

Mid Week • 2 Timothy 2:14-26

INTRODUCTION

Let's set the scene as we get in to tonight's study. We're picking it up at v. 14 of chapter 2 –

The Apostle Paul is in prison in Rome.

He's been arrested and tried as a dangerous peddler of an illegal religion, one that presents a threat to the stability of the Empire. He's already been cleared of charges of conspiring to burn the City of Rome.

But now he's facing a guilty verdict for being a rebel.

The punishment is beheading, and all Paul is doing is awaiting the setting of the date for the carrying out of his sentence.

As he waits, he writes to his protégé, Timothy, who was pastoring the Church in Ephesus.

Paul dearly wants to see his friend before the end so this letter was sent to ask him to come, and quickly.

But Paul knows that he may be executed at any time and Timothy might not make it there before he's gone.

He knows Tim has been having a rough go of it in Ephesus.

The church has been rocked again and again with false teachers who have led split after split.

Also, persecution from without has been turned up – so Timothy and the faithful are getting hammered from both side.

Paul writes to encourage Timothy who he knows tends to be timid and lacks perseverance.

This letter aims at steeling Timothy by laying a sober charge on Him to be a man and endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

In the first half of this chapter, which we looked at last week, we see Paul placing a serious challenge before Tim to not grow weak or shrink back but to be strong in the grace God has given him to be the pastor of Ephesus.

CHAPTER 2 – PART 2

14 Remind *them* of these things, . . .

What things? The things of vs. 11-13, which is a hymn sung in the early church.

Even though it was something the believers sang when they gathered together, it stood in danger of being forgotten.

As we saw last week, vs. 11-13 speak of our union with Christ through faith.

If we believe in Him, then our old nature died with Him on the cross and now we live a new life, empowered by His resurrection.

If our faith endures the trials of this life, then we will receive the reward.

If our faith *fails* and we *finally* turn away from the Lord, then in the end, He will turn away from us.

But even when we stumble and fall along the way, when our faith is less than perfect, God remains faithful and holds forth to us the promise of forgiveness and restoration if we will only turn to Him once again.

Paul tells Tim – Remind them of these things!

Remind those who are being persecuted not to give up but to endure.

Remind those who are being seduced by the lies and distortions of the false teachers not to turn from the truth that is in Christ.

Remind those who have stumbled and fallen along the way that if they will only turn to the Lord in sincere repentance and confession – God is faithful and will restore them.

Don't just sing the songs – live the life!

There's a song by Matt Redman titled, *Now To Live The Life*

The words go – “Many are the words we speak. Many are the songs we sing. Many kinds of offerings. Now- to live the life!”

It's a simple song with a profound lesson!

We come, we worship, we hear – then we leave.

Do we leave with a heart and mind to *live* what we've just sung and heard?

Think about the *meaning* of the words in the songs of worship and praise we sing!

They speak of God's love and justice – His mighty power.

They speak of His forgiveness – His cleansing, His matchless

grace and mercy.

They speak of our unity and oneness before the Lord.

When the music fades and the sanctuary empties while the fellowship hall fills, do we do what we've just studied and sang?

“Many are the words we speak. Many are the songs we sing. Many kinds of offerings. Now- to live the life!”

The word “remind” is a present infinitive – so Paul is saying “KEEP on reminding them.”

While it ought to be the aim of every pastor to take his flock higher and higher in the things of the Spirit – he must never forget that height is built on a solid and deep foundation.

So he will return to the foundational truths of the Christian faith again and again.

Most all the errors that creep in to divide the church are denials of the Faith's foundations.

The pastor will therefore be diligent to continually remind his people of what the Bible teaches regarding these things.

And that leads us to what Paul says next . . .

14 Remind *them* of these things, charging *them* before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.

Timothy was also to continue confronting false teachers with their error and warning them to stop their gross distortions of the truth.

These false teachers were masters at taking words, gutting them of their true meaning and pouring new meaning into them.

Then, pretending to be scholars, they were peddling their error to gullible people who didn't know any better.

The cults do this – they take words that are precious to the believer, gut them of their meaning, and pour new meanings into them.

The Jesus of Mormonism is not God incarnate – he is a spirit child of Elohim, who was once a Mormon man on a planet named Kolob who was elevated to the place of deity because he was a really good Mormon on his home world.

This Mormon God Elohim, had celestial sex with one of his many celestial wives and produced the spirit child Jesus, the brother of another spirit child named Lucifer.

Then, Elohim took on the form of a man and had relations with Mary so that they could prepare a human body for the Spirit child Jesus to enter and live on earth.

So – if you talk with a Mormon and say you believe in Jesus, he or she will nod their head and say they do too, but it’s a completely different Jesus.

The Jesus of the Watchtower, the Jehovah’s Witnesses is not the Eternal Son of God; their Jesus is an incarnation of the archangel Michael.

The cults redefine other words like, salvation, grace, works, faith, the Holy Spirit, and a host of others.

Just as Paul has been “charging” Timothy with instructions, now he tells Timothy to charge *others* that they stay true to the faith and not get caught up in these word games.

15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The word *diligent* here means to *apply every effort*.

If you have an Old King Jimmy, it’s translated as *study*.

That’s because the old usage of the word *study* meant to be diligent or zealous.

If we say someone is *studious*, we mean that they are applying themselves in a concentrated way – and that’s the idea behind the Greek word here.

Earlier, in the chapter, Paul likened Timothy to a soldier in battle, an athlete in the heat of competition, and a hard-working farmer – so here, he likens him to a laborer whose foreman will soon be by to inspect his work.

The phrase “rightly dividing” is actually a work-word.

Literally it meant to “cut-straight” and was used of the skilled farmer who could plow in straight neat rows, or a carpenter who was able to make a straight cut, or a seamstress who could sew a straight line.

Masons especially used this word as a skill of a master-craftsman.

The excellent mason was one who could “cut-straight” when chiseling stone.

Paul says that Timothy is a spiritual laborer whose work is to cut-

straight in the Word of God.

This stands in contradiction to the false teachers whose devious and circular travels through scripture were calculated to lead people astray.

Tim was to apply himself to this – bending every effort to the study of the scriptures, making sure he understood what was there, and then faithfully sharing that with the people.

Paul knows the day will come when his and Timothy's work will be inspected.

The way to avoid embarrassment is to make sure the ministry has been built on and is sustained by the careful study and application of God's Word.

Everything and anything else will result in shame!

- 16 But shun profane *and* idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.**
- 17 And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort,**
- 18 who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.**

While Timothy is busy studying and teaching God's Word, he must avoid the trap of getting caught up in controversies and movements that are nothing more than vain babblings.

The word "profane" means "outside the temple" and refers to that which is void of God.

Some *religious* talk is actually *godless* in that it is a blanket denial of God's word.

The teaching of the false teachers was like that – it sounded spiritual, but it was wide of truth, and so empty of God.

Paul tells Timothy to stay away from these discussion altogether.

And even though Timothy does stay away, the discussions will grow and progress into even greater ungodliness and sin.

Eventually, they will be like gangrene, which is the word Paul uses here translated as *cancer*.

In the same way that gangrene spreads, infects, and kills other tissue, so false doctrine spreads and infects the church.

This infection must be exposed and removed.
Only the sound doctrine of the Word of God can keep a church
healthy and growing. [\[1\]](#)

Paul named two false teachers who were examples of this kind of
godless chatter that spread spiritual infection.

Hymenaeus is mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:20 though this is the first
time we meet Philetus.

Both of them “wandered from the truth” by teaching that the
resurrection had already taken place.

We’re not sure in what way they were teaching this but they were
guilty of doing what Paul has already condemned in this
chapter – of redefining words and leading people from the
foundations of the Faith into error.

In 1 Cor. 15, Paul makes it very clear that the bodily resurrection
of Christ and the future bodily resurrection of the Church is a
foundational doctrine of the Faith.

To deny it is to pass outside the bounds of orthodoxy – you can’t
be a Christian and deny the resurrection.

Hymenaeus and Philetus had done that.

Paul’s purpose in this letter is to both encourage and challenge
Timothy.

The challenge has come in the first 18 verses of this chapter – now
for some encouragement!

19 Nevertheless . . .

Despite teachers like Hymenaeus and Philetus and the damage they
have done to the Church -

**the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The
Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Let everyone who
names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”**

**20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold
and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor
and some for dishonor.**

**21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter,
he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for
the Master, prepared for every good work.**

Paul now turns to use a vast estate and mansion as an illustration.

The great house is the church – and it is built on a foundation secured by two rock solid truths –

- 1) “The Lord knows those who are His” (Num. 16:5)
- 2) “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity (Num. 16:26)

The use of seals was a common practice in the ancient world

When closing a document or letter, wax was dripped on the seam to close it, and then an identifying ring or stamp was pressed into the wax before it set up to show the owner or author.

Crates and cargo was sealed in the same way – the seal signifying ownership.

When Paul says the solid foundation of God stands with the seal of these two truths, he means that the Church is based on two unalterable and corresponding facts.

False teachers may attack the church and at times do it great damage.

The church itself may go through periods of trial and darkness.

Persecution will hammer away at the church throughout the ages.

But the church is built on the Faithfulness of God who knows those who genuinely belong to Him, and He will never fail His people.

And His people – will prove themselves to be so, because no matter what error sweeps through, or who falls away, or what trouble comes, they will remain true to the Lord.

Paul then moves from the *foundation* of the house to its furnishings, vessels which are used around the house for various purposes.

He divides these purposes into two broad categories –

- 1) honorable vessels used for storing precious and valuable things
- 2) dishonorable vessels used for things like wash water or as a bedpan

The honorable vessels are made of precious metal while the dishonorable vessels are made of common materials.

While the true church, the *invisible* church, is built on the foundation of God’s grace and man’s response – the *visible* church is populated by people who are both genuine and fake.

The genuine are vessels of honor which hold the precious gift of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The fake are vessels of dishonor which are void of truth and are filled only with that which is worthless.

But Paul says the vessels of dishonor can at any time empty themselves of the worthless things they've been holding and instead be filled with the precious treasure of God.

Once they do, they will find they've gone from being common to precious and useful as a vessel to honor God.

Those false teachers that so troubled Timothy – though they ere vessels of dishonor full of spiritual and moral sewage, if all they did was repent, they could become productive members of God's Church.

22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Just as Timothy must be diligent to stay far from the error of the false teachers, he must also stay far from the error of his own flesh.

Just what Paul means by "youthful lusts" here is uncertain.

The word *lust* means "strong desire."

What are the strong desires of youth?

The word "lust" has driven many to conclude Paul is warning Timothy against sexual sin because that is how we usually use the word today.

But the Greek word does not carry this connotation – it simply means any strong desire or passion.

If it is for something right and good, then it can be a holy desire.

But if it's object is evil, then it is sin.

Because Paul never speaks to Timothy about his struggle with sensuality, it's likely he doesn't mean sexual sin here.

He's referring to the passions of a youthful mind and ego; things that Timothy, as a pastor, would be faced with regularly.

Things like *impatience*.

The young and immature have an idealistic belief that all someone needs to do is be shown the facts, and they'll make a dramatic and instantaneous reversal.

While it is certain God's will that we repent and change, He gives us grace and patience to change over time.

The renewing of the mind is a process that takes years.
If God gives us grace and is patient – we need to be gracious
and patient with one another.

Especially pastors need this with their people – they must be
patient.

It may be that you see a situation going on with someone else and it
seems obvious to you what they need to do – but it takes a while.
It's so easy to see other's faults while we remain blind to our own.
Pray for that person, as as they evidence an awareness that they
need to grow and change, bear with them as you see a
genuinely repentant and broken heart before the Lord.

Be patient – God is!

Now, just as the pastor needs to be patient with the flock and let the
Lord work in His time and way – so the flock needs to remember
that before he is their pastor, he too is a man who is growing.
There are going to be times when I am going to fail – maybe fail
you.

I hope and pray that you'll be gracious toward me and be patient
while I learn how to be a better man and pastor.

Just this week a family who has been centrally involved in the
ministry here chose to leave because they could not trust my
leadership.

I apologized and asked forgiveness for the way I've failed them, and I
hope the day wil come when we can be reconciled.

PATIENCE – Longsuffering – being gracious with one another, not
expecting instant perfection while we all move toward it; this is
what will maintain the integrity of the Body of Christ and protect
our unity.

Another youthful tendency is to be *harsh*.

This is the lack of tact that comes from immaturity and expresses
itself in sharp and caustic words that are meant to shut down
the other person instead of building understanding.

Rolling the eyes – throwing up the arms - setting the jaw – the
tone of voice, all these come in to play with the immature who
just want to be right and don't care how they get there.

Paul tells Timothy to stay far away from these things.

He must be careful to resist his own youthful tendencies and
instead, walk in the Spirit.

As is typical for Paul, he doesn't just give a negative – he follows it up with a positive.

The best way to stay clear of youthful passions is to be busy with the pursuit of the good, like righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

If when dealing with people his mind is set not on defending himself or just “fixing people” but on seeking righteousness and faith and love and peace, then it will all turn out alright.

Note the contrast in v. 22 . . .

Tim is to stay clear of youthful lusts, but he is to be near “those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

It would be easy for Timothy, faced as he was with so many trials and troubles to isolate himself and withdraw from fellowship.

Paul knew how important fellowship is to the health of the spirit, so he exhorted Tim to center himself among those vessels of honor there in the Ephesian church.

23 But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.

Once again, Paul tells Timothy to not get caught up in the endless word-games and pointless debates the false teachers loved to engage in.

In these contests, it's rarely truth that prevails because truth isn't valued.

The one who wins is the one who talks the longest or the most eloquently.

They are not forums for discovering what is real, but what is strong, what is popular, what is fashionable and chic.

It's best to just stay out of these discussions.

There are dozens of religious discussions on the Internet that debate all kinds of issues.

I've read many of them just to see what's out there and I'll tell you – truth is not at all the issue of concern for many of them.

It is just an endless chronicle of name-calling and insult.

Talk about strife – I found myself all worked up just reading the foolishness of some many of the messages.

Strife – who needs it?! Paul didn't, Tim didn't, you and I don't!

- 24 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient,**
- 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,**
- 26 and *that* they may come to their senses *and* escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to *do* his will.**

By “servant of the Lord” in v. 24, Paul means specifically, Timothy in his role as pastor.

The pastor must not quarrel, but instead be gentle with all.

A true servant doesn’t care about winning arguments and proving his point just so he can be right, a servant is more concerned for souls.

So, he carefully and patiently brings instruction whenever and wherever it is needed.

When someone is just set in opposition to him or the church, then he goes and humbly corrects the erring person.

Whether or not they receive the correction is between them and the Lord, but at least the pastor must correct them – again, humbly, seeking to see the Lord’s glory promoted, not his own reputation defended.

The goal of the humble correction of those who are in error is that they will come to their senses, repent, and be delivered from the deceit that has blinded them to the truth.

Because they have set themselves in opposition to the truth, they have brought disunity and division into the church and Paul calls this nothing less than being a tool of the devil.

- 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,**
- 26 and *that* they may come to their senses *and* escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to *do* his will.**

One of the devil’s chief tactics is to divide the church and to bring

disharmony among its members.

A united church, loving one another with the love of Christ is a formidable foe.

Satan knows this, so he runs through our ranks and seeks to set us at odds with one another.

Remember the story of Gideon and his band?

Gideon had 300, while the Midianites numbered into the thousands!

At night, while the Midianites were sleepy and not watching,

Gideon's band surrounded their camp with lit torches covered by clay vessels in one hand and horns in the other.

At the signal, Gideon's men broke their pitchers, revealing their light and then blew their horns like crazy.

The Midianites woke up in complete disarray, grabbed their swords and started hacking at anything that moved.

They ended up killing themselves in a great slaughter!

The devil uses this tactic time and again on the church.

We aren't watching for his stealthy positioning around us, and when he has everything neatly set up by causing little hurts and misunderstanding, miscommunications, stupid, selfish acts, and all the rest, he shouts and blows the horn and says, "Start hacking!" and guess what, we foolishly jump to do his bidding.

Here Paul says that the pastor must be one who works for unity.

If he's quarrelsome, then he is being used as one more tool of the enemy to bring division.

On the contrary, the pastor ought to be a peacemaker – one who aims at reconciliation.

He confronts error when he finds it, and then patiently works at bringing healing and unity.

[\[1\]](#) Wiersbe, Warren – Commentary on 2 Timothy