

Enduring Sound Doctrine

2 Timothy 4:1-6

Introduction: The Apostle Paul wrote 2 Timothy very close to the end of his life. He knew his time on earth was short (2 Tim. 4:6-8). Yet, his closing admonition of very possibly the last known letter he ever wrote was to encourage a young preacher to teach God's word as he had done. *"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching."* (2 Tim. 4:2). Convince because people won't listen; rebuke because people won't obey; exhort because people won't care. Timothy needed to be ready to preach God's word when it was popular and when it was not.

It happens to be that some churches will not tolerate sound doctrine. It is perceived as too hard, too strict or too doctrinal by many weak brethren. *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine"* (2 Tim. 4:3a).

I. Hard preaching has its place...

A. Jesus was a hard preacher (John 6:60).

B. John the Baptist was a hard preacher (Matt. 14:3-4).

C. Peter was a hard preacher (Acts 2:23, 37).

D. Stephen was a hard preacher (Acts 7:51-54).

E. Paul was a hard preacher (Gal. 2:11-14).

F. I was told, "These men were inspired by God to preach hard lessons. But you aren't!" Which leaves me to wonder, if I can't preach a hard lesson... who can?

II. Most discontented members realize the doctrine can't be dismissed, but the messenger can.

A. There is a serious problem in any congregation when members start criticizing the preacher, not because he is teaching a false doctrine, but because it is not what they want to hear or how they want to hear it (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

1. Even weak brethren understand it is wrong to attack the message of God's word. Therefore, it's easier to ignore the message by attacking the messenger.

2. Such weak members degrade the messenger as though it is wrong to even bring up sensitive subjects like attendance, alcohol or withdrawal.

B. James says speaking evil about the messenger is the same as speaking evil against the message (Jas. 4:11-12). The very thing discontented brethren are trying to avoid by speaking against the messenger is the thing they are accomplishing which is speaking against God's word.

C. What Paul told Timothy is perfectly understandable; “*But you be watchful in all things, **endure afflictions**, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry*” (2 Tim. 4:5). That was meant to encourage Timothy when brethren don’t want to hear certain truths – **endure afflictions**.

D. The question should be asked, “*Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?*” (Gal. 4:16)

III. Dissatisfied brethren will say, “We just need edification.”

A. Everyone needs edification, but what makes us think we are not being built up when we are told things that we do are wrong? Could the message be depressing because we don’t allow God’s word to change our actions? We need to determine where we stand with God’s word when we are rebuked (Prov. 9:8).

B. The case could be made that the Israelites wanted to be edified during the days of Isaiah (Isa. 30:9-10). Isaiah makes note that it is a rebellious people who don’t want to hear doctrine in favor of smooth words.

C. As a child, edification comes through the discipline, training and the nurturing of parents. It is no different between God and us (Heb. 12:5-11). “*Do not despise the chastening of the LORD, **nor be discouraged** when you are rebuked by Him.*”

Conclusion: The reason the Apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to preach the truth despite what the audience preferred to hear was because the time would come when people won’t endure sound doctrine (2 Tim. 4:3-4). People will turn to fables and teachers that will tell them what they want to hear instead of hard, doctrinal, often negative, fire and brimstone type sermons that will save their souls.