

THE FORWARD LOOK
2 Timothy 3:1-4:8

Intro: This morning we took some of the final words of Moses for a backward look. This afternoon I want to take some of the final words of Paul for a forward look. For Paul, the work on earth was over; for Timothy, it was going on. But it is very obvious from what Paul wrote that he was vitally concerned about the future.

Grace Bible Church has had a long history -- perhaps a longer history than it does a future IF we are as close to the coming of the Lord as it seems. How long would you think that you have to serve the Lord together as a people? If you knew that you only had 5 years, what would you do?

Paul gives us some wonderful words of wisdom and guidance. Let me point out some of the outstanding words of spiritual counsel from our text.

I. CONTINUE -- DO NOT CHANGE (2 Tim. 3:14a).

This assumes, of course, that you have been doing what Paul had been doing.

Where did this idea come from that the church has to be changing all of the time?

The church needs to improve, but the church is never to change in its ministry and in its objectives. Those are the same in every age. We need to grow, but that is not changing into something else -- that is only strengthening what we have been weak in before.

Paul mentions three things that must not change if we are to see His blessing in the days ahead:

A. We must continue with our emphasis on a godly life (v. 12).

The world will pressure us to conform. Rom. 12:2 makes that clear. With sin becoming more and more open, it will take extra supplies of the grace of God to keep us walking in the light. There will be those within the church who will tell us that we have to be like the world if we are going to win the world -- and they do it with all the evidence to the contrary in the Word of God.

We are even going to be called narrow and self-righteous if we do not open our doors to any regardless of their relationship to Jesus Christ. We will be called bigoted

if we do not close our eyes to sins that are clearly labelled as sins in the Bible -- but regardless of what happens, we must be more intent on pleasing God than we are in pleasing men.

This is clearly the path laid out in the Word of God to future blessing.

- B. We must continue with our emphasis on the Word of God (vv. 14-16).

There can be no compromise on the inspiration of the Scriptures.

There can be no compromise on the adequacy of the Scriptures. See v. 16. Do we really believe 2 Pet. 1:3?

There can be no compromise on the doctrines of the Word of God.

There can be no compromise on the practical teaching of Scripture.

And as to the Word of God let me single out one thing which Paul emphasizes in our text:

- C. We must continue with our emphasis on salvation (v. 15).

Do you really believe that people need to be saved?

Do you believe that salvation is a divine work -- not a human work -- and not a combination of the two -- but all of God?

Do you believe that there is only one Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ -- and that there is absolutely no possibility of anybody getting to heaven except through Him?

It is getting harder and harder to hear the Gospel. Many are preaching a gospel of a happier life, or of solving problems, or of better relationships, but the voices that declare that man is a sinner and under the judgment of God are harder and harder to find. May this message never be silenced or even toned down in the pulpit of Grace Bible Church!

Let me say something else about our message from these words of the Apostle Paul:

- II. WE ARE CHARGED -- WE DO NOT CHOOSE (2 Tim. 4:1).

Timothy had no right to preach and teach anything that he

wanted to. He is in this passage being charged under oath to do nothing but "preach the Word." He had no choice. This is his commission. To do otherwise would have been the most serious kind of disobedience and would have brought on the judgment of the Father and the Son!

Note Paul's words in 1 Cor. 4:1, 2,

"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

Let us look at the details of the charge:

- 1) It is given in the very presence of "God, and the Lord Jesus Christ."
- 2) "At his appearing and his kingdom" the servants of the Lord will be judged regarding their faithfulness or unfaithfulness to their charge.
- 3) In carrying out this charge, the following things must be done:
 - a) It must be preached, i.e., proclaimed openly, verbally, audibly. Cf. this with the tendency to relegate preaching to an unimportant place, or to do away with it altogether!
 - b) The servant of the Lord must be ready, be on hand, at all times -- when the opportunity is there, and when there does not seem to be an opportunity. Perhaps this could be illustrated by John 3 and 4.
 - c) "Reprove" is a negative aspect following the preaching -- to expose error, to refute, to use the Word in such a way as to bring about conviction with respect to the truth.
 - d) "Rebuke" means to censure, to charge with wrongdoing, to press upon people the seriousness of their offences against the Word, to seek to restrain.
 - e) "Exhort" is to plead with people to change, to do differently, to turn to the Lord. And this is to be done with patience and persistence even when it means trial and difficulty for the servant of the Lord -- the basis of our appeal being "doctrine" (which points here to the act of teaching).

There is no way that we can say in the church today that we do not know what our job is!

However true this may have been of your ministry in the past, make sure that it is increasingly descriptive of your ministry in the days to come.

But there is one other word before I close:

III. WE ARE TO TEACH -- NOT TO TICKLE (NASB) (2 Tim. 4:3-5).

We need to recognize two facts:

- 1) In our churches we are charged to preach the Word of God -- nothing more, nothing less, nothing else!
- 2) The world does not want to hear the Word. The natural man, the unregenerate man, has an aversion to the Word of God.

THEREFORE, THE CHURCH THAT BELIEVES IT MUST GIVE MEN WHAT THEY WANT WILL EVENTUALLY MOVE AWAY FROM THE PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD! It is only a matter of time.

People want their ears tickled; they do not want you to disturb their consciences. They want you to tell them how much they are worth, not what great sinners they are. And unfortunately, those who preach the Word these days are under fire because that is what they do!

Paul's comments to Timothy make it clear that the closer we get to the coming of the Lord, the greater will be the opposition from all quarters against the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. They will accept something that is not true more readily than they will accept what is "the truth." This is what Paul is saying in vv. 3 and 4 of chapter 4.

What are we to do?

See v. 5:

- 1) "Watch thou in all things" -- which really means to be calm, be collected, do not panic, be sober, but do not go to sleep. It is easy to lose one's bearings and to be swept along with the crowd when things are like Paul describes them to be.
- 2) "Endure afflictions" -- used also in 3:2, 9. It means that this is a battle, and that there is going to be opposition to the preaching of the Word which might even become physical!
- 3) "Do the work of an evangelist" -- cf. Acts 21:8; Eph. 4:11. Notice that Timothy was not an Apostle; he was "an evangelist" -- which probably meant that he was to carry the Gospel to those who had not heard, and yet his fidelity to the Word of God was to be the same as any other servant of the Lord!
- 4) "Make full proof of thy ministry" -- which means to carry out in every detail the ministry which has been committed to him, to which he has been called. And the word for ministry here, diakonia, is one which speaks of carrying out the commands of another -- not of deciding for yourself what you are going to do!

Concl. and Appl: From where you are today after 104 years of ministry, the question is: Where do we go from here?

I trust that the answer in your heart is: We are going to continue on doing just what we have been doing -- preaching and teaching the Word of God for the glory of God!

The only change we look for is that we may do the job better because the Lord is making us better.

But this is a time for heart-searching. Grace Bible Church is people -- not a building, nor even an organization. It is people. The work will never be any different than the people who make it up. Your convictions individually will determine the character of the work. If you individually love the Word and love the Saviour, then the work is going to be like that! If not, then it will be something else -- something besides what the Lord desires it to be.

You really have no choice if you are to do the will of God. And you will never see the blessing of God in the days to come unless the Word and the Lord are made the very heart of this work.

Take this passage which we have considered together and read it over again as soon as you can. Read it over many times. Memorize it. Pray over it. Ask God to write it upon your heart. And then stand behind your Pastor, praying for him and supporting him so that the blessing of God may be manifested here in the coming days more than it ever has in the days that are past!