

Fact Sheet for **“Fulfill Your Ministry”**
2 Timothy 4:1-22

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Read 2 Timothy 4:1-22

In chapter 2 of this book Paul earlier wrote these words to Timothy ...

NKJ 2 Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Those words to Timothy echo what is in our hearts and minds also. We all want to rightly explain and rightly apply God's Word. For today's passage in 2 Timothy 4 we are going to have to work a little at that.

Let me show you a little of the problem. I'm going to be focusing on verses 1-5 this morning. In those verses we find that Paul encouraged Timothy to both "preach the word" and to "do the work of an evangelist." So... should all preachers be evangelists? Should we all preach like Billy Graham? If so, then how do you understand Ephesians 4:11? Pastors aren't necessarily evangelists. Now be careful in your thoughts! All pastors may not be specially gifted by God to be evangelists, but all pastors need to be quick to share the Gospel! In fact every one of us should seek to share the Gospel message with others. So, what do you do with Paul's words here? It seems we are going to have to dig a little deeper into 2 Timothy 4 to rightly explain and rightly apply it.

Some verses need this closer look. Some don't. Some verses in the Bible are both easy to understand and easy to apply. Perhaps the most well-known verse in the NT is John 3:16. Jesus spoke these words to Nicodemus when Nicodemus came to Him that night. The first half of that verse is a great divine truth... "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son." Just thinking about that one is amazing! The second half of that verse, regardless of your theology on election, is true for all people... "that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." Many will believe. Many will not. But everyone who believes in Christ will have eternal life. You don't have to work hard at explaining the truths of this verse or how to apply them. The truth of these words is obvious.

But with other verses you do need to work a little harder at their explanation. How would you apply Matthew 5:29 for instance?

ESV Matthew 5:29 If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.

You would be in deep trouble if you ignored the context of this verse. When you keep that in mind (the whole Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7) you see that none of us can meet God's standard of perfection. We all need God's grace and forgiveness! If sinless perfection were left up to eyes, ears, tongues, noses, hands, feet... etc. we would all be in sorry physical shape and still be sinners.

Here's the point. You can't just apply the wording. You have to apply what is true. This is why we're going to have to work a little at understanding 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

Later in verses 6-22 Paul related some of his own personal comments to Timothy. Paul had come close to the end of his life.

6 ¶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Henceforth there is laid up 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 loved his appearing.

When you come to the end of this life I hope these words can be your words too. Here's a quote from Foxe's book of martyrs concerning Paul's death. "The apostle's final destination this side of eternity was a spot on the Ostian Way just outside the walls of Rome. Tradition has it that Paul and Peter were

martyred on the same day – the former fisherman crucified in the city, and the former Pharisee beheaded beyond the gates.”¹

Verses 9-22 then are some personal instructions to Timothy about people and other matters.

But I want to focus on verses 1-5. These verses are instructions to Timothy about his ministry.

ESV 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: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

It would be difficult to see how Paul could make these verses any weightier (look at verse 1). Verse 2 *should* resonate loudly with every preacher... 1 – Preach the Word of God, 2 – Be ready in season and out of season, 3 – Reprove, rebuke, exhort, and patiently teach. Notice also that these two verses use a lot of the same words as the previous two verses (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

Paul had already warned Timothy about those who were teaching Jewish myths (1 Timothy 1:3-4; 4:7). These myths and those individuals were not producing godly behavior.

5 As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

You need to understand who Timothy was to understand this verse well. Timothy ministered along-side of Paul. He traveled with Paul from Derbe through Phrygia, Galatia, Mysia, Troas, Samothrace, Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, and Berea. He remained a Berea for a time as Paul went on. Later he rejoined Paul in Corinth, and traveled with him through Antioch, Caesarea, and Ephesus. From there Paul sent him to Macedonia. Timothy later was joined by Paul in Troas. Timothy is mentioned in Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Philemon, and Hebrews. When Paul wrote these two letters to Timothy he (*Timothy*) was ministering in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3). Here's the point. Timothy was a missionary. He was working with Paul to start and establish churches. And apparently Timothy was gifted by God for evangelism. Timothy was gifted by God to be a missionary, not a long-term pastor. It's easy to see with these things in mind why Paul wrote what he did to him.

With this understanding of 2 Timothy 4:1-5 how then can we all apply these verses to our own lives? Let me answer this by asking you a few questions.

1. How has God gifted you for ministry?
2. How is God using you in ministry? What are your goals in ministry?
3. Are you preparing yourself to share the Gospel with someone when the opportunity arises?
4. What are you doing to train yourself to both know and apply God's Word?

Paul encouraged Timothy to fulfill the ministry God gave him through gifting and opportunity (verse 5). It seems to me that this is a great application from these verses for all of us.

Fulfill the ministry God has gifted you for!

¹ Foxe: Voices of the Martyrs, p. 26.