**PREACH THE WORD**

2Timothy 4:1-8 (Key Verse: 2)

*“Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.”*

In today’s passage we are going to learn from Apostle Paul’s last will and testament to his disciple Timothy whom he raised as a shepherd for the people in the churches that he had pioneered. Apostle Paul delivered his last will and testament to Timothy as charge to preach the word. Apostle Paul gave this charge to Timothy after he experienced great challenges in ministry, challenges of the message of Christ Jesus being distorted and corrupted, false teachers, leaving Timothy discouraged.

As Shepherds of God’s flock, the same charge applies to us as well today. Just like the times of Timothy we too are faced with numerous challenges, both internally in our ministry and the mission field. As Wits UBF God has placed us at Wits University to transform it into a Kingdom of Priests and Holy nation. However, we are faced with the growing sin of sexual immorality, the growing influence of homosexuality, pride, age gap and loss of interest in church by campus students. And to overcome these challenges and many others, Apostle is charging me and you to preach the word.

Therefore, through today’s passage we are going to learn what it means to preach the word, how we can do it. May God have mercy on us to receive one word, a clear direction on how to serve as Shepherds of God’s flock.

Let us look at **verse 1**: “*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:”* In this verse Apostle Paul began by saying “*In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus*” meaning what he was about to say was not just his own idea, but an idea that was planted in his heart by God and Christ Jesus, this demonstrated the seriousness of what he was about the say. Furthermore, he said: “*Who will judge the living and the dead*” here Apostle Paul further expressed the extend of the seriousness of what he was about to say, which is a matter of life and death, it is about judgment. What Apostle Paul is about to say is about saving lives from the power of sin and death. And finally, he said to Timothy, a shepherd of God’s flock who was filled with discouragement, due to what was happening in the churches Paul had put to look after, “*I give you this charge.*” Apostle Paul did not say to Timothy move away from these people, they are hopeless, go to another people who will listen, but rather during Timothy’s discouragement, he said: “*I give you this charge”*.

Here I give you this charge is a strong command, that Timothy needed to obey. As shepherds of God’s flock, we were called not to move away from challenges but to face them head on, that is why Apostle Paul is saying to you and me, I give you this charge as well, it is not something optional, but something we have to obey fully.

But what was the charge that Apostle Paul gave to Timothy? Let us look at our **key verse 2**: “*Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.”* The overarching command or charge here is to preach the word. To preach the word means to deliver the message of Jesus Christ, earlier we learnt that judgement is coming, in order to be saved people need to hear the message of Jesus Christ. Even while living in this world, many people are living restless lives, because of sin, those people are in desperate need of message of Jesus Christ. Because of sin, recently many people are left in confusion and deception of homosexuality that they are created in that way. This people need to hear the word of Jesus. Many young people on campus are tormented by the power of sin and death, to escape it they give themselves to sexual immorality, alcohol, some opt to suicide; to be saved they need to hear the word of God. Another issue that many young people suffer from, especially university students is pride, because of pride many young people remain immature spiritually, they are tormented by the power of sin and death.

To overcome, they need to hear the message of Jesus Christ. And hence Apostle Paul is charging you and me today, to preach the word. Apostle Paul said this with great emphasis, because it the most important command that mankind needs to obey, even when Jesus ascended to the heavens he said to his disciples in **Mark 16:15**: “*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.*” Indeed, there are various ways we can deliver they message of Jesus Christ, it could also be through music, art, through a sermon and many others. In our ministry our founders have left us a very clear direction which was planted by God on how to preach the word, through 1 to 1 bible studies, encouraging students to write testimony and through fishing on campus and Sunday message. I pray that the Lord may help us to hold on to this direction that he has given us so that we can effectively preach the word to campus students.

Furthermore, Apostle Pauls said: “*…be prepared in season and out of season*” What does this mean? Here Apostle implied that Timothy must always be ready to preach the word. Preaching the word is not a seasonal thing, something that we must do only when we are approaching the Easter or Spring Bible conference, but it is something that we must be ready to do anytime. Everyday people are in need to hear the message of Jesus Christ. So, we must be ready to preach the message of Jesus Christ. If we are not ready, we will miss them. So how can we be ready every day? Firstly, we must pray to God to give us spiritual eyes, humble hearts, compassion and desire to share the word of God with those we come across. Secondly, we must study the Bible diligently, so that the message of Jesus may be living in our hearts, so that we may preach Jesus and not our own ideas. Furthermore, to be ready does not mean we need to be very knowledgeable, it does not mean we need to go to Bible School. Yes, it is very much valuable to go to Bible school, but it is not a requirement to be ready to be preach the word. To preach we word all we need is a decision of faith to be used by God; and a simple word of God we can share with the world, our friends, family and campus students.

Furthermore, Apostle Paul said: “…*correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.*” Generally, people do not like to be corrected and rebuked, at the same time it is very difficult for one to correct or rebuke another person. But rebuke and correction are a very necessary from a shepherd, Apostle Paul put great emphasis on this saying “*I give you this charge, to correct and rebuke*” So effective preaching of the word also means we need to rebuke, we need to correct. In order for our sheep to grow and overcome the power of sin, we need to correct them and rebuke them. How can we rebuke and correct? We must not rebuke and correct according to our standards, but rather through the word of God. In **Hebrews 4:12** it says: “*For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”* The word of God is equipped with all correction and rebuke necessary, so we must not try to sugar coat the word of God so that it lands easy to our sheep or those we meet, but we must deliver it as it. For the word of God to work and transform campus students into a kingdom of priests and holy nation, we need to deliver it as it.

When Jesus was with his disciples, he never hesitated to correct and rebuke them, he rebuked Peter when he had the wrong idea and did not accept the gospel message, in **Matthew 16:23** it says: “*Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”* And Peter did not walk away, but he humbly accepted Jesus’ rebuke and repented. Jesus rebuked Peter out of love for him, not to spite him or cause him harm but out love for him, out of desire for him to grow as a strong disciple who will be used mightily in the establishment of the Christian church. So in the same way we too must accept our leaders, correction and rebuke; for it is out of love and desire for us to grow. I remember Sh. Rebekah used to rebuke me a lot, she used to say I want to give you one word and today I am truly grateful for her correction and rebuke.

Furthermore, Apostle Paul says we must encourage with great patience and careful instruction. As Shepherds of God’s flock, though we must correct and rebuke, we also must encourage with great patience and careful instruction. Many people on campus are going through so much, challenges in their studies, childhood trauma, family issues. As we shepherd them, we need to exercise gentleness, through the word of God encourage them. The Bible is filled with so much encouragement, even the key verse of the Bible **John 3:16**: “*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life*.” is filled with so much love, encouragement. It is so encouraging to know, that regardless of my sins, how bad I am, I am loved by God, the creator the heavens and the earth. I am loved not just in words, but with action, the life of the Son of God is given for me. So, as we preach the word, as we raise disciples, let us pray God may grant us the spirit of encouragement, patience and careful instruction through his word.

Let us look at **verse 3-4**: “***3****For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.****4****They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.”* Here Apostle now gives one of the reasons why he has been emphasizing and charging Timothy to preach the word. Apostle Paul described the atmosphere of the time, where people would not put up with sound doctrine. They would become irrational to satisfy their sinful desires. They would gather around them a great number of teachers who would say what their itching ears wanted to hear. People would turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. And this we see today, we see many churches accommodating sexual immorality, homosexuality and many other things, and the Bible is clear about these things. So, we need to preach the word of God, it is a matter of life and death, in **verse 1** we learnt that judgement day is coming. Let us not follow the world. In **verse 5** Apostle Paul says: “***5****But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.”*

**Conclusion**

From today’s passage we have been charged as Shepherds of God’s flock to preach the word, we have been given guidelines and directions on how to do so. We have also learnt that it is not easy, especially because of the world we live in, a world filled with people of pride and justification for living a life of sin, a world filled with busyness. But this is the mission that God has given us, through our Genesis study we have also learnt that for us to have meaning and purpose we need to obey this command, fulfill the mission that God has given us. So, though we are going through hardships as we preach the word, this is how we can experience innermost joy, the joy of being used by God to save our brothers and sisters from the power of sin and death, from judgement at Jesus’ second coming. Apostle Paul, though he was going through hardships, deep down he was filled with joy. He said: “*For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near.****7****I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.****8****Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.* Like Apostle Paul, the crown of righteousness will await us at the appearing of Christ Jesus.