

## **Bold Preaching: Expository and Applicational – 2 Tim 4:1-5**

We're starting a new series this week on our **Core Values**. The characteristics of our church that define us and drive us. The qualities and attributes that describe who we are and what we do, at the core.

And I want to talk about them, because the extent to which we keep them in the forefront of our minds, we will abide by them. To the extent we don't, we won't. We'll default to what's convenient and easy.

Not only that, but knowledge leads to conviction, and conviction leads to community; unity. To the extent we *know* who we are and what we do, we'll be passionate about it; knowledge leads to conviction. And any time a group of people share common convictions, they're united.

So we're going to spend the next few months focusing on these, starting with bold preaching: expository and applicational. And the primary passage on which it's based, is 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

➤ The apostle Paul is writing, and says . . .  
*I 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: [2] preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. [3] For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, [4] and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. [5] As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*

This is Paul's last letter, written while sitting in prison waiting to be executed, and addressed to Timothy, the pastor of the church in Ephesus. And of all the things he could have said in his last few paragraphs, he chose this: *Preach, the, word.* V2. As in the Word of God; the Bible.

So we do. The first part of our core value of bold preaching, is that . . .

### **We preach from the Bible and the Bible alone (v1-2)**

And by we, I'm not just referring to myself. I'm talking about all the pastors and directors on staff, all the elders and deacons, and all of you. Because we're not only in this together, but to the extent *you* have opportunity to preach the word, it's your responsibility too. We preach from the Bible and the Bible alone.

The Bible, because it's the word of God. God. The creator and sustainer of the universe. His written revelation to us. With that at hand, what else would you preach? We proclaim its content because people have to have it. We amplify its message because people need to hear it. We extend its reach because people need to get it. That's preaching.

It's urging people to consider what it says. It's persuading people to accept its claims. It's encouraging people to embrace its life. Its exhorting people to believe its substance.

More than just reiterating the Bible, or retelling it, or re-wording it; we *preach* it. We herald it. We expound it.

➤ And notice, this isn't some namby-pamby *request* on his part. You know, an option for us to *consider*. "If you get the chance, could you preach the word? If you can fit it in around the blessing of your pets and your motorcycles, could you talk about it a little bit? If your dramas and specials allow, could you open it?"

I don't think so. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul says, *I charge you, v1*. I command you, I order you, I exhort you. And as if that wasn't enough, he adds as much weight and validity and emphasis as he possibly can. Saying, *I 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.*

It's kind of like saying, "With God as my witness, get it done. Preach the word, so help me God. In light of his return, get at it. In view of his judgment and kingdom, don't stop. Far from a request, it's a command with as much force as he could possibly bring. So we do. We preach from the Bible.

And the Bible alone. Not our *own* counsel, not our *own* thinking, not the word *plus* something; religious traditions or *pop* psychology. But the word alone. Because that's the only thing God *says* to preach. Preach, the, *word*. Period. The Bible and the Bible alone.

➤ Then, in v2b, he tells us *how*. *Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort* [that's part of it; to which we'll come back], *with complete patience and teaching*. That's the rest of it. *Preach the word*, employing these various means, *with complete* . . . *teaching*. As in instruction; explanation; application.

Preach, with teaching. Because all heat and no light burns people to death. All preaching and no teaching is deadly. All style and no substance is empty. And by the same token, all light and no heat *bore*s people to death. All content and no passion is painful. Think, dry college lecture.

So we strive for both. Preaching *with* teaching. Just like Paul says. We strive to proclaim and amplify, encourage and exhort; with explanations, and reasons, and application.

➤ That's why our core value is bold preaching: expository and applicational. *Expository* simply meaning, "with the intent to explain, or teach, according to the context." Have you heard that expression? Expository preaching? That's what we do. Along with application.

Instead of lifting a verse *out* of context, and making it mean whatever we want, we open up to a passage, and explain it *based* on its context. The grammatical and historical context. We take into account the words and sentence structure, and consider the historical setting, and then talk about how to apply it. What we need to know, be, or do. The very thing the Apostles, prophets, and Jesus himself did. They preached expositively.

Which is best done by working through a book of the Bible verse by verse. What we do *most* of the time. But even if we don't, even if it's a topical series, we still base our message on the text and context, not on our preconceived notions or what we really want to say. And thereby, hopefully, convey both heat *and* light.

That's the first part of this core value. We preach from the Bible and the Bible alone.

Second . . .

**We declare its truth, popular or not (v2)**

Paul says in v2 – *Be ready in season and out of season*. Ready to preach the word when it's popular and when it's not. Stayed up, prayed up, and fired up.

We were visiting a church recently, and after the service the pastor told me that he got up at 3:30 that morning to finish preparing his sermon. And I thought, "Well, that explains what I just heard." There was a lot of words, but not much content. A lot of thoughts, but not much flow. Because he wasn't ready.

And while that might *happen* from time to time, due to circumstances outside our control, it should be a rare exception. God says be *ready* to declare his truth. Because you never know when it's going to be well-received, or terribly hated. Well-embraced, or well-opposed.

➤ Like following disasters. When something bad happens, people are usually *open* to what God says. I'll never forget the spiritual sensitivity after 9/11; we were leading prayer meetings in the parking lot of our church offices. A business complex where everybody came outside for lunch, held hands, and prayed together. It didn't last long, but churches were *full*. The word was *in season*.

Now, not so much. "Who needs the Bible when we're safe and secure? Fat and happy? Who needs old news when there's so much new news? Who needs this when we know *better*?" Sometimes the word of God is *out* of season.

And the church is no different. Including *our* church. Some people are *hungry* for God's word, and others aren't. Some can't *wait* to get here, others can't wait to leave. Some people listen with open ears and open heart, others don't listen at all. Some people lean in with eagerness and engagement, others are like cardboard cutouts. Every single week it's popular and unpopular at the same time.

➤ Question. Should any of that matter when it comes to declaring it? Preaching it? Should I pour it on because some people like it; or ease it up because others don't? Should I try to *soften* the blow when it falls like a hammer or cuts to the core? Massage it to make it more gentle; less offensive; more acceptable?

May it never be. Otherwise, I'm disobedient, and you're missing out.

It's not my job to be a social weatherman, and speak up only when times are good. It's not my job to assess the cultural issues and avoid the ones that are touchy. God says preach the word *in season and out of season* (v2). Whether I feel like it or not, and whether you want to *hear* it or not.

➤ And believe me, there are times when I *don't* feel like it. I sense the opposition, I fear your response, and I know it's going to be hard for some of you to hear. And I care. I *care* about your heart. I *care* about the conviction you feel. I care about the confliction in your soul.

So we've established this as a core value because it's not only commanded, but it's hard. And keeping it front and center is a good reminder for me to do it, and you to receive it.

To *declare* the truth of God's word, popular or not; and receive it, popular or not.

Third . . .

**We proclaim its authority without apology (v2)**

Middle of v2. *Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience*. In other words, apply it to people's lives without apology. Bring it to bear as the sole standard by which they should live. Say what needs to be said, say it like it is, and let God do what he's going to do. That's the *gist* of these 3 words.

Starting with *reprove*. It means to expose someone's sin. We proclaim the authority of God's word without apology by . . .

• **Exposing sin**

"You know that thing you're about? That attitude you harbor? That practice you perpetuate? It's wrong. Sinful. Missing the mark." That's a *reproof* in the biblical sense. It's calling someone out for their sin, and doing so unapologetically.

"It's not *that* bad," is one of the worst things I could say to you. "There are worse things you could do; don't sweat it." That *insulates* you from God's word instead of exposing you. Excuses you instead of holding you accountable.

Better to bring God's word to bear in a way that's equal to its weight and authority. Exposing you to the soul-searching, soul-piercing thrust of his truth. Because like a surgeon's knife, it heals.

➤ The second word is *rebuke*. *Preach the word . . . reprove, rebuke, and exhort*. If reproving someone is *exposing* their sin, rebuking them is . . .

• **Confronting obstinace**

Stubbornness. Hardness of heart. That's the second way we proclaim and apply the authority of God's word without apology. Because a rebuke is a sharp reprimand. "The Bible says that what you're doing is wrong, and you need to knock it off." It's bringing God's disapproval to bear, and leaving it. It's pressing someone until they repent or refuse to listen. Confronting obstinace.

And then third, we proclaim the authority of God's word without apology by...

• **Urging righteousness**

Exhortation. *Preach the word . . . reprove, rebuke, and exhort* it says. Plead for holiness. Stress godliness. As in, "Repent and be clean. Turn and be whole. Give up what's wrong and do what's right." We urge righteousness.

➤ Now, at this point you might be thinking, "Man that sounds harsh. Maybe even unloving." If that's you, it's actually the opposite. To proclaim the authority of God's Word without apology is the *most* loving thing we can do. Because anything else gives people a false sense of security as they're headed for judgment. If we love people at all, we *must* proclaim God's word like this.

But not without patience. *Reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience* it says (v2b). God help me. Because that means I have to contain my frustration when someone *rejects* the word. Contain my exasperation when they're slow to accept it. As long as

people are willing to listen, even just one person, it's my responsibility to preach. And yours too.

4<sup>th</sup> . . .

**We share its message with a sense of urgency (v3-4)**

Because *the time is coming [v3] when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, [4] and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.*

Every time I preach this text, I think it can't get any worse. And yet here we are. The time isn't just coming, it's here. Where people are *running* from the truth. *Running* from conviction. Taking their ball and bat and going elsewhere or nowhere. Searching the internet for someone who tells them what they *want* to hear, in the way they want to hear it. And then pretending that they're part of a church and living biblically. You want to talk about a pandemic.

They won't *endure sound teaching*, so they pursue teaching that tickles their *ears*. Teaching that makes them feel good. Teaching that condones their lifestyle. Or addresses their pet issue. Or assuages their guilt. Or alleviates their complacency.

And they end up buying into half-truths, wandering *into myths*, and practicing a *form* of religion that has no power. All while rationalizing it, and deceiving themselves to feel good about it.

That's why we share the message of God's word with a sense of urgency. Because it may be the only time or the last time that some people will hear it. Before they take their ball and bat. Or fall by the wayside. Or descend into sin.

We preach from the Bible and the Bible alone, and boldly share its message with a sense of urgency.

And then last . . .

**We stay the course no matter what (v5)**

The course of preaching the word and fulfilling our ministry. Like Paul says in v5. *As for you [speaking first to Timothy, as a pastor], always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.* Your purpose. Your calling. The ministry of preaching the word. The same ministry that God has entrusted to *us* as a church. And to *me* as the *pastor*. It's a mandate. A mandate that rings in my ear, and should in *our* ears; together.

And to accomplish it, we must *be sober-minded*; focused and on task 24/7. And *endure suffering*; because opposition and attack *will* come; it's part of the game. And certainly we need to *do the work of an evangelist*; the hard work of preaching the Gospel and discipling the saints. All for the purpose of fulfilling the ministry that God has entrusted to our care.

We have no idea what's coming. At least not explicitly. No idea what cultural pressures will mount. What political or legal obstacles are in store. What form the opposition will take or how strong it will be. But we know it's coming because it's already here.

And it's imperative that we stay the course. No matter what. That's the idea. Don't quit;

even if others *do*. I'm preaching to myself here. Don't stop, even if people leave. Don't waver even if difficulties seem insurmountable. Or problems unsolvable. Fulfill your ministry. That's what God says.

So we do. By the grace of God, we have; and by the grace of God we will, stay the course no matter what. It's who we are and what we do.

Pray – Father, find us faithful. Faithful to preach your word, and your word alone. Faithful, in season and out. Faithful to fulfill our ministry. Faithful to stay the course. Oh God, bolster us, and strengthen us, and fill us, and fuel us.

**You Are Loved**