

PASSING THE
FAITH
To the Next Generation



“Itching Ears in a Swiping World.”

May 17, 2026

Text: *2 Timothy 4:1-5*

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KEY QUESTION

How should Christians respond to the myths of our age?

BIG IDEA

Be ready to preach the Word, endure the warning, and fulfill your ministry.

Introduction

- The disappearance of MH370 illustrates our culture's hunger for compelling narratives—even speculative ones—when facts run out.
- Spiritually, we do the same: when God doesn't explain himself on our timetable, we drift toward alternative narratives. That is the danger Paul addresses in 2 Tim 4:1–5.
- **Paul's three-part answer:** The Charge (vv. 1–2) → The Warning (vv. 3–4) → The Work (v. 5)

Movement 1: The Charge — Preach the Word (2 Tim 4:1–2)

The Weight of the Charge (v. 1)

- Paul speaks as if under legal oath — “in the presence of God and Christ Jesus.” God himself is the witness.
- Christ is identified as THE JUDGE — one day all will stand before him (Rom 14:12).
- His “appearing” (Gk. *epiphaneia*) — the glorious return of the true King — demands our readiness now. Our ultimate allegiance is to the Kingdom of Christ, not any earthly nation.

Preaching in Three Actions (v. 2)

- **Reprove** → targets the MIND. Correct doctrinal error with clear biblical reasoning.
- **Rebuke** → targets the WILL/CONSCIENCE. Confront sin and call to repentance directly and urgently.
- **Exhort** → appeals to the HEART. Comfort, urge forward, and walk alongside those who are struggling.
- All three are done with complete patience and teaching. This applies to every Christian — not just pastors.

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Movement 2: The Warning — The Age of Itching Ears (2 Tim 4:3–4)

- **"Sound" teaching** (Gk. hygiene) = clean, uncontaminated truth. Contaminated teaching poisons the soul like polluted water.
- **"Itching ears"** = the impulse to collect teachers who confirm our desires rather than submit to God's truth. AI algorithms and social media make this easier — and more dangerous — than ever.
- **Warning:** False teachers would not exist without demand. The congregation that prefers an entertaining pastor over a faithful one enacts the logic of spiritual consumerism.

Two Myths to Recognize

- **Myth 1 — Moralistic Therapeutic Deism:** "God exists, wants you to be nice, and rewards good people with heaven." Enough Christian vocabulary to seem orthodox; empty of the Gospel.
- **Myth 2 — The Affirmation Gospel:** "A loving God would never call sin what feels authentic to who I am." Desire reshapes truth rather than truth shaping desire.
- People don't abandon truth overnight — they wander. Little fascinations. Small compromises. A gradual drift away from Christ.

Movement 3: The Work — Fulfill Your Ministry (2 Tim 4:5)

"But as for you..." — a deliberate contrast. Don't share the fate of those who wandered. Four imperatives:

- **Be Sober-Minded:** Stay clear-headed. A sober mind resists being swept away by the latest cultural narrative.
- **Endure Suffering:** Faithful ministry in a myth-saturated culture will cost us something. Resist the itch.
- **Do the Work of an Evangelist:** Even if not your primary gift — expose myths, make disciples, fulfill the Great Commission.
- **Fulfill Your Ministry:** Leave nothing on the table. Complete what God uniquely called you to do. This is finishing, not just starting.

Conclusion: A Dying Man's Final Word (2 Tim 4:6–7)

- Paul — writing from a Roman prison, awaiting execution — testifies: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."
- For 175 years, the saints of Millington Baptist Church have handed this same faith to the next generation — through hardship, change, and costly moments of obedience.
- The baton is in your hands. Will you scratch ears or preach the Word? Wander into myths or stay anchored to truth? Fulfill your ministry or settle for comfort?

Fight the good fight. Run the race. Keep the faith. Preach the Word.

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