

# **Exegesis Paper on 2 Timothy 4:1-8**

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## **2 Timothy 4:1-8**

4:1 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: 2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 3 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; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. 5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 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.

The Apostle Paul, in this one of his three pastoral epistles (1 Timothy and Titus being the other two), is giving to Timothy, of whom he referred to as his spiritual son, a firm and sober message on what he needed to be aware of or to be reminded of in his calling from God to be a pastor. Yet in these eight verses we find it to be jam-packed full of solid and necessary things that not only a pastor should be aware of and be reminded of, but is also imperative for the body Christ to understand as well. Paul starts off by saying "I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ." The word charge comes from the Greek word *diamarturomai* which are from the two words *dia* and *marturomai*.<sup>1</sup> The word *dia*, which as the prefix means thoroughly, we can see that as the prefix of *diadem*, which is a crown, which incidentally Paul refers to the crown of righteousness as one of our eternal rewards once we have finished this race, so to speak. You can also see the word *diameter* deriving from that word *dia* which can mean encompassing, surrounding, or encircling. The suffix *marturomai*, which essentially means to call as a witness, we can see the word *martyr* which we know of as being one who dies for their faith, for their testimony or witness. The word charge then from Paul is what would be considered a court scene as *diamarturomai* means to solemnly testify as if before God and the Lord Jesus Christ. So if we look at the depth of that first phrase where Paul 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", we could conclude that Paul is saying that as God is watching over us, even encircling us or surrounding us. Imagine God's courtroom encircled above us and watching over us. If that makes one uneasy, think too of what David spoke in Psalm 12:15, "For You, O Lord, will bless the righteous; with favor You will surround him as with a shield", and then also we have been thoroughly given the witness of the Lord Jesus Christ which will be rewarded in the end with a crown of righteousness.

Included in that imagery could be in how God circumcises the heart (this is all symbolic of course of how God calls us, equips us, and surrounds us with His calling and presence), and in that, God gives us His testimony of sending His only begotten Son Jesus, to die on a cross for our sins, and then raising from the dead on the third day, conquering death so that we too can be alive to God in Christ, as we are then reconciled to God through Christ, forgiven of our sins, and the wrath that was due us was put on Christ, and then we too will overcome death and have eternal life in Christ Jesus. Then as Paul says in Romans 6:8, that as we have died to Christ, in becoming that new creation that he spoke of (2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15) and of what Jesus Himself said, that all must be born-again in order to see the kingdom of God, then as is witnessed by God and the Lord Jesus Christ as He has called us,

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<sup>1</sup> W. E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*, pg. 96 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996)

revealed and equipped us with His truth, and then encompasses us (as we are now Christ's) by giving us His Spirit as a deposit as a guarantee for what is to come (2 Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 1:13-14) and He has given us His testimony, that is the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that Timothy (and ourselves) are responsible before the courtroom of God to be His good and faithful witness in word and deed.

The clear indicator of that responsibility to Timothy, as well as ourselves, is that Paul continues by saying that God "will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom." The final verdict though, as Paul concludes, is that to all who has loved His appearing will receive that crown of righteousness. What is implied and not mentioned in these eight verses is that just as with Timothy, so are we called to be ambassadors of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord has given us the ministry of reconciliation, "that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). Therefore, as we carry with us the testimony of Christ, we are before the court room of God to be His ministry of reconciliation as we share the love and the Gospel, that is, the good news of Jesus Christ. We know from the words of Christ Jesus that there is no greater commandment by God than to love God with all of of our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and then also to love our neighbors as ourselves. Jesus further clarified or expounded on that by giving a new commandment saying "as I have loved you, that you also love one another." (John 13:34) That really is the starting point in our ministry as we are called to testify to the reconciling to God in Christ. It is also important to realize that as we are called to love others as Jesus has loved us, that is, "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us". (Romans 5:8) What that should remind us of is that love indeed does cover a multitude of sins, thank You Jesus (1 Peter 4:8)), and that God "is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

That is and should be the starting point, the foundation to which all believers should operate and rest on. When we are day by day striving to endure in our faith we are reminded of the time of great trial spoken of in Revelation to where it is said, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death." (Revelation 12:11) Yet it is by the blood of the Lamb that saves us and the word of our testimony follows. It is not by our own righteousness, or wisdom, or zeal or anything within us, or any works that we do, that we receive the great gift of God which is the forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:8-9) Yet continuing to verse 10 it says that we ARE His workmanship and we are and

were created by God to do good works which is His work in building His eternal kingdom. (Ephesians 2:10) After the initial charge before God and Christ to Timothy, Paul tells Timothy, and us, to be ready in season and out of season. What that specifically means is that we shouldn't just be ready when it's "go time" in ministry. The Apostle Peter says it well saying, "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." The emphasis could be said that we are ALWAYS to be ready to be used by God to be His light and testimony but it could also be said that the emphasis is the sanctifying God in our hearts. After all, Jesus flat out said, "without Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5) If we are always allowing ourselves to be sanctified (that is, being set apart in God's holiness) then we will always be ready (and willing and able). That involves then the constant studying of God's Word, continual prayer, and the conscious focus of humbling ourselves before God in any and all situations. After all, He alone is God Almighty and all things were created for His pleasure and purpose and glory. (Philippians 2:13, Isaiah 43:7, Revelation 4:11) This is all God's plan, not ours and we are not going to accomplish anything beyond what is His plan and purpose. That SHOULD humble us but it is always encouraging to know that we are ultimately just trusting in God and relying upon Him to do the work for which He purposes. Proverbs 3:5-6 reminds us to, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." Similarly we are reminded that Jesus is our Shepherd in Psalm 23 and that He leads us here and there and tells us to do this or to do that.

Getting to the Pastoral calling to Timothy, Paul tells him to preach the Word (in season and out of season) and to "convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching." There are several things we can get from that. For starters, as Paul said in his great Love Chapter (1 Corinthians 13), without love it means a whole lot of nothing. That is why Paul tells Timothy that it should be done with all long suffering. We can be reminded that longsuffering is of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and it is God working in us to will and to do for His good pleasure. (Philippians 2:13) It is a great work and honor and privilege that one has in being used of God to share His love and Word to others. Haddon W. Robinson reflects on that by referring to Jesus, when He told the disciples, "greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father" (John 14:12) and says, "For Christ, perfect God, to work directly on a lost soul to quicken and bring out of death and into life is great, but for Him to do the same thing through us is greater work."<sup>2</sup> David Fisher testifies of how God uses a faulty human to do His great

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2 Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, pg. 56 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014)

work by preaching His Word, "Somehow, mysteriously and under the hand of God, preachers stand each Lord's day and with faltering human speech incarnate the living Word again."<sup>3</sup>

Another important issue is what Timothy Keller explains in Preaching that there needs for us to understand that the calling of God, that is, the gifts that God has given us, is separate from the character and heart of the preacher. "This distinction between "gift operations" and "grace operations" or fruit is a vital one. Gifts will usually be mistaken for spiritual maturity, not just by the audience but even by the speaker."<sup>4</sup> We can then be reminded of Jesus having someone calling Him Lord and saying all the wonderful things they did for Him, yet Jesus replies that He never knew them and refers to them as workers of iniquity or those who practice lawlessness. We all had to begin at a starting point though and all have sinned against God. Therefore, we are to be ever mindful that we are all God's workmanship, and we are to also be aware that spiritual gifts do not equal sanctification. Also we are told that it is the goodness of God that leads one to repentance. (Romans 2:4) That is what essentially leads one to a godly sorrow which brings one to salvation (2 Corinthians 7:10) as opposed to a worldly sorrow which may bring forth tears but still leads to death. Those persons that are looking and listening are possibly God's people and He won't take too kindly to attacking His children with a bunch of poison-tipped words or in the tickling of their ears or in the gaining of one's own glory. Another thing that Paul is saying is that Timothy, as well as us, should be preaching the Word. The Word of God is what is living and powerful (Hebrews 4:12) and will not return void (Isaiah 55:11).

Paul says to convince, rebuke, and exhort. The convincing part is in being faithful to teach with all patience or longsuffering but in also remembering who is doing the convincing, that is the Holy Spirit that does the work through the Word of God. We are just responsible to be faithful witnesses to the Word. Exhortation, coming from the Greek Word *parakaleo* is the root of the Greek word *parakletos*<sup>56</sup> with means advocate or comforter which is the word used for the Holy Spirit in John 14:16 and is judiciary in context similar to how a lawyer is for the defendant in a court setting. The word exhort then means to encourage and to comfort through the Word of God, while being aware that, as it is with convincing, so it is with exhorting, that it is the Holy Spirit that does the real work in the heart of man. Rebuke, from the Greek word *epitimaó* is stronger in tone and is a warning of a need for correction while using the Word of God (but once again, even rebukes can be done in love).

<sup>3</sup> David Fisher, 21st Century Pastor, The pg. 245 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996)

<sup>4</sup> Timothy Keller, Preaching, pg.195-196 (New York: Penguin Books, 2015)

<sup>5</sup> Biblehub.com, 3870. *parakaleó*, <https://biblehub.com/greek/3870.htm>

<sup>6</sup> James Strong, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, Greek Dictionary of the New Testament, pg. 54 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, no date given)

While Timothy has the calling as a pastor, it is the same with us all that we should be faithful in our studying of the Word of God and in prayer and also in encouraging others within the body of Christ to be living godly lives in Christ Jesus and we are to also be teaching the Word with sound doctrine. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that the pastor and leaders of the church are ultimately responsible for church discipline and that the church doesn't need a team of holiness vigilantes in chasing people out of the church. Just as the Apostle Peter, in speaking to the elders in his first epistle said, that no one should be lording over anyone but that we should all be leading by example. (1 Peter 5:3) We are truly all in this together and yes, to some extent we are our brother's keeper (to answer Cain's question).

In 1 Corinthians, Paul addressed numerous issues within the church including false doctrines, divisions within the church, and the practicing of ungodliness. What Paul addresses in the eight verses in 2 Timothy is to be preaching and teaching sound doctrine, which really addresses all three of those issues, and that there will be those who want to hear what tickles their ears, which basically is saying that they just want to hear what makes them feel good to fulfill their own desires. There is always going to be those who want the good news of salvation and eternal life but don't want to live according to the righteousness of God in Christ. There are some though who will only be doing so in ignorance but there will also be those who will never repent. Then there were others that were spreading lies to the damage of the church. William Barclay described the situation by saying, "Men in the days of Timothy were beset by false teachers hawking round sham knowledge. Their deliberate policy was to find arguments whereby a man could justify himself for doing what he wanted to do. Any teacher, to this day, whose teaching tends to make men think less of sin is a menace to Christianity and mankind."<sup>7</sup> Plain and simply put, Jesus said about His calling and ministry, "For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." (Matthew 9:13) Nevertheless, the call of God to Timothy and to others who are called to be pastor are to preach and teach to convince, exhort, and rebuke if necessary, all the while acknowledging that it is the Holy Spirit doing the work of leading others to the truth and to repentance and there will be those who have no intention of repenting, yet that is up to our Judge to determine, not to us. For some though, that means what would equate to a pulling them out of the flames of hell, figuratively speaking, and for some, as Paul said, giving them up to Satan to basically let them get beaten up a bit to hopefully knock some sense in them. It was the responsibility of Timothy

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<sup>7</sup> William Barclay, *Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, The, pg.207 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975)

and the other church leaders to look after the church and make sure that bad doctrine and ungodly living was not taking root in the church and if they won't repent to tell them to leave. Timothy, as well as all of those called into God's kingdom through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is reminded to, "be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." That has been described as the Four Principles for Churchmen that are "essential ingredients for effective Christian service under any circumstances."<sup>8</sup> We may not all have the specific call as a pastor or as an evangelist but we all drink from the same cup of the Lord Jesus as Paul said but then explained, "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons." (1 Corinthians 10:21) There should be a clear distinction between the lives of the children of God in comparison to the ways of the world. Paul continues by saying that our lives are to be to the edifying of the body of Christ. Even without the specific calling of pastor or evangelist, all of the body of Christ is to operate on some level in those functions. We are all preaching and teaching with longsuffering for the edification of God's people. But what Timothy is reminded of is to fulfill his calling in ministry. It has been said, the Lord won't take us home to His glory, until our job is complete- until our ministry has been fulfilled. God knows precisely what He wants to accomplish in us and through us, nothing more and nothing less, just as Paul knew when he had "finished the race."

The charge to Timothy as it is with us is in the question of whether we are willing to go the distance to where we could say as Paul did, that we are "being poured out as a drink offering" or to have a mind of Christ, as Paul put it, to where "He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:8) Will we say as Paul did at the end of our race, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." Those words aren't the ear tickling words that entice the flesh, but they are the Words of Life that leads to a crown of righteousness. That crown that Paul speaks of is "not a crown of ambition; it was not a garland won in struggles for earthly distinction; it was that which the appropriate reward of his efforts to be personally holy, and to spread the principles of holiness as far as possibly through the world."<sup>9</sup> That is, the holiness that is in our Lord and Savior, Christ Jesus, to where we allow Him to work in us His Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption, that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:30-31) To which then, "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."

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<sup>8</sup> Fred D. Gealy, *Interpreter's Bible, The*, pg. 510 (Nashville: Abington Press, 1955)

<sup>9</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the New Testament*, pg. 1182 (Grand Rapids: Kregal Publications, 1966)



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