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“*Eukairos*” and “*Akairos*” in 2 Timothy 4:2: A Hermeneutical-Theological Study for Gospel Preachers

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Abstract

2 Timothy 4:2 emphasizes two conditions that a preacher of the gospel must face in carrying out his calling, namely "good times" (eukairos) and "bad times" (akairos). A review of the literature reveals that previous researchers have focused only on ethical, homiletic, and practical aspects without comprehensively interpreting the theological meaning of the terms εὐκαίρως (eukairos) and ἀκαίρως (akairos), resulting in a shift in meaning that has led to a partial and less contextual understanding. Therefore, this study aims to examine the lexical-theological significance of εὐκαίρως (eukairos) and ἀκαίρως (akairos) in 2 Timothy 4:2 and to analyze their implications for perseverance and continuity in gospel ministry. Through a theological hermeneutical approach, this study finds that the term eukairos refers to situations where the preaching of the gospel is openly accepted by the audience, while akairos describes a context of ministry that is full of rejection and resistance to the truth of the gospel. Four important implications for evangelists are: first, they must always be ready to serve in all circumstances; second, external situations should not change the main purpose of evangelism; third, success or rejection does not affect the spiritual reward promised by God; fourth, difficult ministry conditions actually become a vessel for God's power to be manifested tangibly. The results of this study reinforce the focus, perseverance, and integrity of missionaries in facing the dynamics of ministry at all times.

Keywords: *Eukairos*; *Akairos*; 2 Timothy 4:2; The Gospel

INTRODUCTION

2 Timothy 4:2 records Paul's exhortation to Timothy to "preach the word" with constant readiness, both in favorable and unfavorable circumstances. The paired expressions εὐκαίρως (*eukairos*) and ἀκαίρως (*akairos*) emphasize the continuity of gospel proclamation regardless of external conditions.¹ Within the broader context of the

¹ I. H. Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles (International Critical Commentary)* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1999).

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Aska Aprilano Pattinaja, et al.

Pastoral Epistles, this exhortation reflects Paul's deep concern for perseverance in ministry, doctrinal faithfulness, and steadfast proclamation amid growing opposition, false teaching, and spiritual decline in the early church.² In response to this interpretation, this study argues that the expressions εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως should not merely be understood as rhetorical descriptions of favorable and unfavorable situations. Rather, these paired expressions function theologically to emphasize the continuity of gospel proclamation under all circumstances. Paul's exhortation indicates that the responsibility of preaching the gospel transcends external conditions and remains rooted in obedience to the divine mandate entrusted to the preacher.

Theologically, Paul's command to proclaim the word "in season and out of season" is closely related to the preacher's responsibility to remain faithful to God's mission regardless of acceptance or rejection. This exhortation highlights that the proclamation of the gospel is not determined by favorable circumstances, social approval, or ministerial comfort, but by obedience to the divine calling entrusted to the preacher.³ Consequently, 2 Timothy 4:2 has become one of the central texts in discussions concerning perseverance, ministerial endurance, and pastoral responsibility within Christian ministry.⁴ This study further contends that Paul's concern in 2 Timothy 4:2 extends beyond practical ministry perseverance. The exhortation also carries a theological dimension that portrays difficult ministry situations not as interruptions to gospel ministry, but as contexts in which faithfulness, endurance, and dependence upon God are demonstrated more clearly. Thus, perseverance in proclamation becomes an essential characteristic of the preacher's theological identity.

Major scholars of the Pastoral Epistles such as Philip H. Towner,⁵ I. Howard Marshall,⁶ William D. Mounce,⁷ George W. Knight,⁸ and Gordon D. Fee⁹ generally interpret this passage as a call to steadfast ministry and unwavering commitment to gospel proclamation. Their discussions emphasize pastoral perseverance, doctrinal fidelity, ecclesial responsibility, and endurance amid adversity as central themes within Paul's final instructions to Timothy. In many exegetical discussions, the expressions εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως are commonly understood as rhetorical contrasts referring to favorable and unfavorable situations for preaching ministry.

Recent lexical-theological studies have also examined specific elements within 2 Timothy 4:2. Aguiar, for example, explores the meaning of λόγος (logos) in Paul's exhortation to "preach the word," emphasizing the theological authority of divine

² P. H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2006).

³ Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus (Based on the New International Version)*, ed. W. Ward. Gasque (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988).

⁴ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles (International Critical Commentary)*.

⁵ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*.

⁶ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles (International Critical Commentary)*.

⁷ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles (World Biblical Commentary 46)*.

⁸ Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*.

⁹ Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus (Based on the New International Version)*.

revelation and the moral responsibility of gospel preachers.¹⁰ His study contributes significantly to understanding the theological foundation of proclamation in 2 Timothy 4:2. However, while Aguiar provides a focused analysis of λόγος, limited attention is given to the paired temporal expressions εὐκαιρως and ἀκαιρως, particularly regarding their lexical-theological significance and implications for perseverance in gospel ministry.

Several contemporary studies have approached 2 Timothy 4:2 from ethical, pastoral, homiletical, and practical perspectives. Bankston’s study approaches the passage from a practical and pastoral perspective by emphasizing the preacher’s readiness to adapt ministry methods within digital contexts. The study highlights the continuity of gospel proclamation amid changing communication patterns and post-pandemic ministry realities.¹¹ Similarly, Gunawan and Sukmawati focus on the adaptation of preaching ministry within digital and virtual contexts, particularly in response to developments in communication technology and contemporary ministry patterns.¹² These studies demonstrate that Paul’s exhortation in 2 Timothy 4:2 continues to be understood as a relevant theological foundation for sustaining gospel proclamation amid changing ministry situations and communication contexts.

Meanwhile, Sariyanto emphasizes the theological importance of preaching ministry in 2 Timothy 4:2–3 by highlighting doctrinal faithfulness, pastoral responsibility, and the urgency of proclaiming biblical truth amid contemporary challenges.¹³ The study contributes significantly to understanding the theological and pastoral dimensions of gospel proclamation, particularly regarding the preacher’s ethical responsibility to maintain sound doctrine and faithfully communicate biblical truth. Other contemporary studies on digital ministry and virtual preaching likewise emphasize the continuity of Christian witness, discipleship, and worship practices within evolving technological contexts.¹⁴ Collectively, these discussions reinforce the contemporary relevance of 2 Timothy 4:2 for pastoral ministry, homiletical practice, and Christian witness in rapidly changing social and technological environments. Taken together, previous studies predominantly interpret 2 Timothy 4:2 through pastoral, practical, and homiletical frameworks, while focused lexical-theological analysis of εὐκαιρως and ἀκαιρως remains relatively limited.

¹⁰ Adenilton Tavares Aguiar, “PREACH THE WORD: THE MEANING OF LOGOS IN 2 TIMOTHY 4:2,” *PRÁXIS TEOLÓGICA* 15, no. 1 (December 2019), <https://doi.org/10.25194/2317-0573.2019v15n1.e1598>.

¹¹ Robert Mike Bankston, “Adapting the Digital Pulpit: A Study of the Transition to Online Preaching” (Asbury Theological Seminary, 2023).

¹² Dedi Gunawan, “Berkhotbah Secara Online Sebagai Praktik Spiritual: Studi Kualitatif Penghayatan Hamba Tuhan Di Beberapa Gereja Di Bandung,” *TRANSFORMATIO: Jurnal Teologi, Pendidikan, Dan Misi Integral* 1, no. 02 (June 2024): 169–85, <https://doi.org/10.61719/Transformatio.A2412.009>.

¹³ Sariyanto Sariyanto, “Studi Teologis Pentingnya Pemberitaan Firman Berdasarkan Kitab 2 Timotius 4:2-3,” *Ritornela - Jurnal Teologi Pentakosta Indonesia* 3, no. 1 (April 2023): 35–47, <https://doi.org/10.54403/rjtpi.v3i1.61>.

¹⁴ OLULOWO Segun Ayotunde and Oluremi Funmilola AGUNBIADE, “THE DIGITAL PULPIT: A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON CHRISTIAN WITNESS AND DISCIPLESHIP IN THE ERA OF SOCIAL MEDIA,” *KWARARAFI Security Review* 3, no. 3 (December 2025): 217–32, <https://doi.org/10.64633/ksr.v3.i3.17>.

However, despite the significant contributions of previous studies, most discussions primarily emphasize pastoral adaptation, homiletical application, and ministerial responsibility. Consequently, limited attention has been given to the lexical-theological significance of the paired expressions εὐκαίρως (*eukairos*) and ἀκαίρως (*akairos*) within their historical and theological contexts. In many interpretations, these expressions are treated only as general references to “favorable” and “unfavorable” times without further theological reflection on perseverance, endurance, and continuity in gospel proclamation amid both acceptance and rejection. This gap is important because the interpretation of εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως directly shapes theological understanding concerning faithfulness in ministry under varying circumstances.

Therefore, this study seeks to provide a theological-hermeneutical elaboration of the paired expressions εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως in 2 Timothy 4:2 by examining their lexical, historical, and theological dimensions within Paul’s exhortation to Timothy. In contrast to previous studies that primarily emphasize pastoral practice and homiletical application, this study focuses on the theological significance of these temporal expressions and their implications for perseverance, integrity, and faithfulness in contemporary gospel ministry. Through this approach, the study argues that εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως should be understood not merely as rhetorical contrasts, but as theological expressions that construct a paradigm of continuous gospel proclamation rooted in faithfulness to the divine mission regardless of external circumstances.

METHOD

This study employs a theological-hermeneutical method to examine the paired expressions εὐκαίρως (*eukairos*) and ἀκαίρως (*akairos*) in 2 Timothy 4:2. The study primarily adopts Anthony C. Thiselton’s theological hermeneutical approach, which emphasizes the integration of historical context, linguistic analysis, theological interpretation, and contemporary appropriation in biblical interpretation. According to Thiselton, theological hermeneutics seeks not only to reconstruct the historical meaning of the text but also to understand how the text functions theologically within the life of the church and contemporary faith communities.¹⁵ In this framework, interpretation involves a dialogical process between the biblical text, theological understanding, and present-day application.

This approach is further supported by Osborne’s hermeneutical spiral, which views interpretation as a cyclical movement between text, context, and theological meaning, enabling deeper understanding through repeated interaction with the biblical text.¹⁶ In addition, Kevin J. Vanhoozer’s concept of Scripture as participation in the “drama of doctrine” reinforces the theological dimension of interpretation by

¹⁵ Anthony C. Thiselton, *An Introduction Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009).

¹⁶ Grant R Osborne, *Spiral Hermeneutika - Pengantar Komprehensif Bagi Penafsiran Alkitab (Terj. Elifas Gani)*, ed. Stevy Tilaar (Surabaya: Momentum, 2021).

emphasizing that biblical texts call readers to participate faithfully in God’s redemptive mission.¹⁷

In practice, this theological-hermeneutical method is implemented through four interrelated stages. First, historical-contextual analysis is used to examine the background of 2 Timothy, particularly Paul’s final exhortation to Timothy amid false teaching, ecclesial challenges, and increasing opposition to the gospel. This stage aims to identify the historical and pastoral circumstances surrounding Paul’s command to “preach the word.” Second, lexical and grammatical analysis is conducted by examining the Greek expressions εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως within their semantic, grammatical, and literary contexts. This stage includes analyzing the lexical range of the terms in Koine Greek usage and their theological nuances within the Pastoral Epistles in order to determine how these expressions function in Paul’s exhortation. Third, theological-syntactical analysis is employed to connect the exegetical findings with broader theological themes in Pauline theology, particularly perseverance, ministerial faithfulness, endurance in suffering, and continuity in gospel proclamation. At this stage, the study analyzes how the paired expressions contribute to a theological understanding of ministry that transcends favorable and unfavorable circumstances. Finally, contextual-theological application is used to explore the implications of εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως for contemporary gospel ministry. This stage focuses on how Paul’s exhortation in 2 Timothy 4:2 remains relevant for understanding perseverance, integrity, and faithfulness in contemporary preaching ministry amid changing social, cultural, and ministerial contexts.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

2 Timothy 4:2 occupies a very important position in the entire collection of pastoral letters because this verse affirms the essence of the calling of a servant of the word: to preach the gospel in all situations, “whether the time is favorable or unfavorable.” This command serves not only as moral advice for a preacher, but as a theological mandate that originates from the authority of God Himself. In the context of the pastoral epistles, the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, his spiritual son, who was then ministering to the church in Ephesus, a large city that was the intellectual and spiritual center of Asia Minor, but also a hotbed of syncretism and doctrinal deviation.¹⁸ Therefore, the instruction to “proclaim the word” (κήρυξον τὸν λόγον) is not merely practical advice, but a prophetic call to uphold the purity of the gospel amid a tide of compromise and moral relativism.

This letter was written toward the end of Paul’s life, while he was imprisoned in Rome, making his words not only a reflection of his personal experiences but also a spiritual testament for future generations of ministers.¹⁹ Amidst the threat of external persecution and internal spiritual decline, Paul emphasized that faithfulness to the word must be the highest priority, even when the social and emotional context seems

¹⁷ K. J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

¹⁸ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*.

¹⁹ N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God (Vol. 1)*. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2012).

Aska Aprilano Pattinaja, et al.

unsupportive. Thus, the call to "preach the word" has a strong dimension of perseverance and integrity to show that divine truth must not bow to human preferences or the circumstances of the times.

Furthermore, the phrases "*eukairos*" and "*akairos*" used by Paul are key to understanding the dynamics of true ministry. These two Greek expressions appear to reflect contrasting ministry circumstances within Paul's exhortation, particularly situations in which gospel proclamation encounters either receptivity or resistance. However, the precise lexical-theological significance of εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως within the context of 2 Timothy 4:2 remains a subject that requires further theological-hermeneutical examination). By using this contrasting pair, Paul emphasizes that the commitment of a preacher of the gospel must be absolute; he is called to obey not because the situation is favorable, but because he lives in obedience to God's will.²⁰ Therefore, this verse has a profound theological meaning in shaping the spirituality of ministry and mission ethics. It guides every minister of the word to understand that faithfulness to the divine calling does not depend on outward success, but on steadfastness in proclaiming the truth, both in seasons of acceptance and rejection.

Historical Analysis

Historically, 2 Timothy is commonly understood as Paul's final epistle, written during his second imprisonment in Rome shortly before his martyrdom under Nero around AD 64–67.²¹ Unlike earlier Pauline letters that primarily address doctrinal and ecclesial issues, 2 Timothy reflects the personal and pastoral concerns of an apostle nearing the end of his ministry. The letter contains Paul's final exhortations to Timothy concerning perseverance, doctrinal fidelity, and continuity in gospel proclamation amid increasing opposition and suffering.²² Within this context, 2 Timothy 4:2 functions as a solemn apostolic mandate emphasizing the urgency of proclaiming the word regardless of external circumstances.

The historical setting of Ephesus further clarifies the significance of Paul's exhortation. Ephesus was one of the most influential urban centers in Asia Minor, known for its religious pluralism, Greco-Roman philosophical traditions, and the cult of Artemis (Acts 19:23–41). According to Knight, the Ephesian church faced serious internal challenges related to false teaching, speculative doctrine, and moral disorder.²³ Similar concerns are reflected throughout the Pastoral Epistles, particularly regarding doctrinal deviation and the spread of misleading teachings (1 Tim. 1:3–7; 2 Tim. 2:16–18). Consequently, Paul's command to "preach the word" should be understood not merely as general pastoral advice, but as a response to concrete ecclesial and theological crises confronting the early church.

²⁰ G. W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans., 2002).

²¹ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles (International Critical Commentary)*.

²² Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*.

²³ Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*.

The wider political context of the Roman Empire also contributes to understanding the urgency of this exhortation. During Nero’s reign, Christians increasingly experienced suspicion, hostility, and persecution from Roman authorities.²⁴ Paul’s imprisonment illustrates that gospel proclamation was inseparable from suffering and social opposition. In this historical context, the expressions εὐκαίρως (*eukairos*) and ἀκαίρως (*akairos*) gain particular significance because they reflect ministry carried out amid both receptive and hostile situations. Paul’s exhortation therefore emphasizes that the legitimacy and continuity of gospel proclamation are not determined by favorable social conditions, public acceptance, or political security, but by faithfulness to the apostolic mandate entrusted by God.

Furthermore, the historical circumstances surrounding 2 Timothy reveal that perseverance in proclamation was central to Pauline ministry theology. Marshall notes that Paul’s concern in this letter is not simply the preservation of church leadership, but the preservation of the gospel itself through faithful proclamation across generations.²⁵ Thus, the command to preach “in season and out of season” should be interpreted within a historical framework marked by doctrinal conflict, cultural pressure, and the anticipation of suffering. The historical background of 2 Timothy 4:2 therefore provides an essential foundation for understanding εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως not merely as temporal expressions, but as theological indicators of steadfast gospel ministry amid varying circumstances.

Literal Analysis

A literal analysis of 2 Timothy 4:2 is necessary to observe the textual structure, imperative force, and translational nuances of Paul’s exhortation. In the Greek text, the verse is structured around a sequence of imperative verbs centered on the primary command κήρυξον τὸν λόγον (“preach the word”), followed by instructions that describe the manner, urgency, and continuity of gospel proclamation.²⁶ The syntactical arrangement of these imperatives highlights the active and authoritative nature of the apostolic mandate entrusted to Timothy.

Most English translations preserve the imperative force of the verse while rendering the temporal expressions εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως with slight interpretive variations. The KJV translates the phrase as “in season, out of season,” emphasizing continuity regardless of circumstances. Similarly, the NASB and NIV render the phrase “in season and out of season,” maintaining the formal contrast between favorable and unfavorable situations. Meanwhile, the NLT expands the phrase as “whether the time is favorable or not,” making explicit the contextual contrast between receptive and unreceptive ministry conditions. These translational variations indicate that εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως carry not merely chronological significance, but also contextual and theological implications concerning the continuity of gospel proclamation.²⁷

²⁴ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles (Works Biblical Commentary 46)*.

²⁵ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles (International Critical Commentary)*.

²⁶ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles (Works Biblical Commentary 46)*.

²⁷ Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*.

Aska Aprilano Pattinaja, et al.

Structurally, the verse contains a chain of imperative verbs: κήρυξον (“preach”), ἐπίστηθι (“be ready” or “stand ready”), ἔλεγξον (“reprove”), ἐπιτίμησον (“rebuke”), and παρακάλεσον (“exhort” or “encourage”). This succession of imperatives creates a strong rhetorical emphasis that portrays gospel ministry as urgent, active, and continuous.²⁸ The command κήρυξον establishes proclamation of the word as the central task of ministry, while the subsequent imperatives describe the preacher’s readiness and pastoral responsibilities in confronting error, correcting wrongdoing, and strengthening believers.

The concluding phrase, ἐν πάσῃ μακροθυμίᾳ καὶ διδαχῇ (“with all patience and teaching”), further qualifies the manner in which these ministerial responsibilities are to be carried out. The expression emphasizes that proclamation must be accompanied not only by authority and urgency, but also by perseverance, patience, and doctrinal instruction.²⁹ Thus, the literal structure of 2 Timothy 4:2 presents gospel proclamation as an authoritative, continuous, and disciplined ministry responsibility that transcends favorable and unfavorable circumstances.

Lexical and Grammatical Analysis

The lexical and grammatical structure of 2 Timothy 4:2 is dominated by a sequence of imperative verbs that collectively emphasize urgency, readiness, perseverance, and continuity in gospel proclamation. Among these expressions, the paired adverbs εὐκαιρῶς (*eukairos*) and ἀκαιρῶς (*akairos*) function as central temporal qualifiers that shape the theological force of Paul’s exhortation.³⁰ The verse contains several key terms—κήρυξον (*kēryxon*), ἐπίστηθι (*epistēthi*), εὐκαιρῶς (*eukairos*), ἀκαιρῶς (*akairos*), ἔλεγξον (*elengxon*), ἐπιτίμησον (*epitimēson*), and παρακάλεσον (*parakaleson*)—which together form an interconnected grammatical structure emphasizing faithful proclamation under all circumstances.

The primary imperative κήρυξον (*kēryxon*), derived from κηρύσσω (*kērussō*), literally means “to proclaim,” “to announce publicly,” or “to herald officially.” According to BDAG, the term denotes public proclamation performed with delegated authority, particularly in contexts involving official announcements or divine messages.³¹ In Greco-Roman culture, the κήρυξ (*kēryx*) functioned as an authorized herald who communicated the message of a ruler or governing authority. Consequently, Paul’s use of κήρυξον emphasizes that Timothy’s preaching ministry derives its authority not from rhetorical skill, personal opinion, or social approval, but from the divine commission entrusted to him as a servant of the gospel.³² The aorist imperative form further conveys urgency and decisiveness, stressing that proclamation of the word constitutes an immediate and non-negotiable ministerial responsibility.

²⁸ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*.

²⁹ Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus (Based on the New International Version)*.

³⁰ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*.

³¹ Walter Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (BDAG)*, 4th ed. (Chicago London: University of Chicago Press, 2021).

³² Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*.

The second imperative, ἐπίστηθι (epistēthi), derives from ἐφίστημι (ephistēmi), which can mean “to stand by,” “to be present,” or “to be ready.” BDAG defines the term in imperative contexts as readiness for immediate action or active presence in response to a particular situation.³³ Grammatically, the aorist imperative form communicates decisive readiness and sustained attentiveness. In 2 Timothy 4:2, the term reinforces the preacher’s obligation to remain constantly prepared for ministry regardless of external circumstances. Towner explains that the expression implies active ministerial vigilance rather than passive waiting, particularly amid changing pastoral situations and opposition to the gospel.³⁴ Thus, ἐπίστηθι highlights the preacher’s continual readiness to fulfill the apostolic mandate under both favorable and adverse conditions.

Particular attention must be given to the paired expressions εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως, both of which derive from the noun καιρός (kairos). Unlike χρόνος (chronos), which generally refers to measurable or sequential time, καιρός emphasizes a decisive, meaningful, or opportune moment. This distinction is important because Paul’s use of εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως in 2 Timothy 4:2 does not merely concern chronological timing, but ministry carried out amid differing existential and theological circumstances. In classical Greek rhetoric and philosophy, καιρός frequently referred to the decisive or appropriate moment for action, speech, or decision-making. The term often carried the nuance of strategic timing or a critical opportunity demanding immediate response.³⁵

In the Septuagint, καιρός frequently denotes appointed times within God’s providential activity and sovereign purposes (cf. Eccl. 3:1; Dan. 7:12 LXX). This usage demonstrates that καιρός often carries theological significance related to divinely appointed moments rather than merely chronological duration. Likewise, Pauline usage frequently associates καιρός with significant moments within salvation history and gospel ministry (cf. Rom. 5:6; Gal. 6:9–10; Eph. 5:16). TDNT explains that καιρός in Pauline theology commonly refers to decisive moments shaped by God’s redemptive activity and divine purpose within the history of salvation.³⁶

The adverb εὐκαίρως combines the prefix εὖ (“good,” “favorable,” or “appropriate”) with καιρός, thereby conveying the meaning “at an opportune time” or “under favorable circumstances.” Conversely, ἀκαίρως contains the privative prefix ἀ-, expressing negation or opposition, and thus denotes “inopportune,” “at an unfavorable time,” or “under adverse conditions.”³⁷ The juxtaposition of these two adverbs forms a rhetorical antithesis emphasizing continuity of proclamation irrespective of external circumstances. Marshall argues that Paul intentionally employs this contrast to stress the preacher’s obligation to proclaim the gospel whether the ministry context is receptive or

³³ Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (BDAG)*.

³⁴ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*.

³⁵ Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon, Ninth Edition with a Revised Supplement*, 9th ed., ed. Sir Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie (Oxford England: Clarendon Press, 1996).

³⁶ Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament. Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), <https://doi.org/10.2307/3264881>.

³⁷ Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (BDAG)*.

Aska Aprilano Pattinaja, et al.

resistant.³⁸ Therefore, εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως should not be interpreted merely as chronological references, but as theological expressions describing gospel ministry carried out amid both acceptance and opposition. Through this lexical contrast, Paul emphasizes that the legitimacy of gospel proclamation is determined not by external receptivity, but by faithfulness to the divine mandate entrusted to the preacher.

The additional imperatives ἔλεγξον (elengxon), ἐπιτίμησον (epitimēson), and παρακάλεσον (parakaleson) further clarify the comprehensive nature of gospel ministry. The verb ἐλέγχω (elenchō) denotes exposing error or bringing conviction through correction, while ἐπιτιμάω (epitimaō) conveys authoritative rebuke or disciplinary warning.³⁹ Meanwhile, παρακαλέω (parakaleō) carries the dual sense of exhortation and encouragement, often involving comfort, strengthening, and pastoral support.⁴⁰ Together, these imperatives demonstrate that preaching ministry in 2 Timothy 4:2 is not merely informational proclamation, but also corrective, disciplinary, and pastoral in character. Paul therefore portrays proclamation of the word as a ministry that simultaneously confronts error, strengthens believers, and nurtures the spiritual formation of the church.

Finally, the phrase ἐν πάσῃ μακροθυμίᾳ καὶ διδαχῇ (“with all patience and teaching”) functions grammatically as a qualifying expression governing the entire sequence of imperatives. The noun μακροθυμία (makrothymia) refers to patience, endurance, or long-suffering, often associated with divine patience in Pauline theology (cf. Rom. 2:4), while διδαχή (didachē) emphasizes doctrinal instruction and faithful teaching.⁴¹ Consequently, the lexical and grammatical structure of 2 Timothy 4:2 portrays gospel proclamation as an authoritative, disciplined, and persevering ministry rooted in theological faithfulness rather than favorable circumstances.

Syntactic Analysis

Syntactically, 2 Timothy 4:2 is structured as a sequence of imperatives centered on the primary command κήρυξον τὸν λόγον (“preach the word”). The verse contains a chain of coordinated imperative verbs followed by qualifying adverbial expressions that together create a forceful and urgent rhetorical structure. This arrangement reflects a characteristic Pauline asyndetic style, in which commands are presented without conjunctions in order to intensify emphasis and rhetorical urgency.⁴² The syntactic flow of the verse therefore portrays gospel proclamation as continuous, active, and comprehensive ministerial action.

The central syntactic element of the verse is the imperative clause κήρυξον τὸν λόγον. The aorist active imperative κήρυξον functions as the governing verb for the entire sequence, establishing proclamation of the word as the primary ministerial responsibility. The direct object τὸν λόγον immediately follows the imperative verb, creating a close

³⁸ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles (International Critical Commentary)*.

³⁹ Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (BDAG)*.

⁴⁰ J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains (Vol. 1)*. (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1989).

⁴¹ Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus (Based on the New International Version)*.

⁴² Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles (International Critical Commentary)*.

syntactic relationship that foregrounds “the word” as the essential content of proclamation. According to Fee, this syntactic arrangement reinforces the authority and centrality of divine revelation within pastoral ministry.⁴³ The placement of the object directly after the imperative also contributes to the rhetorical emphasis on the inseparability between proclamation and the gospel message itself.

The imperative ἐπίστηθι functions syntactically as a subordinate imperative that clarifies the mode and continuity of the primary command κήρυξον. Its position before the paired adverbs εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως creates a syntactic relationship in which the adverbial pair modifies not merely the preacher’s readiness, but the entire activity of gospel proclamation. Marshall and Knight argue that the broad syntactic scope of these adverbs is more consistent with the rhetorical structure of the verse because the temporal contrast governs the wider imperative sequence rather than a single verb alone.⁴⁴ Consequently, εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως function syntactically as adverbial qualifiers expressing continuity of ministry under both favorable and unfavorable circumstances.

The sequence of imperatives ἔλεγξον, ἐπιτίμησον, and παρακάλεσον forms a coordinated triadic structure that further develops the practical dimensions of gospel proclamation. Syntactically, these imperatives stand in parallel without explicit conjunctions, creating rhythmic progression and rhetorical intensity. The absence of expressed objects represents a form of ellipsis in which the implied recipients are understood contextually as members of the congregation or those influenced by false teaching. This compressed imperative structure contributes to the rapid rhetorical movement of the passage and underscores the comprehensive responsibility of pastoral ministry.⁴⁵ The syntactic parallelism also demonstrates that correction, rebuke, and encouragement are inseparable components of faithful proclamation.

The concluding prepositional phrase, ἐν πάσῃ μακροθυμίᾳ καὶ διδαχῇ (“with all patience and teaching”), functions syntactically as a manner adjunct governing the entire chain of imperatives. Rather than modifying only the final imperative, the phrase provides a comprehensive qualification for the execution of all ministerial actions described in the verse. Lea and Griffin note that the placement of the phrase at the end of the sentence gives it a broad syntactic scope extending across the entire imperative sequence.⁴⁶ Thus, the syntactic structure of 2 Timothy 4:2 balances urgency with pastoral restraint, demonstrating that proclamation of the word must be exercised with patience, doctrinal instruction, and sustained pastoral responsibility.

Theological Analysis

Theologically, 2 Timothy 4:2 occupies a central position within the theology of ministry in the Pastoral Epistles. Paul’s command κήρυξον τὸν λόγον (“preach the word”) establishes proclamation of the gospel as a divine mandate grounded in the authority of

⁴³ Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus (Based on the New International Version)*.

⁴⁴ Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*.

⁴⁵ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*.

⁴⁶ Thomas Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture (Volume 34) (The New American Commentary)* (Nashville, Tennessee: Holman Reference, 1992).

Aska Aprilano Pattinaja, et al.

God rather than in human rhetorical ability or ministerial status. Within Pauline theology, proclamation is not merely communicative activity, but participation in God's redemptive mission through faithful transmission of the apostolic message. Towner argues that the central concern of the Pastoral Epistles is the preservation and continuation of the gospel through authoritative teaching and faithful proclamation across generations.⁴⁷ Within the theological framework of the Pastoral Epistles, faithful proclamation functions as the primary means for preserving apostolic doctrine and maintaining ecclesial continuity amid false teaching and spiritual decline. Guerrero likewise observes that 2 Timothy presents ministry as a form of theological continuity in which future generations of believers are shaped through faithful preservation and transmission of the apostolic message.⁴⁸ This perspective further reinforces the theological emphasis of 2 Timothy 4:2, where proclamation of the word functions not only as individual ministerial responsibility, but also as participation in sustaining the continuity of the gospel within the life of the church.

The paired expressions εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως further contribute to the theological dimension of perseverance and ministerial endurance within Paul's exhortation. Rather than functioning merely as temporal references, these expressions establish a theological framework in which proclamation of the gospel transcends favorable and unfavorable circumstances. Marshall explains that Paul employs this rhetorical contrast to emphasize continuity of proclamation regardless of receptivity or resistance within the ministry context.⁴⁹ In this sense, εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως reflect a theology of faithfulness in which obedience to the divine commission remains constant amid changing historical, social, and ecclesial conditions. Consequently, proclamation in 2 Timothy 4:2 should be understood not merely as ecclesial duty, but as participation in God's continuing redemptive mission within history.

This theological perspective is closely related to the broader Pauline understanding of suffering and endurance in ministry. Throughout the Pastoral Epistles, perseverance in proclamation is consistently associated with opposition, hardship, and doctrinal conflict (cf. 2 Tim. 1:8; 2:3; 3:10–12). Mounce notes that Paul's final exhortations to Timothy are framed by the expectation that faithful ministry inevitably involves suffering and resistance.⁵⁰ Consequently, εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως should be interpreted within an eschatological and missional framework in which gospel proclamation continues irrespective of acceptance, rejection, or external adversity. Theological faithfulness, therefore, is measured not by ministerial success or social approval, but by perseverance in fulfilling the apostolic mandate entrusted by God.

The sequence of imperatives—ἐλεγξον, ἐπιτίμησον, and παρακάλεσον—also reveals the theological comprehensiveness of pastoral ministry. These commands

⁴⁷ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*.

⁴⁸ Corinna Y. Guerrero, "2 Timothy: Forged in the Past for the Work to Come," in *Latinx Perspectives on the New Testament*, ed. Osvaldo D. Vena and Leticia A. Guardiola-Sáenz (Paul Street, London: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2022), 297–306, <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781978719958.ch-16>.

⁴⁹ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles (International Critical Commentary)*.

⁵⁰ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles (Worlds Biblical Commentary 46)*.

demonstrate that proclamation of the word includes corrective, disciplinary, and restorative dimensions. According to Fee, the pastoral task in the Pastoral Epistles involves guarding doctrinal truth while simultaneously nurturing the spiritual formation of the church through instruction, correction, and encouragement.⁵¹ Thus, preaching ministry in 2 Timothy 4:2 is presented not merely as declarative proclamation, but as theological participation in the formation, preservation, and edification of the covenant community.

Furthermore, the concluding phrase ἐν πάσῃ μακροθυμίᾳ καὶ διδασκῆ (“with all patience and teaching”) reinforces the theological balance between authority and pastoral endurance. The inclusion of μακροθυμία highlights that faithful proclamation requires sustained perseverance and patient endurance amid difficult ministry circumstances. At the same time, διδασκῆ underscores the importance of doctrinal instruction as an essential component of ecclesial stability and theological continuity.⁵² Knight observes that the combination of patience and teaching reflects Paul’s concern that pastoral ministry must remain both doctrinally faithful and pastorally responsible.

Therefore, the theology of 2 Timothy 4:2 presents gospel proclamation as participation in the *missio Dei* through faithful, persevering, and doctrinally grounded ministry. Within this theological framework, εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως function not merely as rhetorical contrasts, but as theological expressions that define the continuity of proclamation amid both acceptance and opposition. Paul’s exhortation ultimately constructs a theology of ministry in which faithfulness to the divine commission transcends external circumstances and remains rooted in obedience to God’s redemptive purpose.

Explanation of the Meaning of the Words *Eukairos* And *Akairos*

The paired expressions εὐκαίρως (*eukairos*) and ἀκαίρως (*akairos*) in 2 Timothy 4:2 constitute one of the central theological emphases of Paul’s exhortation to Timothy. These expressions are not merely temporal references describing favorable and unfavorable moments, but theological qualifiers that define the continuity and faithfulness of gospel proclamation under all circumstances. Their placement within the imperative sequence of 2 Timothy 4:2 demonstrates that Paul intentionally frames proclamation of the word within a theology of perseverance, endurance, and unwavering obedience to the apostolic mandate.

Etymologically, εὐκαίρως derives from the prefix εὖ (*eu*), meaning “good,” “appropriate,” or “favorable,” combined with καιρός (*kairos*), which refers to a decisive, opportune, or meaningful moment. Conversely, ἀκαίρως consists of the privative prefix ἀ-, expressing negation or opposition, attached to καιρός, thereby conveying the sense of “inopportune,” “unfavorably,” or “under adverse conditions.”⁵³ The lexical contrast between these two adverbs creates a rhetorical antithesis that emphasizes continuity of action regardless of external circumstances. According to BDAG, εὐκαίρως refers to

⁵¹ Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus (Based on the New International Version)*.

⁵² Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*.

⁵³ Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (BDAG)*.

Aska Aprilano Pattinaja, et al.

acting under favorable or suitable conditions, whereas ἀκαίρως denotes action performed when circumstances appear unsuitable or resistant.⁵⁴

The theological significance of these expressions becomes clearer when examined in relation to the semantic range of καιρός within Greek literature and biblical theology. In classical Greek rhetoric and philosophy, καιρός often referred to the decisive or proper moment for speech, action, or decision-making. LSJ notes that the term frequently carried the sense of strategic timing or critical opportunity requiring immediate response.⁵⁵ Unlike χρόνος (*chronos*), which generally refers to measurable or sequential time, καιρός emphasizes qualitative and meaningful time. This distinction is significant because Paul's exhortation in 2 Timothy 4:2 concerns not merely chronological timing, but theological readiness and continuity of ministry amid changing circumstances.

In the Septuagint, καιρός frequently denotes divinely appointed moments within God's sovereign activity and redemptive plan (cf. Eccl. 3:1; Dan. 7:12 LXX). The term therefore carries theological implications beyond ordinary temporality, often referring to moments shaped by divine providence and covenantal history. Similarly, Pauline theology consistently employs καιρός in relation to salvation history, divine action, and faithful perseverance in ministry (cf. Rom. 5:6; Gal. 6:9–10; Eph. 5:16). TDNT explains that καιρός in Pauline usage frequently signifies decisive moments determined by God's redemptive purpose rather than merely human scheduling or opportunity.⁵⁶ Consequently, the expressions εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως in 2 Timothy 4:2 should be interpreted within a theological framework shaped by divine mission, providence, and ministerial endurance.

Within this framework, εὐκαίρως may be understood as circumstances in which gospel proclamation is received openly and positively. Such moments include contexts where audiences respond receptively to the gospel message, where ministry opportunities develop favorably, and where proclamation proceeds without significant opposition. The book of Acts records several examples of such receptive situations, including Paul's ministry in Berea, where listeners eagerly received and examined the Scriptures (Acts 17:10–12). In these situations, proclamation appears to occur within a “favorable kairos,” namely circumstances conducive to the spread and reception of the gospel message.

However, Paul's exhortation deliberately pairs εὐκαίρως with ἀκαίρως in order to prevent ministry from becoming dependent upon favorable conditions alone. The expression ἀκαίρως describes situations in which proclamation encounters resistance, rejection, indifference, suffering, or hostility. Within the immediate context of 2 Timothy, Paul warns that a time will come when people “will not endure sound teaching” (2 Tim. 4:3–4). Thus, ἀκαίρως reflects ministry carried out amid doctrinal opposition, cultural resistance, and spiritual decline. Mounce explains that Paul's exhortation assumes that faithful ministry inevitably involves periods of rejection and adversity.⁵⁷ Therefore,

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon, Ninth Edition with a Revised Supplement*.

⁵⁶ Kittel and Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament. Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley*.

⁵⁷ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles (Works Biblical Commentary 46)*.

proclamation during ἀκαίρως becomes a theological expression of obedience that transcends public acceptance or ministerial comfort.

The pairing of εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως also reveals a theology of perseverance central to the Pastoral Epistles. Paul consistently portrays ministry as participation in God’s mission amid suffering, hardship, and opposition (cf. 2 Tim. 1:8; 2:3; 3:10–12). In this context, the preacher’s faithfulness is not measured by external success or audience response, but by steadfast obedience to the divine commission. Marshall argues that the contrast between εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως emphasizes continuity of proclamation irrespective of changing social and ecclesial conditions.⁵⁸ Thus, the legitimacy of gospel ministry is grounded not in favorable opportunity, but in fidelity to the apostolic mandate entrusted by God.

From a missiological perspective, these paired expressions demonstrate that the gospel transcends temporal, cultural, and situational limitations. Gospel proclamation is not conditioned by social acceptance, political security, or emotional convenience, but by participation in the *missio Dei*. Paul’s exhortation therefore constructs a theology of ministry in which every moment—whether favorable or adverse—becomes a context for faithful witness. Chrysostom similarly emphasized that faithful preaching is determined not by the convenience of the moment, but by obedience to God’s command.⁵⁹

Ultimately, εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως should be understood not merely as rhetorical opposites describing “good” and “bad” times, but as theological expressions that construct a paradigm of continuous gospel proclamation rooted in perseverance, faithfulness, and obedience to God’s redemptive mission. Through this contrast, Paul presents ministry as a vocation that transcends fluctuating human circumstances and remains anchored in the enduring authority of the divine word.

The Implications of *Eukairos* and *Akairos* for Gospel Preachers

The lexical-theological meaning of εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως in 2 Timothy 4:2 carries significant implications for understanding the nature of gospel ministry within the context of the Pastoral Epistles. Paul’s exhortation demonstrates that proclamation of the word is not conditioned by favorable circumstances, ministerial convenience, or social acceptance, but by faithfulness to the apostolic mandate entrusted by God. Consequently, ministry in both receptive and resistant situations becomes part of the theological identity of the gospel preacher.

First, the paired expressions εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως imply that gospel ministry requires continual readiness under all circumstances. Paul’s use of the imperative ἐπίστηθι together with the temporal contrast emphasizes sustained vigilance and active availability for proclamation regardless of changing situations. Within this framework, readiness should not be understood merely as practical preparedness, but as theological obedience rooted in awareness that proclamation belongs to God’s redemptive mission. The preacher is therefore called to maintain faithfulness amid shifting cultural conditions,

⁵⁸ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles (International Critical Commentary)*.

⁵⁹ John. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Second Timothy*. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 13*, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994).

doctrinal challenges, and social opposition without allowing external circumstances to determine the continuity of proclamation.

Second, the contrast between εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως demonstrates that the legitimacy of ministry is not determined by external success or favorable reception. In the immediate context of 2 Timothy 4:3–4, Paul anticipates situations in which sound doctrine will be resisted and truth rejected. Theological faithfulness, therefore, is measured not by numerical growth, public approval, or ministerial popularity, but by perseverance in proclaiming the apostolic message. This implication is particularly important within contemporary ministry contexts where proclamation is often shaped by pragmatic pressures, cultural accommodation, or institutional interests. Paul's exhortation emphasizes that doctrinal integrity must remain central even when proclamation becomes socially unpopular or culturally resisted.

Third, εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως contribute to a theology of ministerial perseverance closely related to Pauline theology of suffering. Throughout the Pastoral Epistles, faithful proclamation is consistently associated with hardship, opposition, and endurance (cf. 2 Tim. 1:8; 2:3; 3:10–12). Consequently, rejection and adversity should not be interpreted as evidence of ministerial failure, but as part of participation in the apostolic mission. Within this theological framework, perseverance in proclamation becomes an expression of obedience to God rather than dependence upon favorable outcomes or immediate visible success.

Finally, the theological relationship between εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως reinforces the understanding that gospel proclamation participates in the *missio Dei*, which transcends historical, cultural, and situational limitations. The continuity of proclamation under both favorable and unfavorable circumstances demonstrates that ministry is ultimately grounded in God's sovereign redemptive purpose rather than human approval or societal acceptance. Thus, every ministry context—whether receptive or resistant—becomes a setting for faithful witness to the gospel. Through this perspective, εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως function not merely as temporal descriptions, but as theological expressions that construct a paradigm of continuous proclamation rooted in perseverance, doctrinal faithfulness, and obedience to God's mission.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the paired expressions εὐκαίρως (*eukairos*) and ἀκαίρως (*akairos*) in 2 Timothy 4:2 function not merely as rhetorical references to favorable and unfavorable circumstances, but as theological expressions that construct a paradigm of continuous gospel proclamation rooted in perseverance, doctrinal faithfulness, and obedience to the divine mandate. Through lexical, syntactical, and theological analysis, the study shows that Paul's exhortation emphasizes continuity of proclamation irrespective of acceptance, rejection, social resistance, or ministerial adversity. The findings further reveal that the theological significance of εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως is closely related to Pauline theology of ministerial endurance within the framework of the *missio Dei*. Gospel proclamation is therefore understood not as ministry

dependent upon external success or favorable conditions, but as faithful participation in God’s redemptive mission across all circumstances. In this sense, the study contributes a lexical-theological interpretation of 2 Timothy 4:2 by positioning εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως as theological categories of ministerial continuity rather than merely temporal contrasts. Future research may further explore the relationship between Pauline theology of καιρός and early patristic interpretations of mission and perseverance, particularly within the writings of Chrysostom and Augustine. In addition, further studies may examine how the theological framework of εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως can contribute to contemporary discussions on gospel proclamation within digital ministry, marginalized communities, and contexts of religious opposition.

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