



The President's Perspective



In Season & Out

In II Timothy 4, Paul challenges Timothy, in the form of a charge, with the responsibilities that he, as a young preacher and pastor, has in the ministry. Verse one says, "I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ...preach the word." The word is the WHAT of the ministry. That which must occupy the primary place of emphasis in the life of the God-called preacher is the word. It is WHAT the preacher is called to give his life to declaring. Someone once said that the preacher is one "who spends his life telling people what someone else has said." That "Someone" is none other than God Himself.

In addition, Paul communicates to Timothy the HOW of the ministry. In the latter part of verse 2, he says, "reprove, rebuke, exhort ...". The ministry involves all three of these elements. While most preachers would love to only exhort (encourage) their congregation, there are times when rebuke and reproof are necessary. To fail to engage in all three of these elements is to fail in the calling to which God has called the preacher.

Finally, Paul communicates to his young son in the faith the WHERE of the ministry, when he states emphatically, "be instant in season, out of season." For years, I've heard that verse quoted this way, "be instant in season AND out of season." Please note, there is no AND in the verse. It simply states that ministry is to be conducted "in season, out of season." What does that mean? "In season" is actually the Greek word KAIROS and has the meaning of a "seasonable opportunity." "Out of season" is the word AKAIROS (the "a" in front negates the word, or reverses the meaning) and carries the meaning of an "unseasonable opportunity." That is, the preacher is to declare the word at both "seasonable" times and "unseasonable" times. May I put it this way? "In season" times are the ministry opportunities we TAKE. "Out of season" times are the ministry opportunities we MAKE. Sunday morning and evening are times of ministry that we, as preachers, take. They are already scheduled into our week and form the crux of the preaching ministry available to us. However, those are not the only times of ministry in which we are implored to be involved. There are times of ministry we must make. These opportunities are outside the mainstream. They are opportunities that are "outside the box" and are more difficult to acquire. Hence, they are referred to as "out of season" (unseasonable). Such times of ministry would involve preaching in the city marketplace, as Paul did in Athens (Acts 17). These unseasonable times of ministry would involve declaring the gospel at a community event, racing event, rodeo and other related activities. In other words, the "out of season" opportunities are those outside the four walls of the church. They are opportunities we are encouraged to seek out that

place us in the mainstream of where people congregate who may never enter a church building.

Here's the heart of the issue. "Be instant in season, out of season" (no AND included) is Paul's way of charging Timothy to so preach that the "unseasonable" times become "seasonable" times. As Dr. Stephen Olford said, "Seek out opportunities to preach everywhere people congregate. And do so with such regularity that the "out of season" times become "in season" times." It is my desire that the unique places of preaching ministry (i.e. Pentagon courtyard, community festivals, racing events, rodeos, hurricane ravaged areas, etc.) become such regular opportunities, that they are as "in season" as preaching on Sunday morning in a church building. This became true of George Whitefield during the first Great Awakening in this country. He preached in churches (in season) but he also preached in the open field (out of season). His open air preaching began to occur with such regularity that it literally became "in season" (seasonable) ministry.

May God grant us the wisdom, passion and creativity to discover ways to effectively proclaim the life-changing gospel to this generation. Doing so will, no doubt, bring criticism from some, but it will doubtlessly bring the approval of heaven. It is this very type ministry that Jesus engaged in. We must follow our Savior's lead, venturing into the "highways and hedges" compelling the lost to come in that our Savior's house may be filled.

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