

Preach Faithfully 2 Timothy 4:1-8

(Show slide 1 as soon as the talk starts)

In many jobs there are sentences that would seem **ridiculous** to mention.

For example, if someone works in an ice cream shop, no one ever says to them at the start of the day, "Make sure you sell lots of ice cream."

Or if someone is a bus driver they don't need anyone to say to them as they set off for work, "Make sure you drive a bus today."

The reason is because those activities are so obviously connected with the role that it would be crazy to mention them.

How should we respond to what's written at the start of **verse 2**?
Three critical words. A pastor of a church is told, **preach the word**.

Is that not insanely obvious? Surely it's in the same category as the ice cream seller and the bus driver.

Preach the word, what else would a pastor be doing?

What else would categorise the heart of church life apart from the Bible being opened up and held out to listening ears?

Lots and lots! Visiting. Administration. Planning. Meetings. Social engagements. Community events. You name it. It's not hard for a pastor and a church to fill their diaries and programmes with everything apart from the preaching the word.

It's important to notice that the charge is not simply to preach. Or to preach some words. No, the commission from God's apostle is to preach **the word**.

That is, we are not simply to fill the airways with any words. As if the point is to remove the silence with any noise for a few minutes.

No, the responsibility of a pastor is to ensure that the word of God is what is heard across the life of the congregation.

God has spoken. **Therefore**, his words to us must be proclaimed to the people.

Preaching is not human words about God. No, it is God's words to the creatures he has made

Preaching **any words** for any length of time can be a challenge in our contemporary context when we are bombarded by people telling us that we have such a short attention span. Preaching **the word of God** is even harder!

I heard of a congregation that used to hold up and tap their watches if the pastor spoke for more than about 15 mins!

How can we ensure that the word of God is proclaimed throughout our church?

There are **two** reasons I want to highlight from this section of **2 Timothy 4**.

- God wants it to happen
- We need it to happen

Change to slide 2 First, God wants it to happen

Look at verse 1. **Read verse 1.**

The charge to preach the word is a **strong** one and a **serious** one.

However, it is not simply a human aspiration from a passionate missionary with zealous intentions.

No, it comes straight from **God Almighty**.

In this society it is easy to forget God in a typical week. The combination of busyness, tiredness and the silence of God conversation apart from using his name as a swear word is sadly normal for many people.

We are surrounded by substantial evidence of God's existence and almost daily we are reminded that we frail humans with a short term expiry date need help from someone more powerful and wise. And yet the days go past and God is forgotten.

In **verse 1** the apostle Paul gets our attention.

In the **presence** of God and of Christ Jesus.

We may not see them but God the Father and his eternal Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, can see us and everything we do.

The apostle Paul is their messenger or their ambassador to the human race. And so when he says "Preach the word" the true authority for this grand commission is the heavenly sender.

God himself wants his word to be preached.

In a moment I want to unlock **why**.

However, even at this point we have enough to obey the commandment.

Why should this happen? Because God wants it to happen.

Is that enough for our joyful compliance? Yes.

Change to slide 3 I love the encounter that is recorded for us in **Luke chapter 5**. Jesus tells his disciples to head out to deep water and let down the nets to catch some fish. Simon Peter replies, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the net.”

Because you say so.

It’s not just what is said but who says it.

When we hear Paul say, “Preach the word” we know that he wants it done. And who is he? He is the all-wise and all-powerful God. This means even when we don’t know all the reasons why, we can still conclude that it is wise to do it.

Why does God want his word to be preached? Because we need it.

Change to slide 4 **Second, we need it to happen**

Listen again to verse 1. **Read verses 1 to 2a.**

Our generation is increasingly marked by entertainment, trivial pursuits and a focus on this earthly life.

That makes the **content** of **verse 1** very **unusual** and very **shocking**.

We're confronted with the Lord Jesus Christ, who we're told will **judge the living and the dead.**

And who, we are reminded, has a future appearance booked in his diary. A day that is ahead of us when he will return visible, personally and unmistakably to bring the fullness of his promised kingdom.

This is the **moment** when he will judge the living and the dead.

This is not a topic that we will find discussed in most of the weekly conversations that happen in Scarborough. However, this is **the reality of the future,**

One day, everyone who has ever lived will have their life perfectly scrutinised by the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's a day no one can avoid. We can't say we're double booked and we can't send out apologies.

The Bible already tells us the outcome. Everyone will be found guilty of cosmic treason. However, all those who have sought forgiveness and redemption in Jesus will be saved.

Here's the link to preaching the word. **Paul says, in view of what will happen, do this.**

The implication is that only the word of God proclaimed in the church and in the world prepares us for the future day of judgement. It will do so much more than this but of all the things we need to be ready for, it is that one unavoidable eternity shaping encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ,

The word of God will tell us everything we need to know and everything we need to do in order to prepare for our 121 with Jesus.

To put our faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

Even though we need it we don't always want it.

Look at verse 2. **Read verses 2 to 5.**

These verses are full of wisdom for those of us who speak God's word and for those of us who listen to God's word.

First, those involved in proclaiming God's word must do it in season and out of season. Either when they don't feel like it or those who are listening don't feel like it.

The dream is the double reality of when both speaker and listener are keen to hear the voice of God from his written word.

However, when that's not the situation, we keep on holding out God's precious word to God's precious people.

Second, those involved in proclaiming God's word must be sensitive to God's purposes for what he says.

- Correct
- Rebuke
- Encourage

When we hear a word that threatens to correct us or rebuke us, let's resist the temptation to activate our spiritual missile defence. Let's be shaken by God's word so we can find peace with Jesus.

Third, those involved in proclaiming God's word must do it with great patience and careful instruction.

It takes time for the truths to go deep and it takes time for the truths to become clear.

The temptation is to become frustrated and grumpy.

Let's get our expectations right and pray for the power of God to make us those who are patient and tender to the precious ones as they gradually grasp the truth of God's word.

Fourth, those listening to God's word must be aware of our internal desire to listen to other words that are far more comfortable.

Look again at verse 3. **Read verses 3 and 4.**

People who abandon the Bible often don't leave churches. They stay and make sure alternative words are spoken that suit their preferences and beliefs.

We won't be able to stop this happening everywhere but we can certainly understand the reality of what's going on.

It's not that God's word isn't clear or that God's word isn't relevant. It's that God's word isn't convenient. And that leads people to eradicate it from their daily lives.

May that never happen in this congregation!

Fifth, those involved in proclaiming God's word must keep going over the long term.

Or in the words of verse 5. **Read verse 5.**

Don't panic. Embrace hardship. It's not a sign you are doing anything wrong. It comes with the territory.

Do the work of an evangelist. Tell everyone about Jesus. Non-Christians and Christians. Everyone needs to be won for Christ given the future day of judgement.

None of this will be easy and so it's wonderful to be presented with a powerful motivation to keep going.

Look at verse 6. **Read verses 6 to 8.**

To be with Christ is better by far. Paul's faithful ministry is coming to an end. What's next? Not the grave but the sky. He is expecting a reward from his generous king!

But notice what he says - not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Secure in his grace. Proclaiming his word. Listening to his word. Serving in his kingdom.

It will be hard but let's keep going because we have a generous king who will lavishly reward his servants.

There are athletes who will ensure the most intense pain to win the race and gain the prize. They do it because the end makes everything worth it. How much more true is it for the servants of Jesus!

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, let's preach the word. And when that word is preached, let's hear it and live until the glorious day when we see Jesus face to face. **Amen.**