

**“Fulfill Your Ministry”:  
The Ordination Sermon of Chad Davis**

**II Timothy 4:1-5**

By [Dr. W. Duncan Rankin](#)

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Let us pray.

*most gracious and merciful heavenly Father, Triune God of heaven, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, we know that Your word is true and sure. It is without error or mixture. Indeed, You use it as a blessing in the lives of Your people in the great covenant of grace. We know also that Your Holy Spirit, who inspired that word, can also illuminate, and so we do ask now that You might come and work in our hearts and in our lives. We do pray that Your word might be a living word applied to how we live and think and feel, and that You might bless us and conform us more and more to the image of Christ our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.*

Let me invite you to turn in your Bibles to II Timothy 4, the first five verses, and as you're turning let me confess that I'm a little bit old fashioned. On this occasion that means that I'm still clinging to my New American Standard Version from the early 1970's, which will come up again in a moment. II Timothy 4.

Hear the word of the Lord.

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Jesus Christ, who is the judge of the living and the dead, and by His appearing and by His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Amen.

Just three years ago, when Chad and Jennifer Smith left the Knoxville,

Tennessee, area for Reformed Seminary, our congregation in Oak Ridge suffered a great loss. Chad had been a UT college student and come to the church in Oak Ridge. Then the congregation watched him become a father and a husband—well, a husband and then a father! Chad became a deacon in the church, serving the Lord with faithfulness and distinction. He was our church's first intern, and he set his face toward the gospel ministry as the Lord called.

Why Reformed Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi? Well, there really was no choice on two levels. You might understand his new pastor's prejudice, and that influenced his entire Session to give him no choice in the matter. But there was also something called the Twin Lakes Fellowship, and I drove him down personally. And before we went to the beautiful Twin Lakes facility, we stopped at Two Sisters. And by the time we got to bread pudding with bourbon sauce, that was it! Jackson was to be his new home.

And now we come to this day, to a day of great joy, a day of great thankfulness to the Lord. It is a day of fulfillment of both a hope and a dream, and much hard labor done to the glory of God.

Chad, I know the congregation will forgive me as the canon of the word is pointed in your direction. There is so much I could say to you this evening from the holy word of God, but there's really time tonight for only one main point. Chad, you must now preach the word.

You see, preaching is a solemn duty. The Apostle Paul makes that clear to his understudy, Timothy, as he's addressing him in this epistle. As you learned during your internship, there are times when the mentor cannot always explain in infinite detail, and you have to listen and follow instruction as one who is teachable. You passed that test, and Timothy passed that test as well. The solemn charge of his mentor, Paul — his mentor's name penned at the end of this epistle and beginning would be enough — and if that was not sufficient, to the solemn charge given by Paul was added the injunction of the presence of God, the Triune God, and the presence of Christ Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, the second person of the Trinity. What greater thing could be said in order to rivet his attention to the great imperative to come?

But Paul goes on and he adds to the name of God and Jesus Christ the work of God that is yet to come, the One who shall judge the living and the dead. That implies for us blessing and threat both. “And by His appearing and by His kingdom,” Paul says to Timothy, I charge you.

This is not an abstract theological idea hanging up on a shelf. It's a tangible, imminent call of the apostle to his understudy to hear what he thinks is really so important and absolutely non-negotiable in the ministry in which he is to engage. Paul really thinks that preaching is important, and that is something you must remember all the days of your life. It's the duty of Presbytery to both expect and

protect the preaching of the word of God. And it's the duty of the ministry, so ordained and set aside to such public work, to prepare and to declare the word of God written to His people. And this evening it becomes the duty of Chad Smith to preach the word—to preach the word of God written. Not what you like, not what you think is clever, not what will bring you large crowds and great adoration, but rather to preach the word of God written, all of it, from beginning to end. Every word, every book, chapter, paragraph, sentence, word, syllable...every jot and tittle is important, and you have studied and prepared to open it and to preach the word to God's people.

Preaching is a solemn duty, and it's a solemn duty even when you won't feel like it. Verse 2 says it is to be done in season and out of season. Biblical preaching is, even on the college campus as in the more general culture, not always popular today. And so you have signed up by the call of God for what many would consider to be a very hard slog in an uphill climb. But God is faithful; Christ is faithful — your Lord — and He has gifted you. The gifts that you have been given by Christ our Lord have been seen by the Presbytery, recognized by them. They have given, and are even now giving thanks to God for those gifts, and they expect their usefulness and fruitfulness among the students and faculty and administration of Belhaven College. This is the task for which Christ your Lord has both called you and equipped you.

But why? Why is preaching such a solemn duty? The apostle leaves us in no doubt. He tells us in verse 2 that preaching is much needed. He tells us that preaching will include reproving and rebuking those to whom it is addressed; that is, preaching tells us what not to do and what not to think, and it's important for you to remember. Sometimes after church you will hear people comment on the sermon that they have heard that the preacher's gone from preaching to meddling. And that's usually a fairly good sign.

You see, we should all hope and pray that the word of God as it is preached will impact our lives and touch our souls. We all need the word of God to poke us, to prod us, to cajole us in the right direction. And when the word is applied to conscience, when it bears down upon the hearts and minds, the conscience of men, then the preacher is doing his job and doing it well.

The job of preaching is not for us to tell God what to think about us. He already knows everything. But it's the occasion on which God tells men about himself, His holy Law, their need of salvation. It's when God tells us about the hope of the gospel held out to every creature on earth, and daily Christian living — the rise and fall of the Christian life, that needful obedience that brings glory to God and only occurs by His grace and strength. All of these things are important in the lives not just of your family, but of the students at Belhaven College. Those who do not know the Lord among that larger flock, they will need preaching so that they might feel the need of a Savior, and that they might come to trust in Christ alone for their salvation. And those that do know the Lord, Chad, they will need

the preaching of God, too, to see their need to die to sin and live to righteousness, and the importance of using every means of grace that God has set at their disposal, that they might be so blessed. Preaching is important, Paul is telling us here, even when it hurts.

But he also says preaching involves exhortation. Preaching tells us what to do, and what to think.

I can remember as a younger father the day that it dawned on me that one of my parental responsibilities was to tell my children what to think and how to live. Reed and Arthur and Susan are all individuals, and they all have unique personalities and they need to be cultivated and encouraged. But their mother and father must tell them what to think about everything in the world. Their mother and father must tell them how to feel about everything in God's creation. It's important that we don't leave such important matters up to the world, up to popular opinion or culture, but rather that we raise our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

God raises us that way using His word, and especially the preaching of His word. He exhorts us, and on occasion He rebukes us as well, through the preaching of His word. So, Chad, as you become a campus minister at Belhaven College, you must do the same thing. You must be like your Savior and like your heavenly Father, applying the word of God to that flock and field that the Presbytery set your hand to. You must care for their needs, and one of their greatest needs at this moment is to hear what the word of God says for their lives.

It's not just information, but also application. Together the two, hand in hand, not one replacing the other, but in coordinate fashion, all based and drawn from the word of God written. Yours will be a voice raised, fervent for their good and for the glory of God. But you must raise your voice. Don't be timid. Don't hold back from preaching and applying the word of God to their hearts and lives. You must speak, and you must urge upon them the truths of the gospel on their souls. So I charge you to exhort, exhort, exhort, according to the word of God here written.

It won't be easy. It will be a joy sometimes, and you'll pinch yourself and think, "I can't believe I'm getting paid to open the word of God!" But there will be other times in which it will not be so fun, it will be hard. It will be difficult slogging. But it's an important part of your calling to exhort, and you must do so, lest you fail in your calling.

How is the preacher to go about reproofing and exhorting? Paul says with great patience and with instruction. Line upon line, verse upon verse; studying one passage after another, you must open and read and preach, and read and preach, and pray the word of God to and with your people, to and with those students. This must become your daily and weekly routine in the labor in God's field to which He has assigned you in Belhaven College. That means you must

preach in the large group meetings. You must open the word and declare it. But to do that you must also add the patient and tiring work of individual and of small group instruction.

And don't give up on the Bible, Chad. Don't give up on the word of God written. That's the underlying principle that the Apostle Paul is here declaring. You know there are many today that are giving up on the word of God, and they've given up on preaching, too. Small Group Bible studies are being replaced by fellowship clubs in a lot of places and on a lot of campuses, and spiritual steak is taken off the table, and in its place is set a dozen Krispy Kreme doughnuts. Now I want to let you know that I like Krispy Kreme doughnuts. We just had a birthday party for a deacon in the church, and his wife exhorted us to "bring 30 of something." Thirty toenails, she suggested...thirty nails or paperclips...my family brought thirty Krispy Kreme doughnuts. We were the most popular folks at the party!

But you get my point. To replace the word of God with going to a movie, hanging out at a concert or coffee bar...to replace the steak with merely the dessert, to cut back on the word of God in the name even of world and life view application, to let application replace declaration to the point where you can't hear the word anymore...that will be the undoing of our Reformed faith and of our blessed denomination unless young men like you stand up and hold the line, and are careful to not give up in the preaching of the word of God.

It is a difficult thing. I was recently dressed down by one of our campus ministers for being in favor of Small Group Bible studies. "You're just a child of the 70's," he told me. Well, I like John Denver when I'm riding down the highway at 70 miles an hour! And yes, there is a Monkees album that I will listen to on the way home. "You guys are all so 1970's..." he said [he was mocking me] "...that you have exegeted the campus all wrong. Nobody cares about Small Group Bible studies anymore!" I could not believe my ears.

Brother, you must be faithful to Jesus Christ, your Lord, and to the Apostle Paul and to his exhortation to preach the word. You must open it in season and out of season. You must be faithful to love Jesus Christ and, therefore, to love His word. It's not some abstract system that you study to puff up your mind and to write some ivory tower tome that will do no one any good. Rather, you must open the Bible and read it, and preach it with patience, praying for and with your students that God would bless their lives. Do not be so foolish as to digress and capitulate to the spirit of the age. It's a feminist spirit in our country, so much today. It's a therapeutic spirit, and a mere therapeutic model that is rising across the land. That is not what the Presbytery is calling you to.

You cannot...you will never be able to nurture your students out of all their problems. There are going to be problems and situations where you must declare the word of God with all your heart and with all your strength, with all the love of Christ and of each and every one of the flock that He has given you. You must

also preach the word, reproving, rebuking, exhorting as required, with a heart on fire for Jesus, and I know you will.

Finally, preaching is inclusive, or all-encompassing. That means it involves sound doctrine on the one hand and evangelism on the other. There's a great dichotomy, a wedge that people try to drive between these two things, as if evangelism is practical and doctrine is not, and that sort of mentality shows a total misunderstanding of both. Sound doctrine — the teaching in truth of the word of God — you must state it and urge it upon your students. And you must contrast the truth with error, so that as they go about their daily lives they can see where the devil is tempting them, and where the Lord holds out a blessing.

But remember, false doctrine comes in many forms. Sometimes it's too hard. Sometimes our fallen hearts are attracted to that which is too hard and too mean, as if it's inevitably a means of grace — anything to our right. And then on other occasions, false doctrine is too soft. It's squishy, it squeaks like a rubber duck. You just step on it and it shapes and molds itself to any whim of the culture. Be careful never to presume that false teaching only comes with two horns on its head and a forked tail. The devil doesn't always take that disguise. More often that not in our day, false teaching is attractive and lovely, and in some of its outlines even beautiful and winsome. But you remember: remember the archenemies of Jesus our Lord, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Those who opposed Him, those who put Him to death, they were the attractive, the admired, the wonderful ones of their day. Respectable lot that they were, they were lost in their sin and misery. Do not give up sound doctrine to the false imitation, no matter what form in which it is found; for, you see, true doctrine, biblical doctrine is so important to lives and to hearts and to families and to communities; bad doctrine corrupts morals. It makes a mess of people's lives. It brings darkness rather than light, and you must shine the light of the word of God.

Sound preaching conveys sound doctrine of the word, and it never forgets to do the work of the evangelist. You see, you have a great privilege. The Presbytery is going to see to it that you get to share the good news with lots of people. Many people that perhaps don't even darken the door of a church, you are going to have interaction and coffee with them, and you're going to be able to speak to them the word of God, and there you're going to be able to preach, and to exhort and to reprove. You're going to be able to share with them the good news of Jesus Christ our Lord, who came into this world to save sinners, even like us.

The great privilege that God has blessed you with, good preaching, should never leave any doubt about how to be saved. If you have students that go away from your Large Group and they go away from the coffee cup with you, and they know that Chad Smith is a nice guy, but they don't know how to be saved, you will have failed. But if you share with them through good preaching as a primary evangelistic tool the hope of the gospel and the truth of the gospel, then you will be blessed in your ministry richly.

But be careful! The gospel is not just a slogan. The gospel is not just a phrase.

Not so long ago I heard a sermon from a young man soon to be ordained, and he used “the gospel” in his sermon 25 times. I was counting! And I listened, and I listened, and I listened to see if anyone would learn how to be saved. First it sounded like the gospel was being preached, but then I realized the gospel had never been spoken at all. It was just a title. It was just a slogan that had degraded into a mantra...an empty set of words that had never really ever been heard in their content. No one, no one heard the real gospel that day. Chad, you must share the true gospel. Not just a theory; not just a grid. You must share the truth of Christ and Him crucified. You must seize the day and the opportunity, and open the word and press it upon their heart. You must hold out the Savior as their only hope of life. And, Chad Smith, if you are faithful in these things, then you will please the Savior and be a blessing to His church for years to come. And on that great Day, which will swiftly come, you will hear the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

So, my brother, Paul, here tells you — the apostle of Jesus Christ — “Preach the word.”

Let us pray.

*Our most gracious and merciful heavenly Father, we thank You that You sent Your Son into the world to die for sinners like us; to gather us together into His body, and to give gifts to men that Your word might be preached and held up as a light and a healing balm for all. We pray, O God, that Your hand of blessing would be upon Chad Smith's ministry, and that indeed many might rise up and call him blessed because of the work that You do through him. May all the glory be to Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.*

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