

2 Timothy 4 – Living in God’s Reality

1. Connecting to reality

III – the progression from phones --> mobiles --> blue tooth --> implants

People cannot stand to be disconnected from the world of communication even for a minute.

Yet, we are often so disconnected from God and his reality, but don’t seem to worry about that.

In God’s reality, there is a judgement day. And I wonder if as Christians we sometimes forget that?

III – I doubt we would ever forget our own birthday, or an important anniversary, or Christmas or Easter Day. But have we forgotten about our day of judgement? Are we disconnected in our day to day life from the reality of the judgement day of God?

Paul begins this last chapter to Timothy by connecting us to God’s reality:

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge:

As we hear these words today, we need to be connected to God’s reality – the reality of the judgement day, the reality of the coming kingdom of God. In fact, we need to live our lives in this context. We need to connect ourselves daily to God’s reality and not be locked into the world’s idea of reality which helps us to forget about judgement and to forget about the arrival of the kingdom of God. As we pray “your kingdom come” we should be expecting it to happen at any moment!

Two things we can take from this passage on HOW to connect to God’s reality and stay there:

1. Listen to Reality and
2. Live Reality

1. Listening to Reality

III – When I was a maths teacher, it was always interesting to return to school after being absent for a day. If I knew I was going to be away, I would leave lessons for the casual teacher to do. And when I returned the next day, I would ask the students, “How was the teacher while I was away?” And I remember one time their reply was “He was awesome Sir! He was really cool. It was fun.” Since this was a maths class, I was immediately suspicious. So I asked them what they did. Games. That’s what they did. They played games. My lessons were untouched. The teacher decided that it was easier to play games with them than actually have them do any work! This is a novel approach to teaching. Yet not without fault!

As a teacher, it’s not about being fun and entertaining. It’s not about having everyone like you as a fun guy. It’s about education.

Paul calls on Timothy, first of all, to teach the Word of God:

I give you this charge: 2Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. 3For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

Timothy is to be prepared to teach God’s word to people in season and out of season. In other words, be ready at any time and in any occasion. God’s Word teaches us about everything – suffering, money, commitment, the assurance of our salvation. God’s Word teaches us about the eternity of the punishment in hell and the eternity of blessing in heaven. God’s Word teaches us about the reality of Christ’s death and physical resurrection, and it teaches us that Jesus is the **only way** to know God.

God's Word is able to teach and correct and rebuke. Timothy is told to be ready for any situation because there are people who only want to hear teaching that suits them. There are people that like certain parts of the Bible but not others. There's a new version of the Bible out called the "positive Bible". It takes out all the so called 'negative' stuff. The stuff about judgement and death and hell. A Bible that gives people what they want to hear, so they can have their own little reality and ignore God's reality.

Some people believe in only prosperity for Christians – that God wants you to be rich and healthy in this life, and if you're not, it's because you're unfaithful. But that's not in God's Word. There are those who want to hear that if you're a good person and do good things and live a good life, you will go to heaven. But that's not in God's Word. Ephesians 2:8-9 says *"For it is by grace you have been saved through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no-one can boast."*

There are those who want to hear that every religion leads to the same God, yet Acts 4:12 says that there is no other name than Jesus by which we can be saved.

Some believe that Jesus wasn't raised physically from the dead, or that there is no hell or that if there is a hell, it isn't eternal. Yet God's Word tells us these things are not truth.

Some people will only listen to teachers who tell them what their itching ears want to hear. **Not** the truth. But what **they** want to hear.

Do we have ears that seek out the **truth**? And would we know when we are being taught the truth or lies? The more you know God's Word for yourself, the more perceptive you can be in what you listen to from your teachers.

There are NO PASSENGERS in God's church – even though church looks a bit like a bus, with all the pews lined up facing the front! But none of us are called to just sit here. We're all called to be challenged with God's Word. God's word gives us the strength to endure. This is the way we combat false teaching. This is the way we learn what God wants rather than just going after what WE want all the time. Paul's last words to Timothy make his preaching a key part of his ministry, because the truth of God's Word is so important if our faith is going to endure to the end.

And it's not easy. It's not easy to preach the truth from God's word sometimes. And it's not easy to hear the truth sometimes. And sometimes it's not easy to say you believe this truth. There is a cost in living in God's reality. And Paul knows more than anyone what that cost can be. Because he lived it. And living God's reality is where it really gets tough.

2. Living Reality

From verse 6, Paul says:

6For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. 7I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8Now there is in store 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 longed for his appearing.

III – In the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin, there is the story of a snowboarder by the name of Lindsey Jacobellis. Jacobellis was in the lead because everyone else in the race had fallen over behind her. She was way out in front and had pretty much won the race. While all the others were trying to get back up again, she came over the second last jump, and she did a little trick – a little showing off – and she fell! By that time another girl had recovered from her fall and went flying past her. I can't imagine how painful it would be to run a whole race like that and stumble and fall at the very end because of a silly mistake. You don't want to fall at the end. But even though she fell, Jacobellis got back up and finished the race. In second place.

As Paul writes, he is at the end of the race. He's finished. He's ready to receive the crown of righteousness. You see Paul has been living in God's reality. Living in the presence of God. All through his race he had been **knocked** over so many times, but he kept getting up. And now at the end, the tough tests kept coming – so many had fallen away, and nearly **everyone** had left him (verse 9-16). Listen to these verses:

10for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. 11Only Luke is with me. ...

14Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. ...

16At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them.

BUT! says Paul,

17But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth.

18The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom.

You see, he's living in God's reality! Living in God's reality means that even when others desert you, **God** stands by your side. Paul is looking forward to the finish line and nothing is going to stop him getting there. Because he knows what's waiting for him. He's focussed on the judgement day. The kingdom of God.

We are fighting a fight. We are running a race. And God is beside us. **He** is our strength. And there is an **urgency** and an **importance** to the way we live out our faith. Knowing the truth and living the truth is what transforms churches and suburbs and nations. The way we live out our faith doesn't affect just us, but the people around us. Do we, like Paul, **long** for the appearing of Jesus, the righteous judge? And if we do, does the way we live out our faith show that longing?

God's Word is what keeps us running the right race. God strengthens us through his Word. If we listen to it. If we hear it and act on it. We need to be connected to God's reality. To connect everything in our lives to the reality that says judgement day is just around the corner. That's why Paul was so willing to give up **everything**. Because he lived in God's reality. He lived "in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead." He lived for the crown of righteousness, from the Lord, the righteous Judge.

As we finish this final letter of Paul to Timothy, I want us just to finish by focussing on one question. A question that often gets lost in the world that we live in each day. Think about everything you have in your life, and ask yourself this question: **"What are you living for?"**

If you're living in God's reality, there's only one answer to that question.

"What are you living for?"

Let's pray.