

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE - 8.27.2023

PART 25 - FAITHFUL TEACHERS

I. INTRODUCTION

2 Timothy 2:14-26

14 Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. **15** Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. **16** But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, **17** and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, **18** who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some. **19** But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

20 Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. **21** Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

22 So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. **23** Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. **24** And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, **25** correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, **26** and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

II. REMIND THEM OF THESE THINGS

- Paul now returns to his exposition of highlighting the character and nature of Timothy's ministry by employing three more images: the good worker, the honorable vessel, and the Lord's servant.
- V14 "Remind them of these things and charge them before God..."
- A recurring theme of this letter is remembering and reminding.
- Timothy is to remind the believers of what they already know, of what they have already been taught—the gospel.
- He is to retell what he received from Paul, who received it from Christ.

- That is the responsibility of the faithful teacher, to remind God's people over and over again of the content of the gospel.
- Romans 15:15-18 15 But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God 16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. 17 In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. 18 For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, 19 by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum *I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ*;
- Paul did not deviate from what Christ instructed him to teach.
- What happens when you don't continually retell and remind others of the gospel?
- Paul writes, "and charge them before God not to quarrel about words..."
- The teacher who abandons the faithful teaching of Scripture, he drifts away from Scripture as the primary source of instruction and authority, will do much damage to the church.
- "Quarreling about words" literally translates as "word-battles."
- A teacher who leaves biblical revelation and begins teaching human speculation, dislodges God's Word from being the ultimate standard and authority for what is true. That becomes the ground which breeds quarreling about words.
- Why can't we just allow the person who claims to have a personal revelation, a personal prophecy from the Lord to teach and instruct others in the church?
- Look at the effect of false teaching in the church.
- V14 does no good
- V14 ruins the hearers
- V15 leads people into more ungodliness
- V15 spreads through the church like gangrene, killing the life of the church
- V18 it upsets the faith of some
- V23 breeds more quarreling and division
- V26 those who teach it and those who receive it are ensnared by the devil.
- This is why faithful teachers must zealously guard the truth, continually preach and teach and remind God's people of what they have already heard.

III. THE PORTRAIT OF A FAITHFUL TEACHER

THE GOOD WORKER

- 15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.
- The teacher is a worker. The work they engage in is teaching.
- Two different kinds of workers are being contrasted. Good and bad workers.
- The good worker is one who is approved.
- Approved means to have proven genuineness, They have been tested and found to be authentic. They have no need to be ashamed.

- The bad worker is not approved. They have failed the test. They are not genuine and they should be deeply ashamed.
 - How is this determination made?
 - The way you can differentiate between the good worker and the bad worker is by their handling of the word of truth, the good deposit.
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- The good worker rightly handles the word of truth.
 - “Rightly handles” means literally, “to cut along a straight line.”
 - The idea is of a straight path, the word of truth is the straight path.
 - The faithful teacher, the good worker, is precise, accurate, careful in his teaching, and plain in his exposition of the word of truth.
 - He gives utmost attention and care that he is both staying on the path himself and making it easy for others to follow along the straight path.
 - Timothy is to “do his best” to present himself to God as one approved, he is to be diligent.
 - He must sweat and toil in the preparation and delivery of God’s Word.
 - Is preaching and teaching really hard work? How?
 - He is laboring to rightly understand what God’s Word teaches and present it in a way that is clear and understandable to the hearer.
 - 1 Timothy 5:17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.
 - It’s hard work because you have to handle with great care, material that is not yours, material that by its nature is offensive to some and controversial.
 - It’s hard work because like the farmer, great patience is required to see some type of harvest. You cannot always immediately see the results of faithful teaching.
 - Weekly sermon study and preparation is a heavy weight to carry.
 - They also know they will have to give account before God for how they handled the word of truth.
 - James 3:1 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.
 - That is why Paul continually exhorts Timothy to not get caught up with irreverent babble and quarrels about words, because it leads people away from what is the goal of the faithful teacher—godliness.
 - Timothy must avoid that temptation because those distractions will damage his hearers.
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- In contrast, the bad worker swerves from the word of truth.
 - “Swerve” is an archery term. It means to “miss the mark,” a failure to hit the target.
 - The truth is like a target that must be aimed at and hit.
 - Their aim is off because the truth is not what is central, it’s not the bullseye.
 - Instead of cutting a straight path, bad workers deviate, they make crooked paths.
 - Acts 13:8-10 But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹ But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him ¹⁰ and said, “You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?”
 - Elymas was a false teacher who was twisting and perverting the truth. Paul confronts and commands him to stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord.
 - Paul names two examples of crooked teachers who missed the mark and he names the truth that they deviated from.

- Hymaneaus and Alexander. These two individuals were teaching that the resurrection has already happened.
 - In other words, people did not need to place their hope in a future bodily resurrection to come. They spiritualized the resurrection.
 - Last week we looked at how the resurrection is a central and foundational doctrine of our faith.
 - They deviated from the word of truth and twisted central doctrine of the church.
 - The result was that they were upsetting the faith of their hearers.
 - False teaching is like gangrene, which slowly spreads like a disease bringing death to a fellowship.
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- But we must not despair. There is a great comfort for those who truly belong to the Lord.
 - God's true Church will not fall apart and be destroyed.
 - 19 But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."
 - God's firm foundation is the true Church.
 - Paul quotes an OT passage and a central idea as a twofold seal upon the true Church.
 - The first seal is secret and invisible, that is that the Lord knows who truly belongs to him and he will keep them safe.
 - The rebellion of Korah and the sons of Levi--Numbers 16.
 - God has a people chosen for himself and no amount of false teaching and false teachers will ultimately steal them from the Lord.
 - As destructive as false teaching and false teachers are, they will not destroy the church.
 - The second seal is public and visible, the fruit of those who claim to be Christians, can be examined.
 - "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."
 - The Spirit-regenerated life will produce a harvest of righteousness over time. That fruit is visible and can be examined.
 - The point: God's church will persevere and endure the assailment from false teaching and false teachers.
 - God's sovereignty in salvation and the witness of true believers should never cause us to think God's Church is doomed.

THE HONORABLE VESSEL

- This is about the purity that faithful teachers should possess.
 - Houses are filled with many different types of vessels,
 - The good stuff is used for special occasions. The common stuff for everyday, common use.
 - The great house is God's house, the visible church. The visible Christian community contains a mixed bag of people.
 - There are two kinds of vessels which represent two types of teachers, the honorable and dishonorable vessels are the good and bad workers.
 - Teachers are vessels, they are instruments.
 - Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.
 - Faithful teachers are considered the honorable vessels that have been consecrated, set apart as holy, eager to serve God and be used for his glory.
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- But the condition for being an honorable vessel is that they are to "cleanse themselves from what is dishonorable."
 - They are to cleanse themselves in both life and doctrine.

- This is consistent with Paul's qualifications for elders (1 Tim 3; Titus 1).
- It is consistent with Paul's exhortation: 1 Timothy 4:16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching.
- Faithful teachers avoid falsehood and error, they don't engage in the irreverent babble of false teachers.
- They pursue purity of life and doctrine.
- The metaphor of the honorable vessel and the great house is bookended by two clear calls to personal holiness.
- "Depart from iniquity" in v19 and the command to "flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart" In v22.
- Timothy is to purify himself so he can be fit for the Master's use.
- Negatively, he is to flee youthful passions. This is not just about sexual sins and lust, but all of the wayward impulses of youth.
- Honorable vessels cleanse themselves from everything that is not Christ-like.
- Positively, he is to pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace.
- 1 Tim. 6:11 But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.
- These four essential marks are the things Timothy is to pursue.
- Run from spiritual danger and run after what is spiritually good.
- That is the duty of every Christian.
- John Stott, "It is the ruthless rejection of the one in combination with the relentless pursuit of the other which Scripture enjoins upon us as the secret of holiness."
- Pursue practical holiness by the grace of God.

THE LORD'S SERVANT

- Paul refers to the faithful teacher as the Lord's servant. The faithful teacher is a slave in the Lord's house.
- Because we are the Lord's servant, we are prohibited from engaging in the foolish, senseless, and stupid controversies that breed quarrels.
- He is not forbidding all controversies because the faithful teacher will have to confront false teachers, they will have to correct their opponents.
- What he's saying is that Timothy must choose his battles.
- What is in view here is the character and behavior of the Lord's servant in how he will go about correcting those who are in error.
- And the fundamental characteristic of the Lord's servant is kindness, an ability to teach, patiently enduring evil, and correcting his opponents with gentleness.
- Elder qualifications, "not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome..." (1 Tim 3:3).
- Gentleness is the fruit that the Spirit produces (Gal. 5:23).
- The character of God's servant is everything!
- Gentleness is the attitude in which Timothy is to correct his opponents.
- The goal of having an attitude of gentleness is winning souls not winning arguments.
- The goal is his opponent's turning from error and coming to salvation.
- Too many want to win arguments and care nothing about winning souls!
- Faithful teachers want to see people turn from sin, repent of their falsehood and turn to Christ.
- Paul closes with a reminder of the spiritual warfare. There is a real enemy behind false teaching and false teachers—The devil, our adversary.
- Those who oppose the gospel are ensnared by the devil.

- The hope is that the gentle gospel witness, the patience of the Lord's servant, will open their eyes to the truth and that they will turn and repent.
- The call to ministry is arduous, labor intensive, it will be fraught with many challenges, and false teaching and teachers will need to be confronted.
- Pray for your pastor.
- As dedicated soldiers, disciplined athletes, diligent farmers, we can expect results as we devote ourselves to the work of ministry.
- As good workers, we must be accurate and clear in our exposition, cutting a straight path to the truth.
- If we cleanse ourselves from what is dishonorable, we will be useful to the Master of the house.
- If we are gentle as the Lord's true servants, as we engage in the correcting work of ministry, the Lord may perhaps grant our adversaries, repentance, salvation, and deliverance from the devil.
- It would be impossible to do all of this if we were to look only to ourselves and our own strength.
- We need the reminder to be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.
- We need to remember Jesus Christ and his powerful work of salvation.
- He was the perfect good worker.
- He was the perfect honorable vessel.
- He was the perfect servant of the Lord.
- And by his glorious work, he destroyed forever the power of the devil.
- Praise God that his Church will not be destroyed, we will triumph, because He has triumphed!

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?