

<b>Series</b>	Gamma 17 – Study 15 (Preach the Gospel)
<b>Reference</b>	2 Tim 4
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<b>Speaker</b>	Dr Peter Ng

Welcome back to Gamma. We are now finishing the second letter of Paul to Timothy, chapter 4. Let's start with a word of prayer.

*Lord we ask that you be with us this evening. Help us to understand your word especially this one where Paul is preaching, probably writing for the last time before his life is offered to the Lord in sacrifice with his ministry. We ask oh lord that you impress upon us what drives this man so that that kind of spirit will also drive us to honour and glorify you. We ask for Jesus sake. Amen.*

Okay, so we come to the last chapter of this wonderful book, 2-Timothy chapter 4 and Paul most solemnly charges his young disciple.

**I charge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and by his kingdom:**

Now I don't think you could emphasize even more than this that this is a very-very solemn charge. He is not just asking him to continue to preach the word. He is charging them, charging Timothy in the presence of God in Christ Jesus who is basically, you are accountable to him because he is going to judge the living and the dead and also in anticipation there is hope that he is going to come and bring the kingdom in his fullness. He is charging them to preach the gospel,

**Be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke and exhort with complete patience and teaching.**

Now if you look there are four imperatives here. The most important imperative is to continue the ministry of the word, preach the word no matter what situation, ready in season or out of season, reprove rebuke, exhort. There are four things you do with a word and there are four imperatives, there are four commands.

Reprove is basically show somebody his fault or error or convince the person of his fault or error, show him.

Rebuke is basically mild scold or show his fault, express strong disapproval of someone. When was the last time we actually reprove someone, whether we rebuke someone. You know our attitude in church is like these three monkeys, we see no evil, we hear no evil and we do know evil, speak no evil and we let everybody do their own thing. Is that how Paul wants Timothy to run the Ephesians church. No, that is not what he wants.

On the other hand we could be judgmental, looking at each other, picking at small faults and other people and forgetting the big plank in our eyes. All right. The importance of doing this is the importance of the body. Look at 1-Corinthians chapter 5 versus 1 to 2.

**It is actually reported among you that there is sexual immorality among you of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. Are you arrogant, are you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.**

So here you actually have a situation where the Corinthian church ignored sexual immorality of such magnitude that is not even seen among non-Christians. And so therefore they should have reprov'd, they should have rebuked, they did nothing, they closed their eyes, closed their ears and closed their mouth and that's not how it's done. Why? Because of the importance of the body. We need to protect the body. And he actually used the analogy or the metaphor of the leaven which is yeast. Yeast represents sin.

Cleanse out the old leaven or yeast that you may be a new lump for you are unleavened. You are a lump of bread with no leaven and no sin. For Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed, let us therefore celebrate the festival not with the old leaven or sin, the sin of leaven of malice and evil but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

So therefore the body of Christ must reflect its actual nature and origin which is Christ Jesus who has taken away our sin so therefore we must live in a holy manner and that is why we reprove, we rebuke and we teach the word in order to maintain godliness because we are chosen by God as the holy calling for his purposes not our own. All right.

Titus 2: 9-10

Born servants are to be submissive to their own masters and everything. They are to be well pleasing and not argumentative, not pilfering but showing all good faith so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God, our savior.

Here he is saying the gospel is so important, the kingdom of God is so important that whatever our behaviour is we are to adorn the doctrine of God our saviour.

The last part is not only to preach the word, rebuke but also to parakaleo which is exhort. So we come aside we also encourage, we're not going to go aside, you know in front of other people pointing our fingers and judging them but we actually, reprove, try to correct but with the purpose of encouraging using this. Parakaleo is the same word we use for parakletos which is basically the Holy Spirit, coming alongside and encouraging people to walk in God's way. So you've got reprove, rebuke, we exhort with complete patience and teaching and the manner in which you do it if you look back in chapter 2,

And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach patiently, enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness

So the manner in which we do this in the body is with kindness, patience and gentleness. All too often we try to rebuke each other and we are taken and the holier than thou attitude that other people are not as good and we gossip about them, we judge them and so therefore it is actually ineffective. So the way we do this, the truth must be told in love, in kindness, in patience and gentleness. Now why do we need to do all these things? Why is Paul in his last letter before he is going to be executed asking them to do these things. Of all things he asked them to do he asked them to preach the word, reprove, rebuke and exhort. Why? Because the times in which we will be living in, which actually the times are reflective what we are going through even now.

For the time is coming which is here now actually that people will not endure sound teaching. They don't want sound teaching, having itchy ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions and will turn away from listening the truth and wander off into myths.

So this describes the time of the last days'. Time of Ephesian church where Timothy is in charge and

also the time which we live. People don't want to hear the truth. They want teachers or teachings that suit their own passions. 1 Peter 2:11

**Beloved I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul**

So what's happening is that we all have passions of the flesh. We all have a desire to indulge our own sinful desires because we believe indulging our sinful desires is a way of which we achieve our quest for happiness.

AW Tozer, a famous Christian pastor about 60 to 70 years ago wrote these words about the changing times and he said,

*I see aright, the cross of popular evangelicalism is not the cross of the New Testament. He is warning us. It is rather a new bright ornament upon the bosom of a self-assured and carnal Christianity. The old cross slew man; the new cross entertains them. The old cross condemns, the new cross amuses. The old cross destroyed confidence in the flesh and the new cross encourages it*

And that's really true. If you look back, you know 40, 50 and 60 years ago, people like Robert Schuller famous American preacher put forward this idea, the most important thing that we need to bring the gospel for is basically man's self-esteem. He wrote,

*The secret of winning unchurched people into the church is really quite simple. Find out what would impress non-church into your community and give it to them.*

And this was taken even further by Bill Hybels of the Willow Creek Church. He said the most important need is personal fulfilment, which means the pursuit of happiness and he redefines sin. Sin is the flawed strategy to gain fulfilment rather than the rebellion against God that deserves death as its punishment.

So there are two kinds of gospel where the church has to grapple with now. We have to grapple with the gospel of where it's all about us, finding fulfilment, finding true happiness in life, finding true self-esteem because God loves us where there is our self-esteem because God loves us, finding freedom from emptiness and loneliness or the kind of gospel which is only about God, for us to live, to worship and glorify him, it is about sin and death, it is about our need for righteousness, it is about our need and desire and aim of living a holy life to glorify God. Which kind of gospel will represent the kind of church which you actually worship in?

If it's this, lots of folk will be there but it wouldn't be the true gospel. The purpose of worship is that clearly express the greatness of God when you worship God, not find inward release or still less amusement and a lot of people worship either in the old manner where you've got all icons of sacredness or even a new manner where there's a lot of music. Why? They want to feel the presence of God. They want to revive this feeling, the focus nowadays is on feeling but not the knowledge of God. Feeling is more important than conviction or informed commitment.

There was a writer called William James who actually is to be fair wasn't a Christian and what he did was he examined the various religious experiences of Christians as well as other religions and he found that and this is what he wrote,

*As long as men can use their God, whoever it is they care very little about who he is or even whether he is at all. God*

*is not known, he is not understood, he is used.*

So therefore men tend to want to use God in order to bring up religious experiences, which makes them feel good but they don't want to know him because when they know him then they lose their independence and they have to follow him, they have to follow the truth. So the direction would seem in the modern church, we live in days where people become Christians but the direction of their life, the trajectory of their life is unchanged. God is just used like a motor car, you run a couple of hundred miles in a race and then you have a broken tire or a punctured valve and you have a pit stop. The role of church is like a pit stop, they just fix your wheels and you still carry on the same direction of your life.

Let me tell you a story from 1 Kings chapter 22. King Ahaz, king of the Northern Kingdom. He wanted to invade the Arameans at Ramoth Gilead. He was wondering you know we will go to war, I don't know whether I will be successful or not. Let us read.

Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, "Shall I go to battle against Ramoth-gilead, or shall I refrain?" And they said, "Go up, for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king." But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not here another prophet of the Lord of whom we may inquire?"

So here we actually a situation where he wants to go to war, but didn't know whether he is going to be successful or not and he basically asked for opinions and opinions are from the prophets and there are 400 prophets. All right, and all of them said got to go, you are going to win except one says why don't we ask there is another prophet and this prophet was Micaiah,

And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD, Micaiah the son of Imlah, but I hate him, for he never prophesies good concerning me, but evil.

I mean he never says anything good about me). Why should I ask a prophet like that? Nobody likes a true prophet isn't it, but in the end he says, better gets his opinion. So the messenger came to Micaiah who went to summon, Micaiah said to him

13 And the messenger who went to summon Micaiah said to him, "Behold, the words of the prophets with one accord are favorable to the king. Let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak favorably."

So before you go and see the king, Micaiah if you know what is good for say good things, don't prophesise bad things, don't worry about the truth, speak favorably. So Micaiah went to the king and when they come to the king the king said to him Micaiah shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle or shall we refrain and he answered him, go and triumph the lord will give it into the hands of the king.

Now this is not true, so in a moment of weakness Micaiah actually compromised and the king said to him, how many times shall I make you swear that you speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord, so the king knew this guy doesn't usually tell him good news and today he is telling him good news. He actually realized I want the truth I don't really want lies and he says Micaiah tell me the truth and,

Now therefore behold, the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the Lord has declared disaster for you."

Not good news, you shouldn't go, isn't it. So you know what Ahaz did. Instead of riding off with the

chariot with all his armour and royal regalia, he actually went in disguise. So if I went to the battle in disguise you know they won't know me, I will be okay so he went to the battle in disguise and a certain man drew his bow at random and just shot an arrow right up there and it struck the king of Israel between the scale Armor and the breastplate, right in between the two bits of armour and Ahaz died. What are the chances of that happening a random stray arrow, because the prophecy was actually true.

You see people don't want to hear the truth. Isaiah 30,

Who says to the prophets, "Do not see to the prophets, do not prophesy to us what is right speak to us smooth things, prophesise illusions, leave the way turn aside from the path, let us hear know more about the holy one of Israel.

People we live in the times of people not wanting to hear the truth. Take for example American politics, trump re-election prophecy. Do you know there are about 40 Christian leaders and prophets in the United States who actually prophesied that Trump would be re-elected but he wasn't and when he wasn't great consternation rang out among the whole nation and you've got this lady Ruth Graham, the wife of Billy Graham who actually wrote an article published in the New York Times,

*Christian prophecy movement hit hard by Trump's defeat. It would seem as if all these prophecies are fake*

One of the top prophets is Jeremiah Johnson who alone with very few people actually prophesied that Donald Trump would win the 2016 election and only he was correct and he prophesied again but this time he prophesied that Trump would win again and he was wrong and he actually came out to apologize and he said nine out of ten messages I was preaching were about the lord, nothing political or current but because that one that one message would go viral or grabbed so much attention I think it became toxic and it became dangerous over time and to be candid he said whether you want to call it a temptation or not that is what sells.

And the whole problem even with Christian teachers, prophets and pastors today or elders, it is what sells and he sells books on Trump and the Future America and so therefore he has to told the lie and what the people want. The people want to have itchy ears and they want to follow the passions of their flesh. This is another prophet uh Loren Sandford. He actually apologized and said,

*I allowed myself to be caught up in the prevailing stream and to carried along by it. In doing that, I actually compromised what the lord had already told me years before.*

False prophecy. Here Shawn Boltz, another prophet who apologized for the wrong prophecy about Trump. He received death threats, okay and they actually wrote to him said,

*When trump is re-elected again you'll be strung up in front of the white house and killed as a false prophet.*

So pressure on the teachers and the prophet is to follow the passions of the people. In fact the people believe, many of them on the mountain seven mountains of culture that that the Christians will have to recapture government to make a Christian government for Christ to return again and so therefore we live in an age where everything is being micro-targeted, every bit of news you watch and Facebook is basically based on your own desires and your own favourites, they will find all that and feed you what you want to hear, not feed you the truth, and they can even use scripture. If you look in the same situation here, 1 kings 22:11,

And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made for himself horns of iron and said, "Thus says the Lord,

‘With these you shall push the Syrians until they are destroyed.’” 12 And all the prophets prophesied so and said, “Go up to Ramoth-gilead and triumph; the Lord will give it into the hand of the king.”

So here is another prophet and he is saying he is using the horns of.. Why does he use the word horns of iron? Because there is a promise in Deuteronomy chapter 33:17

A firstborn bull—he has majesty, he is referring to Ephraim which is a one of Joseph's son which is emblematic of the whole northern kingdom.

The firstborn bull—he has majesty, and his horns are horns of a wild ox; with them he shall gore the peoples, all of them, to the ends of earth; they are the tens of thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.”

So basically we're talking about the success of the northern kingdom as symbolized by Ephraim and Manasseh. And what this Zedekiah was saying, look we go back in history we know that the firstborn bull with these horns is northern kingdom, Ephraim, they will be successful, they will gore all people, Syrians are all, so based on this promise you go, God has promised you, you'll be successful.

This is how false prophets take scripture and twist it out of context. Look at Netanyahu goes to visit Trump and he says these words,

*We remember the proclamation of the great king Cyrus the Great—Persian king. 2500 years ago he proclaimed that the Jewish exiles in Babylon can come back and rebuild our temple in Jerusalem and we remember how a few weeks ago President Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital, Mr President this will be remembered by our people throughout the ages*

He is actually casting back biblical history to equate King Cyrus with Trump. You see a lot of people will use scripture for their own benefits.

For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching. They will have itchy ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers who suit their own passion and will turn away from listening to truth and worse if you do that they will actually wander off into myths

Myths are really far out there and here is an example of a false prophet called Johnny Enlow. You know what he said. He said,

*If you can see what is in heaven, who's sitting on the throne—go up and look at the presidency seat in heaven, see who's sitting there. It ain't Biden; it's Trump.*

He is telling you spiritually in heaven Trump is sitting up there. This is actual myth. It has gotten to be so bad. You know during Paul's time as you can see here is the Parthenon all right and right at the bottom here is a hill and this is called Mars Hill and Paul was there in Acts chapter 17. When he was there all along he saw so many altars with all sorts of Greek gods, to Zeus, to Achilles, to so many of the gods and found and the people all believe in the multitude of gods. There is nobody there who would believe in a single god and as there was even an altar there's so many gods until there was also an altar to the unknown god and Paul stood up there, unashamedly, against all the odds and he actually preached about one single God.

I have found an altar to the unknown god, What therefore you worship as an unknown this I proclaim to you the God who has made the world and everything in it being lord of heaven and earth does not live in

## temples made by man

Can you see the pressure on Paul? When you live in a world where it is populated by gods that's a prevailing consensus, prevailing worldview, nobody believes in just one single god and he stands up there against all the odds and he stands up there with the truth and says you know that's the one altar the unknown god that unknown god is the real god, and imagine the disaster that happens.

And when they heard the about the resurrection of dead some mocked others says we'll hear you again later on and Paul went out from the midst, some men joined them actually believe

So we are going to come to the world with the truth, the world will not believe our truth, they will mock but there will be some who will believe in this message and in Acts chapter 18 in Corinth the lord said to Paul after persecution there, he said one night,

Don't be afraid, go on speaking, don't be silent I'm with you, no one will attack you to harm you because I have many in this city who are my people which means there are people who are yet to know God and Paul will be instrumental in bringing them there. So continue in your mission.

Elijah in the depths of his depression, feeling as if he was alone in his fight against Baal, the priests, Ahaz, Jezebel, God said to him,

Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel all knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him

Which means God in every situation and every time in every ministry has his people. Paul himself said

Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, these are the people God has chosen they will obtain salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory

That is why we preach the gospel in and out of season, that is why we reprove, we rebuke and we exhort each other. Right.

As for you, doesn't matter what the world wants, what they want with the itching ears, be sober, don't be swinging from one theory to another, one doctrine to another, endure suffering, do the work of evangelists, fulfil your ministry.

Now how do we see our lives. This goes to the passage that talks about our lives. Paul ends this last letter he writes with how he has viewed his life. He views his life as three things, an offering, a race and a fight.

For I am being poured out as a drink offering and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I finished the race. I have kept the faith.

So what he is doing he is putting out forward that all this labour was like a drink offering to God. Now drink offerings are common in the ancient world, you've got a bottle of very expensive champagne and you pour it on the altar of the gods. It represents a sacrifice. Here is a picture of Assyrian king offering drink offering to his god. The Greeks have the same thing as well offering wine, they call it libations. All right. Here in Israelite culture you offer a drink offering with your sacrifices, it represents victory, it represents sabbath rest, it represents whatever you give you sacrifice and God drinks it and it makes God's heart glad. Right.

Paul describes his whole life asking all of us,

**By the mercies of God to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God which is your spiritual worship**

And so a life, Paul describes his life as a drink offering poured out. It is not poured out on the ground. It is actually poured out in service for other people. If we offer our lives to God it is offered out in service to other people. You either pour out your life in service to God by serving others or you pour your life on yourself and that's what we call a wasted life.

One of the heroes of Christianity in Asia especially that has really impacted my life was John Sung. I remember reading his book when I was in 20s written by Leslie Lyle and his name was he was aflame for God. He was just burnt up for God. He was a young chap at eight or nine when he experienced a blessing of a revival in his home church in Hinghuah where about three thousand were saved, at age of 13 he became his father's assistant and they all actually called him a little pastor. He actually went to the United States, a very brilliant man to study. He got awards, Ph.D. in chemistry which in those days extremely rare, we are talking about before World War II and he was really brilliant and then he found Christ. When he found Christ he was so excited about Christ that a lot of people thought he had gone mad because he really was on fire sharing gospel everywhere. They actually put him in an asylum for a long time because they were not sure whether this guy is mad or really you know born again.

Anyway at the end of this time in America he came back with his Ph.D. just before he actually entered Sung Shanghai Harbour he actually stopped just outside the harbour, he took all his degrees and all his awards, he only got his Ph.D. he actually got rewards for it took all of that threw it out into the sea and he started the ministry of preaching the gospel. Within 12 years, he only served for 12 years. This evangelist revival shook the church of China and Southeast Asia. It is estimated that he has got up to 200 to 300,000 converts in this one man alone and you know why that's important because the time of 1949 when the communists took over there were only one million Christians in China and 200 to 300 thousand had come to know Lord through this one man. He used to lead bible studies for two hours three times a day. In 1936 he preached to the whole bible in one month to 2000 participants from all over China and Southeast Asia. And here is a picture of John Sung. He made Singapore his headquarters. He is preaching at the Telok Ayer Methodist Church. He preached 40 sermons in two weeks, started a bible school there which is still present today and many of the people who came to know Lord were responsible for planting churches all over Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines and Indonesia. One of his famous disciples Lim Pui Hian, Fukien district actually became an evangelist and he himself brought thousands of people to the Lord.

John lived a short life. He died at 42 years of age, the last three years of his life was in bad health but even in bad health he would be even on his bed preaching the gospel right up to the last minute when he died. That is why Leslie Lyle entitled him the flame for God. He just burnt up because of his fervour for Jesus Christ. It is written, years later on they looked at his diaries and they discovered one of his diaries that he wrote,

*For a servant of God to have authority in every sentence he utters, he must first suffer for the message he is to deliver. Without great tribulation, there is no great illumination.*

And John Sung is an example of an evangelist whose heart is for the flame for God and who would not listen to the temptations of his world and our world, he was faithful to God's witness and therefore he suffered. He was reviled, he was persecuted, the people very upset with him and yet he continued and you can see the results even resonating to the church to this day.



I am ready for to be poured out as a drink offering and the time of my departure.

The word departure is analysis which is the time of my loosing which means he sees his life as being loosed, like soldiers breaking up camp or sailors losing a ship from his moorings, because he wants to be loosed from this world. The time of my departure has come. Tim Keller has recently had not only thyroid cancer he also has pancreatic cancer and one of his prayer points was

*For Kathy and me, that we should use this opportunity to be weaned from the joys of the world and to desire God's presence above all.*

Same meaning the opportunity be loosed, loosen from all the joys of the world that that hold us so attached to this world and instead to desire God's presence above all, and that is what John Sung's life was about.

### **How do we see our lives?**

Do we see our lives towards the end and the opportunity after we get out from the lockdown to see the rest of the world or do we see our lives aflame for god or is our life poured out in the service of others, in one way we might pour it out on the ground on the other way we can pour it out to honour our Lord Jesus Christ. This day when we read 2 Timothy chapter 4 we need to decide how will you pour out your life.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. That is what Paul says and the description of his life as a race is a tension, effort, self-denial and perseverance. You know you may have come to the race late, you may stumble or you may come to the race with baggage but Paul says in Philippines,

*Not that I have already obtained this or I'm already perfect but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus had made me his own. Brothers I don't consider that I have made it on my own but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining towards what lies ahead.*

So it doesn't matter when you come to the race or you stumble during race or you have difficulties during race, the point is that you forget what lies behind and you press forward to the goal of the prize and upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Our desire must be there and 1 Philippians 1:8 says,

*And I am sure of this that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion on the day of Christ.*

You see whatever God does something, every beginning has an ending. If God has begun a real work in our lives he will bring it to the end. It is not due to our own veracity, our own strength, our own holiness, he who began a good work will bring it to completion on the last day. And casualties are inevitable if you look in Timothy,

*Do your best to come to me. Demas, in love with this world has left, has deserted me, gone to Thessalonica, Alexander did me great harm, beware of him he is strongly oppose our message, everybody abandoned him in Asia.*

At his first hearing, you know when you go to court you've got hearings and your lawyers stand with you your friends will stand with you and tell them you know Paul is a good guy you know he didn't do this or that and by first defence do you know no one stood with me, would imagine this apostle who has

influenced so many lives at his first defence nobody stood with him not a lawyer not a friend not an acquaintance all deserted me. May not be charged against them but the lord stood with me and strengthened me so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the gentiles might hear, so I was rescued from the lion's mouth.

So in the first hearing he escaped but the lord, and he is writing a letter, we know that after he writes this letter he won't escape. He will be martyred but he said these words, the lord will rescue me from every deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom, to him be glory forever and ever Amen. Right after he pens this word they march him down the Appian way and they chopped his head off. That's how God rescued him and brought him to his heavenly kingdom and the place where he was martyred it stands a church called Saint Paul's Outside The Walls that celebrates the wonderful impact of this man's life for which we have so many of his letters and has the words that he writes the spirit which he written them has reverberated around and around this globe and has transformed so many of our lives.

We have we've only got one life to live. Do you want to pour it out on the ground and pour it out on the feet of all the people who need help, you pour it out for our lord Jesus, be that flame like John Sung spend it well because you only got one life to live. May God add a blessing to his word.