



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

MISSED THE MARK! - 2 TIMOTHY 2:16-18

COLORADO

APRIL 7, 2015

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False teaching has a catastrophic effect. It carries the idea of being overturned, or overthrown spiritually. It causes confusion and doubt. These false words intentionally subvert the truth and replace it with error. This can work to the ruin, the catastrophe of those who hear it because it replaces truth with lies.¹ What's the solution for dealing with false teaching? It's handling the "word of truth" accurately. (2 Timothy 2:15) The Bible is God's inerrant, authoritative, sufficient and sole source of God's divine "word of truth". Only from Scripture can we know all other truth. We have a great responsibility to get it straight and give it straight. Paul calls Timothy to handle God's Word accurately. The mark of a faithful believer, a faithful teacher will be that they handle the Word of God, the "word of truth" with careful precision. Anything less than our maximum effort and precision in handling God's Word is shameful. We dare not deviate or distort its' message in any way. For it is God's truth alone that can save a soul.

I. MISSED THE MARK! - 2 TIMOTHY 2:16-18

2 Timothy 2:16-18: (16) "But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, (17) and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, (18) men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and thus they upset the faith of some."

Paul wants Timothy to constantly remind the church of what's important for false teachers are present, trying to subvert the Word of God with long words, theories and philosophies that can make Christianity seem like just an obscure idea. It is no different today. We have friends who have been so deceived by false teaching that misses the mark of the truth. They may believe that Jesus is God's son, but they don't believe He is God. They believe He is the highest human possible, but not God. The truth that saves has been perverted to a lie that can never save because there can be salvation in no one other than faith alone in Christ alone, through grace alone. So Paul again issues his second warning in this letter against those who would teach heresy.

A. "AVOID WORLDLY AND EMPTY CHATTER"- 2 TIMOTHY 2:16

In contrast to the workman who handles the Word of God with accurate precision, false teachers undermine the truth of God and distort the gospel. Timothy was to "avoid" false teaching; a strong, present imperative reminding Timothy to remain constantly alert to the threat of heresy in the church, don't tolerate it, don't be drawn to it. Why? Because it will only lead to "more ungodliness." Heresy will never save and cannot sanctify. Paul wrote in Titus 3:9, "But shun foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law; for they are unprofitable and worthless." 1 Timothy 6:20-21 gives clear instruction regarding false teaching, "O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and be opposing arguments

of what is falsely called knowledge which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith." Paul wants Timothy to take his responsibility to the gospel seriously. Heretical teaching was a constant threat. Only the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ can save. As believers, we not only have the responsibility to share this message, but also to keep and preserve it. This will require perpetual vigilance and the moment we drop our guard, deception creeps in. We not only have been given the gospel which brought us to salvation, but the gospel has been a good deposit, a treasure given to us to guard, keep, protect, defend, preserve and watch.

Remember, it is the Word of God that does the work of God in our lives. Our words are powerless, even the most effective words cannot save or change a life. Only the Word of God is effective in calling one to salvation, transforming a heart and renewing the mind through its sanctifying work in cooperation with the Holy Spirit. And it is God's Word that teaches us about Who God is and offers the unshakeable pillars of truth we can live by and rely upon. We must preserve the gospel of Jesus Christ from being corrupted by any means. We must defend it, oppose any false teaching of it and never let the message of the gospel be diluted or distorted. Paul would later write that he would never be a part of "adulterating the word of God". (2 Corinthians 4:2) May we be committed to the same!

B. "AND THEIR TALK WILL SPREAD LIKE GANGRENE"- 2 TIMOTHY 2:17

"Their talk", refers to any who teach contrary to the truth found in God's Word. That false teaching "will spread", or literally "will have pasture" referring to the growth that spreads rapidly.

"gangrene" Greek "gangraina" refers to a disease that spreads rapidly and in a deadly manner, cancer, if not treated immediately will lead to amputation or even death.

This metaphor emphasizes the serious danger of false teaching in the church for it will spread faster than the truth and will attack and consume the church if not dealt with promptly. False teaching spreads like a poison that corrupts and infects the minds and hearts of people in their understanding of the true, wholesome lifesaving gospel of Jesus Christ.²

Paul goes on to name two false teachers specifically that he put out of the church in Ephesus to end their destructive influence. One was mentioned in his first letter. (1 Timothy 1:20) Evangelistic work cannot go on at the expense of the purity of the church. Both go

BIBLE STUDIES

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Colorado

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hand in hand and the infection of false doctrine spreads like gangrene. The Apostle Peter wrote as a warning in 2 Peter 2:1-2; *“But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned.”* This must not be tolerated in the church of Jesus Christ.

Jude, the half-brother of Jesus would write, *“Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”* We must contend earnestly for the faith for it is under constant assault today.

C. “MEN WHO HAVE GONE ASTRAY” - 2 TIMOTHY 2:18

In contrast to those who would pervert the truth, Timothy, and all believers must be diligent to handle God’s Word with accurate precision because God’s truth matters; *it saves!* Amidst the many false teachers, Timothy must present himself as a teacher of truth.

“astray” Greek “**estochesan**” means to miss the mark, wandered away.

These men have missed the mark regarding the truth and wandered away from that truth. They were teaching that the resurrection had already taken place. But this undermines one of the central beliefs of the Christian faith. Some Greeks laughed at Paul in Acts 17:32 for speaking of the resurrection from the dead. But by denying the bodily resurrection in that it had already taken place for all, they denied the reality of and implications of Christ’s resurrection as well as our future physical resurrection of the body. But Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:13-15, *“For if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.”* Later Paul wrote, *“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body...”* (1 Corinthians 15:42-49) They were saying that the final resurrection of the living and the dead had taken place spiritually for all believers and thus attacked the physical reality of Christ’s physical resurrection. Our resurrection is linked to Christ’s. So to deny the truth about the resurrection in any way is to deny and distort the very heart of the gospel. This blasphemes God and denigrates His Word and will inevitably upset the faith of some. Their gospel was pure, unadulterated anthrax. That’s the sad truth and reveals one of the greatest perils of a false gospel. It *“upset the faith of some”*. If heard

and believed, heresy keeps some souls, and over the centuries, countless millions of them, out of the kingdom.³

We dare not be deceived. Religious deceptions can be so infectious and deadly...*eternally*. Paul warns Timothy and instructs him not to tolerate anything which is contrary to God’s truth. And yet, today, tolerance has almost become a doctrine in itself. It’s considered the loving and kind way to live. But when tolerance crosses the lines of Scripture, it’s wrong and dangerous in the church. Scripture is preeminent in determining how we live and what we believe. Yet because of tolerance, we have allowed almost anything, which leads to mediocrity and ruin in the church. Christianity light and easy believe-ism are embraced and what isn’t tolerated becomes the *“word of truth”*. All roads can lead to heaven instead of the only road which is through faith in Christ alone. And the greatest peril of all becomes a reality...lost souls.

The concern however is that as Christians become less and less familiar with Scripture and sound doctrine, they become easy prey for ideas that sound good but actually mitigates against God’s truth.⁴ We must take our responsibility to the gospel of Jesus Christ seriously and guard the treasure given to us. We must heed Paul’s warnings and remain continually alert to the threat of false teaching and expose and oppose it. As Jude says, we must contend earnestly for the faith for it is under constant assault. It is our sacred duty as believers to safeguard this good deposit, the true and only treasure in this life, given to us to keep, to watch, to guard, preserve, protect and defend. The gospel must never be corrupted or the message changed because it is this truth, not half- truths or distorted truths that save. The message must never be changed because the souls of all depend on it. It is by the *“word of truth”* that we have been saved and others *must* be saved.

¹MacArthur, John Jr., *MacArthur Commentary on 2 Timothy*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.74.

²Williams, Peter, *Opening Up 2 Timothy*. One Day Publications: Ryelands Road, Leominster, New Zealand, 2007. Pg. 53.

³MacArthur, John Jr., *MacArthur Commentary on 2 Timothy*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.80-81.

⁴MacArthur, John Jr., *MacArthur Commentary on 2 Timothy*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.73.