

It's Time (2 Timothy 4:1-8)

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- [0 : 0 0] 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.
- Preach the word. Be prepared in season and out of season. Correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound and doctrine.
- Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching is.
- They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you keep your head in all situations. Endure hardship.
- Do the work of an evangelist. Discharge all the duties of your ministry. For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near.
- [1 : 0 3] I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. 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. Great job. Thank you for reading that. Thank you. It's lovely, isn't it?
- Yeah. Let's pray again. Lord, open our eyes and hearts to hear from this word that we just heard. In Jesus' name. Amen. Near our house, on the way to and from church at the moment, we have a lovely site.
- We have daffodils in bloom. Yeah. Don't know if you have a daffodil kind of daffodils growing near your house, but we do. And bunches of bright yellow, and they're kind of proclaiming the arrival of spring.
- Often we just drive past these things, don't think too much about them. I want you to imagine, though, that this was the last time you'd ever see daffodils in bloom. Would you drive past it without a thought?
- [2 : 1 3] You might slow down, right? And you might perhaps take a closer look. Maybe you're the one in three who are affected by cancer. Obviously, daffodil day, celebrating and remembering those who struggle with cancer.
- Maybe it's your last time in the neighborhood, right? You're about to leave the country, and so this is the last sight of something yellow and beautiful. You'd stop to give thanks, wouldn't you?
- You'd stop and just take a moment. Or perhaps daffodils aren't your thing. Imagine being an Ed Sheeran concert, but it's his final show. It's his final song, right?
- Or maybe you're watching your favorite sports star, okay? Whether it's basketball or something else, and you're listening to your favorite athlete, and they're giving their final press conference because they're about to hang up their boots or retire.

Or you're standing at the departure hall of the airport. All these situations, what would your final requests be? What things would you say? 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.

[3 : 27] What a solemn start to our passage today, right? From the Apostle Paul. Now here in this passage, no wonder. He is very, very serious. These are his final words, as we know, to young Timothy.

And actually time must be on his mind, because in our passage, he's kind of counting down the hours until his death sentence is carried out. Paul here points out a coming time that's full of selfish, ear-tickling teachings.

He also says, verse 2, in good times and bad times, literally, to preach the word. So time is on his mind. So far, actually, 2 Timothy, next slide, has said, don't be ashamed of Jesus.

If we were going to just summarize the whole book that we've heard so far, don't be ashamed of Jesus is how he starts the book. But rather, join the gospel preaching struggle with me.

But do it strengthened by the grace of Christ, the real risen Christ of the gospels. And do it so that you can be set apart and useful to our master, ready for every good work.

[4 : 38] As we remain in what we've learned from all of God's breathed out words in these last days. That's what 2 Timothy has been all about so far. Just a quick recap. And chronologically speaking, time-wise, 2 Timothy chapter 4 is the last chapter Paul writes in our New Testament.

I know your book order is a little bit, you know, here and there, but these are Paul's final words of Scripture. And in these final words, Paul tells Timothy, and God tells us here today at PCBC, that it's time for two things.

So two points today. Firstly, it's time to proclaim the word. It's time to proclaim the word. I want you to turn to one another with your Bibles open. What commands do you see in verse 2?

So take a brief minute or half a minute. Talk to each other. What commands do you see? What instructions do you see? Shouldn't take too long.

Have a look. Verse 2. What commands do you see?

[5 : 52] Okay. Call them out. Someone say. Preach. Okay. Anything else? Be prepared. Okay. Yep. Okay.

What else? Correct. Yep. That's right. Encourage. Yep. Yep. Lots of these instructions, right? Preach, exhort, rebuke, encourage, whatever your translation says.

Paul didn't say play games. He could have. Didn't. He didn't say strengthen the community. He could have. Final words, though.

He said preach the word. The word is a very interesting phrase. In the New Testament, it almost always means the gospel, right? The word is with you in heart, right? Romans chapter 10, right?

The word is near you. The gospel, the good news about Jesus Christ. This good news is, it should be proclaimed from the pulpit on Sundays, but not only preached here.

[6 : 51] Paul actually says to Timothy, doesn't he, be ready with this glorious message about Jesus for the good times and also the bad times, right? In season and out of season.

That's what it means, right? At weddings and at funerals. When it's convenient and when it's not very convenient for you, preach the word.

Proclaim the message of Jesus. But we don't just preach the word or the gospel and then drop the mic and leave, do we? Because there's other commands there, right?

We keep exhorting, i.e. reminding people, with what we preached. Do rebuke and encourage from this word in different situations, depending on context.

We're always bringing our counsel from the cross, from the gospel, not from our egos, not from other sources of wisdom. It's time to proclaim the word, says Paul.

[7 : 50] But according to Paul, how matters as well, right? What does it say in verse 2? It says at the end, with great patience and careful instruction. Patience and teaching, right?

Both and. Not either or. Think about the situation. Remember Paul? He's an old man now when he writes this. He first met Timothy around 50 A.D.

when he was a bit younger. You can read that in Acts chapter 16. And here he writes these words 15 years later from that first meeting with Timothy. That's the kind of patience and prayerful teaching to pray for, to pursue in our relationships with brothers and sisters here.

The only way what we teach, right, about the gospel and model is going to run deep and not just fade away, is through patiently proclaiming the gospel and living it out year after year after year.

But why the focus on the word here? I mean, what about all the other things in church life? You know, good admin skills or a caring personality. The ability to relate with the youth or with older people.

[9 : 01] Aren't those important? The ability to speak in different languages, especially important in this church. These are, of course, helpful skills to have. And the Lord gifts us in some of these areas, don't they?

Doesn't he? And yet there's no doubt, though, in Paul's mind, which ability, which skill, which gift is the most important, right? What should always rank as number one?

Preach the word. Because as we heard last week, God's word here is a strong tower against the currents of life.

And so the ability to explain God's word is what we must prioritize. This is our God-breathed weapon, right? The sword of the Spirit as we wage war against the godless, hopeless lies that our enemy shoots at us in this world we live in.

And verse 3 to 4, it could have been written yesterday, right? Because we live in a time of unprecedented access to teaching. You only have to look and glance at the latest highlights on YouTube or the recommendations on Spotify or your favorite social media, and you see proof that our culture just chases after so many different sources of wisdom.

[10 : 23] And yet there we are. We, too, are tempted to drink from those fountains of daily wisdom. There's a channel for anything our itching ears wants to hear, isn't there?

But how good is it? How healthy is it for our souls? Will it point us to true life in Jesus or lead us astray from Him? That's what verse 3 and 4 are warning us of.

It's a challenge, isn't it? When the cults or controlling personalities come, when the drinking and partying crowd and that skit beckons, when you've had a stressful day at school, where will you turn to with your eyes for true wisdom?

Where will you go? And a challenge as well to us, a related one, is that we want to ask ourselves, and what do you rely to face these situations?

And the Bible tells us we need to rely on God's Word, God's living and active Word, in every situation, for every season. Look, it's one thing to proclaim, exhort, rebuke, encourage with God's Word here on Sunday afternoons, but this is just basic training so that you and I will actually go use God's Word and live it out in our lives, in our workplaces, at school, beyond these church walls.

[11 : 47] And time spent does not lie. Paul has been thinking about time a lot in these passages. Time spent does not lie, right? What we make time for in our small groups, in our dating relationships, in our schedules, our prayers, in our leisure, our wallets, time spent does not lie.

Shows us, shows others what you and I truly care about. How many times have you preached to yourself this past week, in Christ, I'm a child of God.

Yes, I am. How many times have you reached out to someone this week to ask, what does the Bible say about this problem? Or what would an older or wiser Christian do in this situation?

How many times recently have you asked for prayer for someone, please pray, because dot, dot, dot. These are all times to proclaim the word. These are all times to proclaim the word.

It's time to proclaim the word, but Paul also says it's time to fight the good fight. Have a look again at verse 5 to 8. And let me read it again.

[13 : 00] But you, Paul says to Timothy, but you keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

Again, we see several commands, right, if we were to stop and pause, you would see them too. Keep calm. Endure suffering. Do the work of an evangelist. Carry out your ministry.

And actually, in verse 6, in my translation, there's a new paragraph, and perhaps in yours too. But I hope you can see that actually verse 6 links all the way back to verse 4 at least. Right?

It goes, they, you, I. Do you see that? Verse 4, they will act unfaithfully, the itchy ears, people. Verse 5, but you, Timothy, must endure, because verse 6, for I have set you an example.

They've gone bad. You keep going. I'm going soon, Paul says here. He's already being poured out like a drink offering. Anyone at a drink offering recently?

[14 : 11] No? Okay. What is a drink offering, right? We're a bit confused here, perhaps. Here is how Paul views himself, in a sense. He's like an offering of wine or oil poured out on an altar.

He's thinking, of course, using Jewish worship language. Right? Imagine a temple or a tabernacle in Jerusalem. Just as a drink offering might go alongside an animal sacrifice, Paul's kind of saying, I'm like that too.

Right? Jesus, of course, the Lamb of God. He's the ultimate sacrifice. But I'm being poured out like a drink offering alongside. And so it's time for him to say goodbye.

The word here, departure, the time for my departure, could more literally be translated to be freed up. Do you have that perspective on life? Right?

Remember, this is Paul. He's on death row. He's convinced that he's shown Timothy and the others what it's like to serve faithfully. And now he's about to be freed up.

[15 : 09] His ship is about to cast off. He's about to set sail to paradise to be with Jesus. And now he summarizes his life in three ways. Can you see them? Right?

Verse 7, I've fought the good fight. I've finished the race. I've kept the faith. How wonderful would it be if these words matched your life and my life?

We see two images here, of course, of physical struggle. Right? Painful toil in Christian ministry. Fighting the good fight or struggling the good struggle.

Finishing the race as if he was running a marathon in the Christian life. And Paul did not give up. He didn't take a back seat after 5, 10, even 15 years. What kept him going?

Remember the equation we learned in chapter 2. Right? What's the equation for the Christian life? It's suffering first, glory to come. Do you remember that? Just like that's what happened with Jesus, right?

[16 : 13] The cross-shaped pattern for the Christian life is suffering first, glory later. And that's Paul's life here, isn't it? He knows that he's following after the Savior.

Paul has already reminded Timothy of this suffering first, glory later approach. Right? He's even talked about his past sufferings. We heard that last week from Pastor Albert. All the things he endured in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra.

And yet, he says, the word sustained him then. And here, he knows what will sustain him to the end. Right? Verse 8. This glorious vision of the Lord.

That's what will carry him through to his last, final breath. Verse 8 is a wonderful vision of the Lord. He loves. He looks forward, right?

And store for him a crown of righteousness. Just as a winning athlete longs to stand on the podium and receive his medal, Paul here looks forward to the day when King Jesus, the King of Kings we sang about, is going to present the crown of righteousness.

[17 : 15] Paul may have been sentenced to death by the Emperor Nero, but the Lord Jesus is about to declare him righteous forever. The contrast couldn't be clearer.

The court of human opinion has said to Paul, shame, you're about to die. The court of heaven is about to proclaim, well done, good and faithful servant.

And the promise here that Jesus gives a crown of righteousness is not just to Paul, right? What does verse 8 say? Have a look, yourselves. Not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Isn't that wonderful? The word here in the original language literally translates to all who have loved his appearing. And I think love is a deliberate word choice here from Paul.

Just as the godless in these last days, chapter 3, they were lovers of themselves and of money and of pleasure and so on. Just as Paul's friend, we're going to hear about him next week, Demas, he abandoned Paul because he loved this world.

[18 : 22] Love is what truly motivates us to keep going in the Christian life. Right? Who do you love? What do you love? Our SMBC friends earlier in the year talked about how you could sum up the Christian life as love and light of eternity.

and those who have loved the appearing of the Lord Jesus, they're the ones, we're the ones who will truly enter into eternal life on that last day.

What do you love in this life? A Christian is someone whose hearts are consumed with longing for the Lord Jesus to come back. A longing for Christ to come to bring true joy and peace, justice and goodness to our broken world.

Our news feeds are full of stories of war and suffering right now, of death. It's so present. Our schools are war and battlegrounds, right?

Places where our youngest children are being taught about different gods, encouraged to choose their own adventure and gender and all kinds of ideologies. Our world is a place where more kids worship rather than the Lamb of God.

[19 : 36] Can you believe it? Can I ask you this? Do you love the return of the King? The King of Kings? Who captures your heart?

Who are your first messages to in the morning? Who lives rent-free in your head? Let it be Jesus. Only Jesus knows what it's like to be despised and rejected by people and yet be truly blessed.

Only Jesus knows what it's like to even be a refugee, right? Running away with his family and then one day die for the sins of refugees of the outcasts of the lost. Only Jesus knows what it's like to live and die an unmarried man and yet trust his Father through the shame of the cross, the glories of the resurrection.

Only Jesus knows your work stress, your depression, your family issues, your unspoken past, your uncertain future.

Do you love the return of King Jesus? Then, it's time to fight the good fight. It's time to run the race of faith, spurred on by Paul, by Timothy, many, many, many others who have followed him faithfully to the end.

[20 : 54] We want to be inspired, don't we, to follow the Lord Jesus? Let me share with you, there are many, many examples, of course. Let me share with you three today. This is David Brainerd. Can you guess how old he was when he died?

29. David was 21 when he was converted, when he became a Christian. He then went on to Bible college only to be kicked out because he was too holy and too hardcore.

And so, he couldn't become a pastor, he became a missionary instead to bring the gospel to indigenous Indian Americans. He died at 29 of illness. And his example of faithfully proclaiming Jesus until the end, he wrote down all his thoughts in a diary, in his journal.

It has inspired countless other missionaries since then. Or, think of Susanna Wesley, someone who was an inspiration as a mother to many, many people.

She was 19 years old when she married a pastor who earned 30 pounds a year back in those days. I don't know how much that is today, but it wasn't much. But actually, when she grew up, she just put herself to studying.

[22 : 06] She learned Greek, Latin, French, logic, physics from childhood. And as a mom, she guided her kids through daily Bible reading, through prayer, and through far more every day.

For six hours a day, 20 years, looked after her kids, fed them, clothed them, and then would become their mentors as they were adults. Two of their sons, John and Charles Wesley, started a huge part of the Christian church.

And look, she never got to preach in a pulpit, and yet God preached powerfully through her life and testimony about the goodness and kindness of Jesus. Or, my favorite one, this is Mr. Beecroft, actually.

Some of you may have met him, if you go to the same schools I used to, one of my health teachers. Actually, he shared his story in the local paper this past week. He spoke of how a car accident, six weeks in a coma, changed his life.

Instead of being able to go overseas to teach at a Christian school, he became a science teacher just up the road for the next 40 years. But there, there, he lived out his Christian faith. Well, he faithfully taught physics, of course.

[23 : 17] He was a great teacher, still is, and he would coach volleyball, other sports. He would mentor high schoolers out of his Christian faith, serving the Lord in the profession that the Lord chose for him.

No matter what your job title or byline says, please remember, every Christian is a dying person called to proclaim God's word to other dying people.

You and I may look like daffodils in bloom right now. Our time will come, though. There's going to be a day when all of us meet the righteous judge. Until then, we're called to keep the faith, finish the race, fight the good fight, not the pointless ones, so many pointless fights, not the petty ones, not the selfish fights.

Leave those behind. Leave those behind. Fight the good fight of sharing this news about Jesus. How will you use your time? I think none of us should assume, oh, we've got five more years of time.

Oh, think about that part of my life when I'm older. You may not even have five months left. I can't guarantee that for you. As long as you and I have breath, can I encourage you to proclaim the word?

[24 : 33] If you don't know the word, then maybe you need to turn to Jesus. Ask him to forgive your sins, your ignorance of him, who he is, and what he's done for you. And then proclaim the word about him.

Dig deep into the treasures of the Lord Jesus. Rebuke it. Exhort it. Encourage with it. Let's get practical, right? How are we going to focus and fix our hearts on proclaiming the word?

Maybe it means cutting out all the time wasters in our lives or the addictive behaviors on our smartphones and screens. Why? So that we can fan the flame of the Holy Spirit.

Martin Luther once said, I have only two days left on my calendar. Today and that day. Is that how you live? If today was your only day left, would you really spend it in that act?

Would that really help you love his appearing more and more? If we know that time is limited, it may mean stepping in to help resolve a conflict, maybe in your family, in your friend group.

[25 : 38] It might mean encouraging, exhorting someone towards the peace of Jesus Christ. Amidst all our broken relationships, we often assume, oh yeah, I've got more time. I've got more time.

Maybe we don't. As Melissa Chen once put it, I paraphrase her here, you may not be at the end of your life, but you may very well be at the end of your time with someone important in your life.

You see the thinking there? You may not be at the end of your life, but maybe you're at the end of your time with someone. Who are the last daffodils in your life? How can you proclaim the word to them?

How can you exhort them, encourage them, rebuke them with the gospel in this time, in this moment? If our lives are meant to be lived in light of eternity, then you and I must remember the time.

We must number our days and use them for his glory. How precious that our Lord Jesus, the King, he's returning for those who love him. Until then, it's time to proclaim the word and it's time to fight the good fight.

[26 : 46] Let's pray. Lord, there's a time for everything your word says.

And so even in this time, in this moment, help us to slow down, to search within us, Lord. See if there's any sinful ways, any ignorant ways where we have strayed from you.

Lord, would you search our hearts and challenge us about what we truly love, who we truly turn to for help.

Let it be Jesus. let us preach the good news about him. In our lives, when we speak to people, when we need help, when we're trying to resolve a problem.

And Lord Jesus, would you be glorified? Would the Holy Spirit magnify you in our hearts and lives? would you help us to know the affections of our Heavenly Father through everything you have done for us, through a greater assurance that in Christ we are your children.

[28 : 11] Father, we thank you and we pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.