

Sunday 9AM & 11:15AM Notes

1/26/2019 – Jeff Lyle

“Breathing the Bible” 2 Timothy 4:1-7 | 9AM

We only experience intimacy with the God of the bible to the degree that we pursue the God of the bible. We will only pursue Him as He desires to be pursued if we know Him as He desires to be known. And there is no way to accurately know the God of the bible independently of what He reveals of Himself in the written Word. Apart from the ongoing renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2), it is actually possible for us to worship and serve a version of God that we or someone else made up. Many people have beautifully warm feelings toward a self-created God who doesn't actually exist. Something other than the written Word has shaped their understanding of God, therefore the one they worship is not the same as the true God of the bible. Apart from the revelation of Scripture, we cannot authentically know Him. This message magnifies the intense and non-negotiable call from Heaven for Christians to hold to the truth of the written Word of God. We crave deeper encounter and experience with God, therefore we crave the revelation of who God actually is through the Word. The written Word keeps us anchored in the truth of who God is, what He has promised, all that He requires of us and the power of His constant invitation for us to experience Him in spirit and in truth.

I. The Charge To Our Generation (1-2)

A. We have an intense calling (1) - “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom.”

The Apostle Paul is about to charge his young protégé, Timothy, with an intense assignment to be bold in leading with Kingdom truth. Before Paul releases the particulars of this charge, he invokes the name and nature of God the Father and God the Son as the context for what is about to come. This signals to us who are reading his words that what is to follow is extremely serious. Paul gives lots of counsel and commands in his biblical writings. Rarely does he invoke the name of God before releasing instruction. We should sit up and pay close attention to all that he is about to communicate.

B. We fulfill a specific assignment (2a) - “Preach the word; be ready in season, out of season...”

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After invoking the name and nature of God, Paul's first command to young Pastor Timothy is to preach God's Word to those who follow Timothy. Paul is referencing here the Hebrew scriptures, the teaching of Jesus and any of the other writings at that time that were already regarded as God's truth. He tells Timothy to always be prepared to release authoritative truth to those whom he leads. Preach the Word when it is convenient, Timothy! Preach the Word when it is inconvenient, Timothy. The clear emphasis is that God expects those who lead in the Kingdom to do so with an uncompromised emphasis on His written Word.

C. We recognize an ongoing expectation (2b) - "...reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching {doctrine}."

Notice also that Timothy was not simply to teach what the Word says. Attached to the command to preach the Word is also the command to proactively apply the Word to the lives of those who are listening. Timothy is told to reprove them - this word indicates that he was to be forceful enough with them that they are brought to necessary conviction. He is literally to expose their sins to them. Then Paul tells Timothy to rebuke them. This particular word indicates that Timothy was to warn them forcefully of dangers to their souls. To balance this out, Paul calls Timothy to exhort them patiently as he teaches them precisely the truths of the Word. This call from Paul to Timothy is also God's call to Christians, especially those who shepherd the Church. We have fallen a long way from this type of faithful execution of our assignments. Pastors and leaders have exchanged rebukes and convicting sermons for pats on the head and faucets of constant reassurance that God is happy with everything all the time. Warnings of judgment are nearly nonexistent in the Church in modern times. While there needs to be an equal commitment to patience and precise teaching that contains explanations of what the Bible says, we are not allowed to avoid the call to conflict and open challenges. If we are not challenging and correcting one another along the way, we are unfaithful to the truth of the Word. Expect your church leaders to challenge you. Expect them to be faithful to rebuke you from time to time. Consider also that this calling is not for pastors and leaders only. We are to hold each other accountable to the written Word of God.

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II. The Changes In Our Generation (3-4)

A. Look for a deadly drift from biblical truth (3a) - “For the time is coming when they will not endure sound teaching...”

Paul’s words prophesied a coming reality. There is absolutely no doubt that his prophesy has been in the process of being progressively fulfilled for centuries. In our day, this prophetic word is fully actualized, and it defines the entire context of modern thinking. Sound teaching that is in accord with the written Word of God has become very rare. Even in Christianized religious circles, the absence of emphasis on biblical truth is undeniable. Paul’s words to timothy indicate that people will not be able to endure healthy, biblically sound doctrine. The Greek word translated endure signifies that people will not bear with healthy doctrine. They will not put up with it. They will not accept it and, eventually, they will not allow it. These are the marks of our current generation as the bible is opposed, rejected and refused openly by our culture. More stunning is that the visible representation of the Church is also rejecting the teaching of the Scriptures concerning multitudes of subjects. Chief among those topics are the biblical standards for morality. Even professing Christians refuse to believe what the bible says about how we are to live in faith and holiness toward God. Paul’s 2,000-year-old prophecy is our present reality.

B. Note the convenient alternatives (3c) - “...but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions.”

When people refuse truth, they inevitably will seek out alternative sources who will tell them exactly what they wish to hear. Their itch needs scratching, so they find people in authority who will passionately tell them exactly what their compromised hearts crave. When individual passions become more important than eternal truth, self-determined people will create for themselves an arena where they can convince themselves that they are justified in their beliefs and behaviors. They point to their chosen leader or teacher and say, “If he says it’s true, if she says it’s true, then it must be true. See, my leader agrees with me therefore I can be totally convinced that what I have believed is the truth.” This kind of attitude is nothing new. Read below what God said of ancient Israel when they were in a long season of rejecting Him and His words:

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“They refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear. They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore, great anger came from the LORD of hosts. As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear,” says the LORD of hosts.” - Zechariah 7:11-13

C. Beware of the terrible consequences (4) - “And will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.”

This second prophecy has also definitely come to pass in our generation. God’s truth is commonly and widely rejected, therefore, we must stress our commitment to God’s Word all the more vigorously. We must remain unapologetically counterculture in this stand. When we abandon our bibles, we toss away our stabilizing anchor. We throw our compass overboard. We burn our rudder and allow the unpredictable winds of culture and human thinking to fill our sails and determine our course. Inevitably, we end up shipwrecked and sunken. Without the Word of God, we cannot reach our destination.

III. The Need In Our Generation (5-8)

A. Understand there is a cost to pay (5a) - “As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering ...”

Now Paul tells Timothy to get prepared for the battle that comes when we refuse to compromise the Word of God. He lets Timothy know that he must live with a spiritual sobriety - an alertness that reminds him daily that there is a war taking place. Paul also tells his young friend to prepare to suffer in his stand for truth. When we present eternal truth to individuals and cultures that prefer fabricated lies, empty philosophies and man-made religion, there will be much conflict. Satan hates God and therefore hates God’s revelation through the Word. The culture hates God’s word because it opposes the self-serving ways of fallen society. When we proclaim God’s truth, we, by necessity, make war against the lies of the culture. People love those lies so they will aggressively fight back to protect their turf. Paul had already told Timothy that all who live godly in Jesus will suffer persecution (**2 Timothy 3:12**). If we hold to the truth of God’s word, the world will reject us on some level. We will experience persecution. The call of God on the

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Church in this hour is to remain willing and committed to enduring the hardness as good soldiers of Christ. If we crave fitting in, human approval, unholy pleasures and a freedom to self-govern, then we will reject God's Word. If we hold to God's Word, we will have to reject all lies of this present age.

B. Ensure God's Word is never hidden within the church (5b) - "...do the work of an evangelist..."

Paul added to Timothy's assignment the clear call to advance God's Word outside of the context of the Church. We are not allowed to hide in the midst of our spiritual family. We must not only proclaim the Word to one another as believers, we must advance the good news of Jesus Christ straight into the heart of an evil world. Paul tells Timothy to remember to seek to win the unsaved with the Gospel. There has never been a greater arsenal of different ways to share the truth of Scripture! We speak the Word with our own mouths among friends, schoolmates, family and coworkers. We share in specified teaching forums if God has opened up that door. We advance the Word on social media and the internet. We cannot keep the seed in the barn. God calls us to advance the Gospel outside of the Church and into the culture so that unbelievers can hear the Word and believe.

C. Individuals taking ownership of their part (5c) - "...fulfill {bring in full measure} your ministry."

Each Christian has a call to hold to the Word of God and communicate it. We are all granted our own ministry avenues by which we move in truth and proclaim it. No Christian has the right to remain silent. Paul called Timothy to bring his own assigned ministry to full measure by faithfully executing the duties given to him. We all have that call on our lives. If we ever turn loose of our commitment to the written Word of God, then there are a thousand inferior sources which will determine our life-s messaging and the trajectory upon which we will live. It is a spiritual impossibility to withstand the deception in the culture if we are not anchored in the truth of the Word of God. People vastly underestimate the power of satanic, demonic and cultural deception. If the Word is not in us, then there are already lies at work in our hearts, minds and spirits pulling us away from Kingdom truth. Part of fulfilling our assignments from God, no matter what that assignment is, requires that we proactively remain grounded in

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Scripture and live according to what Scripture says. This is how we bring our individual and collective purposes to full measure.

D. Prioritize this principle for the next generation (6-7) - “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept {to watch over, to guard} the faith.”

Paul knew that he was soon to be executed due to his faithfulness to the very things he was writing to Timothy. This letter was the last one Paul ever wrote before he was beheaded by the Roman government. Paul lived what he preached. He endured the suffering. He fought the war. He poured out his life as an offering for the sake of the truth of his King. Paul ran his entire race without ever letting go of his commitment to the truths of the Kingdom. He closes out his words to Timothy by declaring that he kept guard over the truth of the faith. Why was this important? Because Paul had to make sure he passed those truths to Timothy without adding anything or removing anything. Paul was willing to die for the truth. He called Timothy to be willing to do the same. Now, as we read these ancient words, the Lord Jesus calls us to live with that same commitment in our own generation.

The Strength of God’s Word

“Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.” - Psalm 119:89

“But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail.” - Luke 16:17 “The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.” - Isaiah 40:8

The Benefits of God’s Word

“The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.” - Psalm 119:130

“This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.” - Joshua 1:8

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The Uniqueness of God's Word

“For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.” - 1 Thessalonians 2:13

The Preciousness of God's Word

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” - Matthew 5:17-19

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"Keeping the Bite in the Bark" Isaiah 56:9-12 | 11:15 AM

There is a longstanding strand of Kingdom DNA that has come fully unraveled in the modern Church. God's people have always been called to maintain a distinction from the corrupt cultures in which they live. As citizens of an entirely different Kingdom, we are to reflect the priorities, beliefs and pursuits of the Heavenly realm. To keep us in generational awareness of this call to live consecrated to God, there have always been voices which He has raised to communicate this essential calling. When those voices fade or fail, that generation will inevitably lose its way. In ancient Israel, God brought a strong indictment against those whom He had appointed to be the watching eyes and warning voices of a generation. When spiritual watchmen sleep and Kingdom watchdogs refuse to bark, evil creeps in. God is not content to allow this to happen without sounding a wakeup alarm. Our generation, soaked in political correctness, needs to heed this ancient message from God to Israel. If the Church presses the mute button on herself, refusing to speak the hard messages, evil will continue to creep in and take many captive. We are called to keep the bite in our bark.

I. God Ordains an Unstable Season (9)

“All you beasts of the field, come to devour - all you beasts in the forest.”

God summons enemies - both hidden and visible - to come against unprotected, apostate Israel

These words are given through the prophet Isaiah, but their source is the very heart of God. Using the symbolism of a territory that belongs to Himself, God is about to highlight the sinful negligence of the leaders in Israel. It is the voice of God that summons trouble to find His backslidden people. The images of the beasts of the field and the forest represent the foes of Israel. God is calling for a season of deep instability and trouble to come upon Israel. Lest we think God is being too harsh, we must remember that He had been calling Israel to return to Him for a long time. His people had become much more like the pagan people groups around them, having long abandoned a holy, separated consecration to the God of Abraham. When they hardened their hearts, God chose the method that He often chooses to break the will of His stubborn children. He called for trouble to come into the once-protected territory that belonged to His people. God would be calling Babylon to invade and devour the land of

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Israel. When we move far from God, we should expect that His protection will be removed if we choose to ignore His calls to return. Israel had crossed that line and now all that was precious to them would be devoured by the enemy.

II. God Indicts Unfaithful Leaders (10) **SEE ALSO EZEKIEL 34:1-10**

A. Vision was lost (10a) - “His watchmen are blind; they are all without knowledge;”

Much of the focus in these painful verses falls squarely at the feet of the spiritual and civic leaders of Israel. God had raised them up for the purposes of leading, instructing and protecting His people. They had been entrusted with much in their assignments. To whom much is graciously given, much is accountably required. The watchman should have kept a holy eye on the pulse of what was happening in Israel. The sins, the vices, the corruption and injustices were left unchecked, therefore they grew. These watchmen had failed to see the trouble coming their way from God, and they had no wisdom to discern what was happening all around them. Those appointed to see had gone blind. They did not see the sin. They failed to recognize the disciplining hand of God. Now, when it was too late, they were blind to the trouble that was coming to them.

B. Protective warnings were silenced (10b) - “...they are all silent dogs; they cannot bark...”

The symbolism representing these failing leaders now moves from watchmen on the wall to watchdogs in the fields. Sheepdogs were to stay vigilant, especially when darkness fell. When wolves, bears or lions sought to creep toward the flocks, these dogs were meant to bark out a loud signal that awoke the shepherds and alerted the sheep. Additionally, the watchdogs' barking would alert all predators that they were now in danger of being dealt with by the shepherds. For Israel, there was no alert, no alarm and no barking. Those leaders who were appointed to warn had become mute. Feel the weight of the indictment from heaven against Israel! The ones appointed to care for the health and safety of the flocks were blind and mute. The sheep were in big trouble because the predators were being sent from God to enter the land. This is a clear picture of the consequences that arrive when the people of God become willfully ignorant, silently negligent and blind to the truth that God is offering.

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C. Constant protection was neglected (10c) - "...dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber."

These same leaders are brought up on a third charge. When those who were appointed to remain vigilant to lead and protect the flock of God, they are found instead to now be in a deep sleep. Why not? They had nothing to do if they were no longer watching, leading or protecting the ones assigned to their care. Indifference had led to indulgence. Passivity in duty became abandonment of duty. They chose the false realm of dreamland as more appealing than the world of calling, responsibility and holy assignment. Sleep appeals much more to the flesh than vigilance. These fleshly leaders saw no danger so those long hours of watching and waiting held nothing for them anymore. They lay themselves down in comfort and sleep. The darkness of night all around them had now moved inside of them and they fell into a love for slumber.

III. God Exposes Unbelievable Negligence (11)

A. A consuming spirit instead of a serving spirit (11a) - "The dogs have a mighty appetite; they never have enough."

Going even deeper, God moves beyond the unfaithful leaders' outward actions and exposes their inward actions. They had passions for sure, yet their passions were to feed self at the expense of the flock. Rather than hungering and thirsting after righteousness, they had cultivated appetites for things which led to destruction. Whether it was power, money, food or alcohol (see below), these disqualified leaders used their positions to feed their never-ending appetites. Instead of being motivated by serving faithfully and sacrificing selflessly, they cultivated a consuming spirit which led to them being driven by base instinct and unholy appetites.

B. Clueless leaders instead of enlightened leaders (11b) - "But they are shepherds who have no understanding;"

Nothing could be more troubling to a flock than to be entrusted to a shepherd who lacks the wisdom to know what he is doing. The stakes are high for the sheep. They must be led to green pastures and clean sources of water. They need to be watched over lest they get lost and remain that way. The predators are numerous and only a wise, discerning shepherd can protect them over the long-term. Israel was clearly in trouble because God declares for the second time in these verses that Israel's leaders

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lacked knowledge and understanding. When leaders live with a spirit of slumber, they cannot discern things properly. God says of Israel's leaders that they were blind, mute, ignorant and asleep. And trouble was coming their way.

C. An aimless pathway instead of a consecrated pathway (11c) - "...they have all turned to their own way, each to his own gain, one and all."

This is the summary statement from God's point of view. The leaders in Israel had rejected the ways of God and leaned unto their own understanding. They had carved out their own paths and were walking thereupon. Sadly, when God looked at the priests, the prophets, the kings and the elders in Israel, His holy declaration was that each of them had gone their own way. They chose their own gain over God's glory and the people's good. This was not some occasional incident. Twice in this verse, God uses the word *all*. He twice uses the word *own* and then magnifies the extent of this sin by using the phrase *one and all*. The corruption in Israel began with the leaders who refused to see and refused to sound the alarm. The entire leadership structure over God's people was complicit in the neglect and sinful abandonment of God.

III. God Warns of Their Unchanging Ways (12)

A. Self-centered focus (12a) - "Come," they say, "let me get wine;"

Heartbreakingly, the trajectory for what was happening among these terrible leaders was only moving farther in the same destructive direction. So detached were the leaders from the danger being sent their way by God that they were operating in a festive spirit. Let's raise a toast to how good things are! I want to celebrate how great my life is! Bring me the wine! Bring it to ME. I want what I want. I want it for me. I want it now.

B. A growing intensification (12b) - "...let us fill ourselves with strong drink;"

There is something about being surrounded by people as blind, ignorant and spiritually mute as you are that emboldens your sense that things are perfectly fine. If I am blind and surrounded by others who are blind, then none of us are seeing any dangers. Our collective blindness provides a false sense that there is nothing about which to be alarmed. The individual in verse 12 becomes a multitude before the verse ends. The language

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moves from *me to us*. The ignorant crowd is multiplied in number. Also intensified is the type of alcohol they are seeking to indulge in. Wine was normal in ancient Israel; strong drink was not. To move from wine to strong drink expresses a desire to move intentionally into a stupor. This call to get drunk symbolizes just how far from sober minded living Israel's leaders had fallen. Negligence will become decadence if left unchecked.

C. A deceptive sense of invincibility (12c) - "...and tomorrow will be like this day, great beyond measure."

And herein is the danger for a generation led by blind, mute, ignorant and sleeping leaders. They live carefree and convinced that all is well...and that all will be well. Life is one great, big uninterrupted flow of fun, comfort, pleasure and peace. Tomorrow will be just as good as today! There is nothing to be concerned about! Everything is awesome! In fact, these leaders declare that there was no sufficient measure to gauge just how great things would continue to be for Israel. How wrong these leaders were. Babylon was coming and Jerusalem would be destroyed. The temple would be made into rubble. The prophets and priests alike would die under the hand of the very ones concerning whom they were appointed to sound the alarm! When there are no warnings, danger will not be seen until it leaps upon us. When we turn a willingly blind eye to what is happening around us, darkness will become our habitation. When leaders appointed to warn, correct, rebuke and instruct become heavy in spiritual sleep, there remains no other source of awakening. We are called as believers to not only bark, but to leave the bite within the bark. Our messages need to have teeth in them. They occasionally need to sting. They need to grind us if they are to awaken us to the dangers all around. Israel's leaders failed to do this, and the people were destroyed. May our generation of Jesus-followers refuse to make the same mistake.