

PAUL'S FINAL CHARGE TO TIMOTHY

TEXT: II TIMOTHY 4:1-5

INTRODUCTION:

1. There are several charges in I & II Timothy (I Tim. 1:3, 5, 18; 5:7, 21; 6:13; II Tim. 2:14). This is the last one (4:1).
2. The word "charge" is a military word and it means, "an urgent command handed down from a superior officer."
3. This is Paul's final charge to Timothy, and soon he would be executed. It appears that Paul was aware of his impending death (4:6-8).
4. Therefore, we sense a strong urgency in Paul's words to Timothy, whom he considered his "dearly beloved son" in the faith (cf. 1:2).

I. THE WITNESSES (4:1)

II. THE WORK (4:2)

III. THE WARNING (4:3, 4)

I. THE WITNESSES (4:1)

1. Paul wrote, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ..." (4:1).
2. Therefore this was a most solemn charge. *Strong's Concordance* says the word "charge" means, "to solemnly affirm."
3. In this charge Paul refers to the second coming of Christ, when He "shall judge the quick (alive) and the dead at his appearing and his (millennial) kingdom" (4:1).
4. Those who trust in Christ shall reign with Him when He returns to set up His kingdom (II Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:6).
5. Our individual spheres of future service are being determined now by our present service here on earth.

II. THE WORK (4:2)

1. Paul and Timothy were involved in the greatest work -- preaching the Gospel.

*To the work! to the work! in the strength of the Lord,
By the power of His Name, with the light of His Word,
All the slaves of the darkness of Satan set free
And His riches of grace in His glory we'll see.*

2. Paul told Timothy, "Preach the word" (4:2). Preach all the counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

3. Isaiah 58:1 says, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."
4. Most preachers today are not preaching the Word of God, and consequently most church-goers are Biblically illiterate.
5. Many preachers avoid using Biblical words like sin, repentance, judgment, damnation, hell, etc. They avoid preaching against sin altogether.
6. Few preachers preach through books of the Bible. Therefore, most people are unfamiliar with the Word of God.
7. Many people will not stand for strong Bible preaching. Isaiah 30:9, 10 says, "This is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD: Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits."
8. People today want their ears tickled with weak, wishy-washy preaching (e.g., Joel Osteen, Rick Warren). These modern trends illustrate II Timothy 4:3.
9. This is what our Lord warned about in Matthew 13 when He said Satan was sowing tares among the wheat (cf. Matt. 13:24-30, 36-40).
10. Paul told Timothy that whether people liked it or not, he was to preach against sin "in season, out of season" (II Tim. 4:2).
11. Regarding the expression "in season," Albert Barnes said, "The sense is, when it could be conveniently done; when all things were favorable, and when there were no obstructions or hindrances."
12. Therefore, the expression "out of season" is the opposite -- when it is inconvenient; when things are unfavorable, and when there are obstructions and hindrances, etc.
13. "Reprove" (4:2) means to preach hard against sin so that the Holy Spirit will bring the listeners under conviction. Our Lord said in John 16:18 that when the Holy Spirit is come, "He will reprove the world of sin."
14. Note: "reproof" (noun form of same word) in II Timothy 3:16.
15. "Rebuke" (4:2) is a stronger word than "reprove." *Strong's Concordance* says the word means, "to find fault, to chide, and to censure severely."
16. "Exhort" means to encourage (4:2). We think of Barnabas, who was a great encourager. Acts 4:36 says his real name was Joses, but the apostles surnamed him Barnabas, which means, "The son of consolation."

17. This exhortation must be done "with all long-suffering and doctrine" (II Tim. 4:2). Preachers must be "long-suffering" because many people are stubborn and proud, and have bad habits.
18. Many have a bent toward backsliding. Many are worldly.
19. "Doctrine" (4:2) is the key word in the Pastoral Epistles (cf. 3:16).
20. Good preaching must be doctrinal, but preaching is more than teaching. Teaching is directed at the mind, whereas preaching aims for the heart.

III. THE WARNING (4:3, 4)

1. "For the time will come..." (4:3). The time has come!
2. Even back in Paul's day, a rising tide of error and apostasy was developing. Paul said in II Thessalonians 2:7, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work..."
3. These rising tides of apostasy were pushed back by great revivals. But the final tide of apostasy is rising high.
4. Today the vast majority of church members will no longer "endure sound doctrine" (II Tim. 4:3). They will not accept it. They reject it.
5. "Sound doctrine" means "healthy doctrine" (cf. I Tim. 1:10; Titus 1:9; 2:1). *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* says this means, "true and incorrupt doctrine."
6. The cults teach corrupt, unhealthy doctrine. Their teachings lead to spiritual death.
7. Liberal Protestantism teaches corrupt, unhealthy doctrine. Their teachings also lead to spiritual death.
8. Roman Catholicism teaches corrupt, unhealthy doctrine. Their teachings also lead to spiritual death.
9. Roman Catholicism is full of "fables" (4:4), such as transubstantiation, Mary-worship, the supremacy of the pope, etc.
10. The modern day charismatic movement is full of "fables." Only weak and worldly, Biblically-illiterate people could fall for their foolishness.
11. We need Biblical discernment and this comes from studying the Bible (cf. Hebrews 5:11-14).
12. "But watch thou in all things" (4:5). We must be watchful and alert.
13. "Endure afflictions" (4:5; cf. 3:10-13).
14. "Do the work of an evangelist" (4:5). We must keep on winning souls.
15. "Make full proof of thy ministry" (4:5). Paul told Timothy to put all his heart and soul into the work God called him to do (cf. Col. 4:17).

CONCLUSION

1. Way back in 1955, W.A. Criswell, at that time the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, preached a great message on II Timothy 4:1-4.
2. The message was entitled, "The New Religion: Peace of Mind," and you can find it on the Internet.
3. In this very interesting and informative message, Pastor Criswell talks about a Jewish rabbi from Boston by the name of Joshua L. Liebman who published a book in 1946 entitled, *Peace of Mind*.
4. Criswell described the book as a mishmash of Freudian psychology and religion. The book quickly became a best seller and was followed thereafter by a deluge of similar books, such as *The Magic of Believing*, *Peace of Soul*, *The Way to Security*, *Beyond Anxiety*, *Man's Search for Himself*, *Mind Alive*, and a thousand other similar titles.
5. I quote Pastor Criswell: "And above all, that noble exponent of the positive and the obvious, the incomparable Norman Vincent Peale, his book, *The Power of Positive Thinking*, has passed a million volumes already. His book, *A Guide to Confident Living*, is still selling at the rate of three thousand a week, beside his book, *The Art of Living* and his *Guideposts*...And like an editor who publishes a newspaper to give what the people want to read, the pulpits of America have simply been turned over to Peace of Mind religion."
6. From this point to the end of the sermon, Pastor Criswell brilliantly attacked the positive-thinking "peace of mind" religion and Norman Vincent Peale in particular, comparing him to one of the false prophets who advised King Ahab and Queen Jezebel.
7. In his message, Pastor Criswell does not mention Robert Schuller, who became the most well-known and successful follower and advocate of Peale's positive-thinking religion.
8. This is because back in 1955 when Criswell preached this message, Schuller was unknown and was just getting started in his career as a false prophet. In fact, that very same year he opened his Garden Grove Community Church in a drive-in movie theater in Garden Grove, CA.
9. After Schuller came many other positive thinking preachers and now we are surrounded by them: Bill Hybels, Rick Warren, Joel Osteen, and so on (cf. II Tim. 4:3, 4).