgment suggests accountability. We are accountable.
  2. It is a great accountability. James 3:1-2: "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."
- E. "the quick and the dead...."
1. Universal judgment. Includes those now living, those now dead, and all who shall ever live, and all who shall ever die.
  2. Preaching is a life and death matter. We need to preach as dying men to dying men and women.
  3. We need to preach in full view of life and death.
- F. "at his appearing...." Not "at his coming."
1. (Cf. Matthew 24; Isaiah 13).
  2. Hebrews 9:28: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."
  3. Perhaps we would be more accurate if we referred to the "second appearing" of Jesus, rather than to his "second coming."
- G. "and his kingdom...."
1. The kingdom came into existence on Pentecost (Mark 9:1; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4).
    - a. John and those to whom he wrote were in it (Rev. 1:9).
    - b. Paul and those to whom he wrote were in it (Col. 1:13).
  2. But this is a reference to the heavenly state of the kingdom. (Cf. II Peter 1:5-11.)

## II. VERSE 2

- A. "Preach...." From κηρύσσω, which is defined by J. H. Thayer as meaning, "*to be a herald; to officiate as herald; to proclaim after the manner of a herald; always with a suggestion of formality, gravity, and an authority which must be listened to and obeyed.*"
1. This Greek word is used 61 times in the N. T., and it is used in this very sense every time it is used.
  2. This does not mean a preacher must be a "stuffed shirt," or a "stick in the mud." It does mean preaching is serious business.
  3. It does not mean a preacher is not to have a sense of humor, or that he can never use humor in preaching. It does mean that preaching is not something designed to entertain or keep people laughing.
  4. This definition also suggests a reason why sermons should not be interrupted by applause.
  5. Preaching may not appeal to the masses; they will think it foolishness. "For after

that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Corinthians 1:21). But it will save those who believe.

B."the word..." This tells what is to be preached.

1.Entirely too much preaching with entirely too little of the word.

2.Only the word of God can save.

a."Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21).

b."The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward" (Psalms 19:7-11). Why would anybody want to preach anything else?

c."For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

d.For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (I Corinthians 1:22-23).

C."be instant...." Means be at hand, or be ready.

D."in season, out of season...."

1.The word used here is used one other time in the N. T. (Mark 14:11), and is there translated "conveniently."

2.The idea here is, the preacher must be ready to discharge his duty at all times, both when it is convenient and when it is inconvenient.

3.It is sometimes convenient to forego preaching on certain themes. Would have been convenient for Stephen to leave off some of the things he preached (Acts 7).

4.Sometimes a preacher will allow sin and error to go unchallenged, justifying such a course by telling himself that preaching the truth at this time will do more harm than good.

5."And a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matthew 10:36).

6."They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2).

E."reprove...."

1.Means "*to convict, refute, confute*, generally with a suggestion of the shame of the person convicted..." (Thayer)

- 2.To tell one his faults, convince him he is wrong. Same word as in Matthew 18:15:  
"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."

- 3.Not all preaching is designed to make people feel good about themselves.

F."rebuke...."

- 1.Means to "*censure severely*" (Thayer).
- 2.I would say this is a stronger term which suggests stronger language. (Stephen's language in Acts 7 would fit into this category.

G."exhort...."

- 1.From παρα-καλεω, which means literally, "*to call to one's side*" (Thayer).
- 2.Also translated by the words *beseech, desire, pray, and comfort*.
- 3.Shows preaching is to be balanced. The faithful are to be comforted, encouraged.

H."with all longsuffering...."

- 1.μακροθυμία is used 14 times in the N. T. Twelve times translated "longsuffering," twice "patience."
- 2.Patience to grow and develop into an effective preacher. "I would start preaching today if I could start where brother Gus Nichols is."
- 3.Patience with those who did not seem to appreciate preaching and will not respond to it in a positive way.
- 4.Patience with circumstances which may require one to drive an older car, live in a smaller house, have to do without the "finer" things of life that most of the brethren enjoy.
- 5.Patience with brethren when they say you make more money than they do.

I."and doctrine." *Doctrine* means teaching.

- 1.Reproving, rebuking, and exhorting may not involve much teaching. But a preacher who does not teach is not doing his job.
- 2.Some preachers preach in gospel meetings and spend all their time entertaining, or in pleading with people to come forward, but never teach them even the plan of salvation.
- 3.The fundamental teaching of the Bible is being sadly neglected. A few months ago a large church split, and a group started another church led by those influenced by change agents. An elder of the church that split, a respected physician, wrote me a letter in which he said, "I am continually impressed with the fact that a congregation can't get enough of basic, first principle teaching and preaching."

### III. VERSE 3

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

- 1.That is the reason the preacher must be ready to preach the truth when it is convenient and when it is not.
- 2.That is the reason the preacher must be characterized by longsuffering.
- 3.Look at the references in the letters to Timothy and Titus about sound doctrine and

other doctrine.

a. First Timothy 1:3, 4, 6, 10, 19; 4:1, 6, 7, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:1, 3, 21.

b. Second Timothy 1:8, 13; 2:14, 16, 17, 18; 3:7, 8, 16; 4:2, 3, 15.

c. Titus 1:9, 10, 11, 14; 2:1, 7, 10; 3:9, 10.

d. Also such passages as Matthew 15:8-9; Second John 9-11; etc.

B. "but after their own lusts...."

1. The word *lust*, as it is used here, refers to the desire for that which is forbidden.

2. Our society has developed the belief that one should never be expected to deprive himself of that which he wants.

3. Notice how James describes the evolving of sin: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:14-15).

4. Also First John 2:15-17: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

5. In order to live life successfully, one must learn to deprive himself. "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). It is the job of the preacher to show this fact to his hearers.

C. "shall they heap to themselves teachers...."

1. There are many preachers who will preach whatever the people want to hear.

2. This suggests some will choose those preachers whose teaching renders the gratification of the lust of the flesh consistent with the hope of heaven. Are we seeing that today? What about the new (to our brethren) doctrine of grace?

D. "having itching ears...."

1. Some people want ear-tickling sermons.

2. Many preachers will preach ear-tickling sermons.

#### IV. VERSE 4

A. "And they shall turn away their ears from the truth...."

1. Zechariah 8:19b says, "Therefore love the truth and peace."

2. Second Thessalonians 2:10 says, "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."

3. Nearly all people love some of the truth, but not because it is the truth. They love the part that appeals to their own desires, that is, that says what they want it to say.

B. "and shall be turned unto fables." (ASV: "shall turn aside unto fables.")

1. People are going to believe something; if they reject the truth, they will replace it with error.
2. Even the man who spends Sunday guzzling beer and watching the football game has a philosophy, some false ideas which govern his life.
3. The word *fable* here means that which is false. It does make a difference.

## V. VERSE 5

### A. "But watch thou in all things...."

1. Peter's admonition: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8). I think this is especially true of preachers.
2. One of the qualifications of an elder is that he be vigilant (I Tim. 3:2).
3. Acts 22:28 says, "And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born."
  - a. Elmer Davis (1890-1958) said, in speaking of the freedoms we enjoy in this country, "With a great price our ancestors obtained this freedom, but we were born free....But that freedom can be retained only by the eternal vigilance which has always been its price." [*But We Were Born Free*, (1954) ch. I.]
  - b. Think about this statement in relation to the distinctive nature of the church, the gospel, the plan of salvation, instrumental music, etc.
4. The preacher who sees danger, and chooses to ignore it, is not worthy to be called an evangelist.
5. Read Ezekiel 3:17-21; 33:2-7.

### B. "endure afflictions...."

1. Read Second Timothy 1:8; 3:10-12; Second Corinthians 6:4; 2:4; 4:17; Acts 20:22-24; Colossians 1:24; I Thessalonians 3:3, 7; James 5:10.
2. Should not preach unless prepared to endure afflictions. (May include having less money, being unjustly criticized, even being fired, not for failure to do your job well, but because you did your job too well.)
3. Many men start out preaching, but quit when afflictions come.

### C. "do the work of an evangelist...."

1. The word *εὐαγγελιστῆς* means "a bringer of good tidings, an evangelist" (Thayer). Thayer also adds, "This name is given in the N. T. to those heralds of salvation through Christ who are not apostles."
2. See Acts 21:8 and Ephesians 4:11.
3. Many times brethren will hire a man and tell him they want him to spend most of his time in personal work, or some other phase of the work of the church. But in the long haul a preacher will be judged on how well he does "the work of an evangelist." Other things are important, but don't neglect this.

### D. "make full proof of thy ministry."

1. "fulfill your service" (Hugo McCord's Translation)

2. "discharge to the full your duties as a minister" (New Berkeley Version)
3. The idea is that the evangelist should never shirk his duty or try to get around doing what he should do. His attitude should be that which Jesus expressed in Matthew 5:41: "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."

## CONCLUSION

Preaching the gospel is one of the most rewarding things a man can do, if he is sincerely devoted to his charge. Before he decides to spend his life preaching the gospel to a lost and dying world, he should study this charge, and be sure he is committed to it.

One who is not so committed should decide to do something else.