

Speak with the oracles of
GOD
SERVE
with God's strength
that **GOD** may be
GLORIFIED

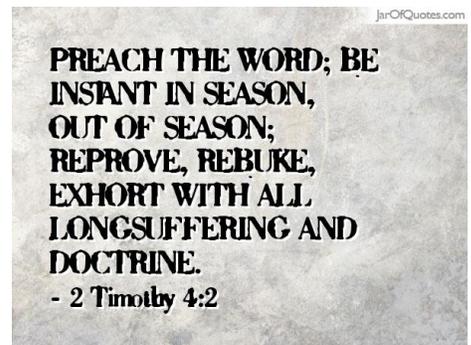
1 Peter 4:11

Suppose it were possible to bring a first century Christian to this church today. Many physical things obviously would be different, but of much greater concern would be any spiritual differences. Think for a moment about how different a first century Christian might find the preaching today. Would it be different from the kind of preaching in the first century church?

The preaching in the first century can best be described as inspired prophecy. Because they had only the Old Testament to guide their activity, God gave sermons to people who revealed God's New Testament pattern. Read the words of those people and think of the differences between those words then and these words spoken today.

First century preaching was plainly convicting visitors who came into the assembly. Paul described a situation with these words: "But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convicted by all" (1 Corinthians 14:24). It's possible that too many pulpits today resound with "polished messages." Where is the conviction to follow God? Many sermons seem outwardly perfect. They may be "welcomed" in denominational pulpits. What is distinctive today? Do visitors depart feeling "satisfied" without ever having been challenged in their faith? Our world today is not like the New Testament world.

Paul's letters to the young preacher Timothy give great insight into the clarity of the message within the early church. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul defines what it means to preach the word. Please, read these words carefully. "Preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2). The King James translates the word "teaching" as "doctrine," yet many preachers avoid doctrinal preaching. One cannot preach the word without often speaking directly to the religious errors in our land. Paul gives the reason to convince, rebuke and exhort with doctrine. "For the time will come when men will not endure sound doctrine." That time has certainly come!



Take a look at Paul's words in his first letter to Timothy. In chapter four, he described how inspired preachers taught the truth. He said, "The Spirit expressly says. . ." He described false teaching as "doctrines of devils" and then specifically described these doctrines. Preaching today often avoids speaking directly about false teaching. We should not ever "sugar coat" the truth.

Having described the Spirit's preaching, Paul told Timothy, "If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ" (1 Timothy 4:6). What does this remark indicate about modern preaching? The verse implies that if we do not instruct the brethren, we are not good ministers of Jesus.

It's obvious our world has changed over the centuries. We must speak as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11)!

Bday/Anniv Lunch: ...yes, when **we** can!
— *THANK YOU* for reading!