

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

2 TIMOTHY LESSON 4 (Chapter 4)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Timothy Sparks and Ben Bailey.

Timothy Sparks:

“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:2). I’m Timothy Sparks.

Ben Bailey:

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Timothy Sparks:

As Paul begins chapter 4 of his second epistle to Timothy, he says, “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the Word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (vss. 1-2). This is a indeed a solemn charge. Why does Paul command Timothy to “preach the word”? It is because only the Word of God can convert the lost. We learn from Psalm 19:7, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” Nothing but the Word of God can turn people from the way of error into the path of light and truth. Paul is not admonishing Timothy to preach fairy tales or anecdotal illustrations. Paul wants him to “preach the Word.” And he wants him to do it “urgently.” Why? Because people are lost in sin without the Gospel of Jesus Christ! According to Romans 1:16, the Gospel is God’s “power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”

Ben Bailey:

The urgency of Paul's admonition is seen in verses 3 and 4. Paul says, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables." People frequently do not want to hear the Word of God. During the days of Isaiah, it was the same way, as Isaiah 30:9-10 makes clear, "For it is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of Jehovah; that say to the seers, 'See not;' and to the prophets, 'Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things.'" What people need the most, however, is to hear the Word of God, because it is indeed "God's "power of God to salvation." In James 1:21, we are told, "Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." The Word of God is the only thing that will stand the test of time. In Matthew 24:35, Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." Peter said, "The Word of the Lord endures forever" (1 Pet. 1:25). God does not want us to hire someone to speak to us "smooth things." He does not want us to have "itching ears," and to heap to ourselves teachers who will "turn our ears away from the truth." We must make sure that we do not give in to our own desires. It is not supposed to be about what **I** want! It does not matter what **I** think. And it does not matter when **you** think. The only thing that is important is what **the Bible** says! The idea of a group of people with "itching ears" suggests that these are people who want to hear only what **they** want to hear—smooth things, appealing things, nice things. "Sin" is not what they want to hear about. But Paul warns Timothy that he must be a true servant of God by standing up to "preach the Word!" Jesus said in Mark 16:15, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." We are not to give in to our own desires. Rather, we are to be good evangelists.

Timothy Sparks:

True Gospel preaching means that a preacher will reprove, rebuke, and exhort. He will offer doctrinal teaching, but he will do so with all longsuffering (patience). People who do not expect any negative teaching at all are not familiar with either Old or New Testament examples of such. Jeremiah was given the commission to root out, pull down, destroy, and throw down (Jer. 1:10). Then he could replant. Jesus came preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 4:17)). Preaching that is true to the Bible will reprove, rebuke, and exhort. We do have to allow enough time for people to absorb the message and then act on that message. We have to be longsuffering and patient. Think of a worldly person living in Corinth, for example. We could not expect them to hear God's Word, obey it, and then suddenly become a mature Christian overnight. Perhaps this individual had come out of an unscriptural marriage in order to become a Christian. Or, perhaps the person had left behind the immorality in which he had been engaged. Growing in Christ is a process. The person cannot be expected to have everything "just right" immediately! Yet they must have a genuine attitude of wanting to do God's will. This is why we need to be patient and longsuffering. With God's help, we **can** live lives that are pleasing to Him. Paul says that we must preach the Word, because the time will come when people will not endure sound doctrine. Then, people will have "itching ears," and will want to hear from teachers who will tell them only what they **want** to hear. They will, to use Paul's phrase, "turn aside to fables." In essence, they will turn from the truth to "tales." They will not want to hear God's Word preached. They will not want to hear the truth. This sounds like many people today, and the type of preaching that they are hearing. We need **the truth** taught to us. Those of us who preach should "speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). But those who hear it should say, "We **want** the Word of God taught, and if it is not taught, then we will not be here to hear it." This type of attitude

would make denominationalism a thing of the past as people came to the simple truth of Christianity and united upon the Word and will of God. This type of unity is the very thing for which Paul pleaded when he wrote his first epistle to the Corinthian Christians. He said, "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). Timothy has his job cut out for him, and has an awesome responsibility in teaching and preaching the Word of God.

Ben Bailey:

Paul then makes some personal comments to Timothy. Paul knows that his days are numbered and his hours are few. He says to Timothy, "I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand" (2 Tim. 4:6). He knew that his death would be a difficult thing for Timothy to handle, because Timothy was his "son in the faith." Paul continues by saying, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (vss. 7-8). Paul is saying to Timothy, "I have done all I can do. Now, it is up to you. You must "fight the good fight, and finish the race. The torch is being passed on to you, because I am being poured out like a drink offering. The time of my departure is at hand." Paul was in prison. He knew that his life was almost over. But he wanted Timothy to know that he must not give up when Paul's life ends. We, too, need a faith that will stand the test of time. Life is so very brief. James 4:14 tells us, "For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." When viewed as a part of the whole, our life is but "a drop in the proverbial bucket" of time. Job said, "Man who is born of woman is of few days" (14:1). Our time here is short. But we **can** have an impact if we "fight the good fight of faith." We must finish the race, and lay hold on life eternal. We must **never** give up! When life "throws you a twist," reach for your Bible. Let God's Word be your guide through difficult times. Every day that we live, Satan is trying his best to cause us to be lost. He is doing his best to tempt us to sin. We, however, must "fight the good fight of faith." Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 10:5-6, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." We are in a battle. It is not a physical battle, but a spiritual battle. We have to bring our thoughts and actions into captivity and into obedience to Jesus Christ. We must not grow weary, we must not give up, and we must not abandon the race. We must "press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14).

Timothy Sparks:

In 2 Timothy 4:9, Paul says, "Be diligent to come to me quickly." Why did Paul make such a request? The next verse provides the answer. "For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." Demas, who at one time had been a faithful Christian, had forsaken Paul and the service of the Lord because he "loved this present world." Demas outlived his faithfulness. If you outlive your faithfulness to God, then you have lived too long. Sadly, some people die too soon. They die short of their soul's salvation, because they did not obey the Gospel. The decisions we make in this life, and the actions we take, will determine whether we live forever in Heaven or in Hell. You have only one life,

and it soon will be past. Only what is done for Christ will last. You cannot “live wrong and die right.” Procrastination is the work of the devil. He does not want you to be saved. And will do everything he can to keep you from being saved. But if you do end up obeying the Gospel, the devil then will “step up his efforts” against you as he tries to pull you back to your former life. That is exactly what he did to Demas. He pulled Demas back into the world. Peter spoke about such things when he said,

“For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: ‘A dog returns to his own vomit,’ and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire’” (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

Passages such as 2 Timothy 4:10 and 2 Peter 2:20-22 show that a Christian **can** lose his salvation. Demas had!

Ben Bailey:

It is interesting that Paul asks Timothy to bring Mark with him when he comes to see Paul (2 Tim. 4:11). In Acts 15, there was a strong disagreement over Mark. Barnabas wanted to take Mark on the missionary journey, but Paul did not. In the end, Paul and Barnabas divided over the topic of taking Mark with them. Apparently, Mark had accompanied Paul and Barnabas on an earlier journey, but halfway through, Mark had turned back. And Paul was not happy about Mark’s actions. Fortunately, Barnabas was willing to take Mark with him in order to help him mature. Now, as Paul writes to Timothy, we see that Mark has grown in his faith—so much so that Paul actually asks Timothy to bring Mark with him! There is an important lesson here. It takes time to mature. We must “stick with” people as they mature. We may have to be like a father or a brother. We cannot give up on them! At one point in his life, Mark was not useful to Paul—and was even the source of a strong disagreement between Paul and Barnabas. Now, however, Paul actually **requests** that he accompany Timothy on his trip to see Paul because “he is now useful for me for ministry.” We can be useful in God’s kingdom—if we will just “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18). We need to follow Peter’s advice in 1 Peter 2:2 to, “as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.”

Timothy Sparks:

As Paul continues his remarks to Timothy, he mentions Alexander the coppersmith. In verse 14, he says, “Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm.” Yet Paul was not of the mind-set that he needed to do something to “pay Alexander back” for the harm he had done to Paul. Instead, Paul said simply, “May the Lord repay him according to his works.” Paul was willing to allow the Lord to take care of the matter. This might remind us of the statement of Michael the archangel as he disputed with Satan in the Book of Jude. Rather than revile Satan, Michael said, “The Lord rebuke you” (Jude 9). Paul wrote in Romans 12:19, “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.” In Revelation 6:10, the question is asked, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” God will tend to matters in His own time and in His own way. We as faithful children of God may have to endure persecution and evil treatment. Why? It might be that God is giving evil people time to repent. Christ

told Ananias (regarding Saul, who later would become Paul), “I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake” (Acts 9:16). Paul did indeed suffer for Christ—which is why he was able to tell Timothy, “You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3). Alexander the coppersmith did great harm to the cause of Christ. We, too, could turn out to be someone like that. Or, we can be people who suffer and are persecuted for the cause of Christ, but who “receive the crown of life that the Lord has in store for those who love Him” (Jas. 1:12). Paul wrote in Philippians 4:4, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” He then continues in the next three verses by saying,

“Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Paul was in prison, yet even there he could write to others and tell them to “be anxious for nothing.” He understood that “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18). Heaven is a **prepared place** for a **prepared people**. God has in store for us something more wonderful than we could ever begin to imagine.

Ben Bailey:

What kept Paul going was his faith in **God**, not his faith in **men**. In 2 Timothy 4:16, he said, “At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them.” Other Christians had forsaken Paul, but he did not want that held to their account. In Matthew 26:31, we read, “I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.” In Jesus’ hour of trial, when He needed His disciples they most, they fled. And those who followed, followed at a distance. When Paul needed aid and comfort, people forsook him, too. But in verse 17 he says, “The Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.” Paul’s hope was not in men, but in God. And God stood with Paul! For the faithful Christian, that is a “given.” God will stand with us in our darkest hours. It may be cold and dark, and we may be lonely, but God is no farther away than the avenue of prayer. He loves us, and wants to help us. The writer of Hebrews said, “For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we may boldly say: ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’” (Heb. 13:5-6). Man cannot take us away from God. We know that God loves us. And if we are faithful to Him, He will stand with us and strengthen us. The words of Philippians 4:13 should be an encouragement to each and every one of us. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” If you are in a dark hour of trial due to the loss of a loved one, a severe illness, or a testing of your faith due to some sin in which you have become involved, remember that if you will turn to God in prayer, He will give you strength. Paul wrote, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Cor. 1:3-4). God comforts us so that we, in turn, may comfort **others**. God is with us, and He is willing to help us in our hour of trial. This is why Paul tells Timothy not to give up, but to place his trust in the Word of God.

Timothy Sparks:

Paul closes his remarks to Timothy by saying, "The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:18). It is our prayer for you that God will deliver and preserve you for His heavenly kingdom. You can become a Christian today by believing in Jesus as the Son of God, repenting of your sins, confessing the name of Jesus as your Savior, and being baptized for the forgiveness of your sins. Jesus is "the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29).

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR 2 TIMOTHY LESSON 4 (CHAPTER 4)

1. According to Paul's introductory verse in 2 Timothy 4, who is going to "judge the living and the dead"?
2. In 2 Timothy 4:2, what three things did Paul instruct Timothy to do as a minister of the Gospel?
3. What did Paul mean when he told Timothy that there would come a time when people would have "itching ears" (2 Tim. 4:3)?
4. What was Isaiah's point when he said that the people of his day were saying, "Prophecy not unto us right things, but speak unto us smooth things" (Isa. 30:9-10)?
5. According to Matthew 24:35, how long will the Word of God last?
6. Why did God tell Jeremiah to "root out, pull down, destroy, and throw down" certain things (Jer. 1:10)?
7. Why did Paul urge Timothy to exhibit "longsuffering" toward others?
8. In 2 Timothy 4:4, Paul spoke of a time when people would "turn aside to fables." What did he mean by that statement?
9. What was the point Paul was trying to get across when he wrote, "I plead with you, brethren...that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10)?
10. Christians are engaged in a spiritual battle against Satan and the forces of evil. According to Paul's comments in 2 Corinthians 10:5-6, our weapons are "mighty in God," and are designed to do certain things. What are those things?
11. In 2 Timothy 4, Paul mentions a man who had once been a faithful Christian. What was this man's name, and what had he done that caused Paul to call him by name?
12. Explain the connection between 2 Timothy 4:10 and 2 Peter 2:20-22.
13. What did Paul mean when he said of Alexander the coppersmith, "May the Lord repay him according to his works" (2 Tim. 4:14)?
14. In Acts 15, Paul and Barnabas had engaged in a serious disagreement over something. What was the cause of that disagreement?
15. Christ told Ananias (regarding Saul, who later would be known as Paul), "I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:16). What did Jesus mean by that statement?
16. Paul told Timothy to "endure" something (2 Tim. 2:3). What was that "something"?