

## Settled in the Word

2 Timothy 2: 14-18

Paul continued to offer sound wisdom and guidance to his young protégé, Timothy. Having dealt with many who opposed him, Paul was well acquainted with the struggles of ministry among those determined to hinder his efforts. While Paul faced physical abuse and oppression frequently, there was also another attack that caused much grief and pain – damaging and hurtful words. He knew Timothy would not be immune from such attacks as he endeavored to serve the Lord and pastor the church.

As I studied this passage, I was reminded of the words of the apostle James. [James 3:6-10](#) – *And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. <sup>[7]</sup> For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: <sup>[8]</sup> But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. <sup>[9]</sup> Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. <sup>[10]</sup> Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. We have all felt the hurt of ill-timed or ill-intended words. At times these come from those within, and at times we hear accusations from those without. Words have meaning, and they bear consequence when spoken. We must be prepared to deal with hurtful words, as well as false doctrine. Both have caused great damage within the body of Christ.*

While we can't prevent hurtful or misleading words, we can prepare to deal with them when they come. The greatest defense against such attack is a thorough understanding of the Word. In order to overcome, we must be rooted and grounded in the Word. As we examine the [admonitions](#) of Paul for Timothy, I want to consider: [Settled in the Word](#).

**I. The Danger of pointless Strife** (14) – *Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.*

Beginning this admonition, Paul warned Timothy of the dangers of pointless strife often prevalent among the church. Consider:

**A. The Challenge** (14a) – *Of these things put them in remembrance...* Paul encouraged Timothy to offer positive reinforcement of the principles of the faith. He was to remind them to abide faithful in Christ, knowing He would remain faithful to them. If Timothy was successful in discipling them in the faith, growing and maturing in the Lord, many of the issues they faced would disappear. (Many of the issues we deal with today result from spiritual immaturity among the church. While this would not solve every problem, it would result in profitable growth for the entire body.)

**B. The Charge (14a)** – *Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit.* Following a reminder to abide faithful, Timothy was urged to charge the church regarding strife resulting from words of no profit. Apparently, there was much debate and senseless arguing among some within the church. These were arguing over issues of little to no importance, that were petty or preferential, but not significant doctrinally. Timothy would have to deal with these issues, but he was not expected to engage in such senseless debate. The matters of the Gospel and spiritual growth among the church could not be neglected or abandoned for unprofitable debate. This likely was being promoted and encouraged by those who sought to infiltrate the church with false doctrine, but it is apparent that some genuine believers were engaged in this activity as well.

- Unfortunately, this remains in the church today. There are many doctrines being promoted, and many of them do not line up with the teaching of Scripture. We must know what we believe and why we believe it, but arguing with those with ulterior motives is never profitable. If they have an agenda in mind, you will never convince them to abandon their pursuit in exchange for truth. Heated debates will never win anyone to Christ, and it runs the risk of tarnishing our reputation. Rather than senseless debate, we must be grounded in the Word, able to spot false doctrine and heresy when it is presented. These attacks will only increase as we draw closer to the Lord's return. (We must also guard against debates with no spiritual or eternal significance. Many issues have split churches that bear no eternal significance.)

**C. The Catastrophe (14b)** – *charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.* Paul knew the danger of such unprofitable debate – it would negatively affect the health of the church. The word subverting comes from the Greek word *katastrophē*, and as one might expect, it is the word from which our English word catastrophe is derived. Such unprofitable debate would have catastrophic effects on the church, endangering their spiritual well-being.

- The need for doctrinal purity cannot be overemphasized, and it must be guarded at all costs. Sound, biblical preaching and teaching is not just needed within the church, it is essential if the church is to remain spiritually healthy.

**II. The Duty to profitable Study (15)** – *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* Paul offered the solution and a very reliable defense against the attack of false doctrine – sound biblical study. Notice:

**A. The Appeal (15a)** – *Study to shew thyself approved unto God*. Timothy was urged to study the Word of God in order to be approved unto God. Paul urged Timothy to approach the Word with persistent diligence, seeking to mine its truth in doctrine. This was to be done so when he was examined by the Lord, he would be able to endure the careful scrutiny and be found approved, worthy of handling the Word.

- Many view this requirement as reserved for preachers and pastors. While it certainly applies to them, it is not reserved solely for them. Every believer is charged to diligently pursue the Word, learning its truth, while allowing the Word to shape and transform their lives. We are more advanced technologically than we've ever been, with more access to information than any previous generation, and yet our churches are filled with those who lack basic biblical knowledge.

**B. The Assurance (15b)** – *a workman that needeth not to be ashamed*. Paul did not refer to arrogance in ministry, but confidence obtained through persistent study of the Word. If Timothy would commit himself to be a diligent student of the Word, he would have no reason to be ashamed. He could boldly stand, proclaiming the eternal truths of the Word, in full assurance and confidence. He could preach the truth in full assurance of its ability to convict and transform lives. Paul desired for Timothy to know the Word and stand confidently assured of its truth!

**C. The Accuracy (15c)** – *rightly dividing the word of truth*. The end result of such committed pursuit would be profitable for Timothy and all who heard the Word proclaimed. Through diligent study, he would rightly interpret Scripture, and thus have the ability to proclaim its truth with boldness. Diligent study would produce sound doctrine to edify the church and convict the unsaved. Timothy would not have to worry about his message as long as it was based on biblical truth.

- Such doctrinal preaching is needed today. This is only achieved through diligent, systematic study of the Scripture. One must approach the Word and allow it to speak for itself. Proper discernment will never lift a passage out of its context to build a doctrine, but allow the context of the passage to reveal the doctrine presented.

**III. The Damage of profane Slander (16-18)** – Finally, Paul cautioned Timothy about the damage of false teaching among the church. Consider:

**A. The Admonition (16a)** – *But shun profane and vain babblings*. Timothy was urged to avoid and denounce teaching that dishonored the Lord or was mere empty words. If the doctrine dishonored the Lord, it certainly had no place within the church. He must reject such teaching at all costs. If

left unchecked, such teaching would lead to utter destruction. (We too must ensure that the doctrine taught here is sound biblically and consistent with the Scripture. Ignoring such will only lead to damage and destruction within the church.)

**B. The Expectation** (16b) – *for they will increase unto more ungodliness.* Refusal to deal with such false teaching would have a devastating effect. Paul warned if it were left unchecked, it would only increase unto more ungodliness. This threat could not be ignored in hopes it would eventually disappear. Those who taught these false doctrines would inevitably influence others, resulting in further ungodliness and impurity among the church. (Doctrine must be guarded and false doctrine must be confronted and expelled from the church. It will not go away quietly without any effect. When false doctrine is allowed to remain, it always expands its reach.)

**C. The Illustration** (17) – *And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus.* Paul offered a very descriptive illustration about the effects of false doctrine. If left alone, it would eat away at healthy believers as a canker sore does the flesh. This literally has the idea of gangrene or a cancerous tumor, spreading rapidly while consuming healthy flesh in the process. Apparently, Timothy was familiar with the false teachers Paul mentioned and the devastation they caused. (Again, we see the danger of false doctrine within the church. When left alone, unopposed, it will continue to spread and consume healthy portions of the body. It will do unimaginable harm, and the only treatment is complete removal of the tumorous growth.)

**D. The Devastation** (18) – *Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.* These were teaching that the resurrection had already happened, causing great concern and confusion among the church. Their teaching had an adverse effect on the church – some abandoned their faith because of such heresy. Paul wanted Timothy to understand the need for doctrinal purity. He desired him to commit to teaching truth and combating false doctrine as soon as it was discovered. If left alone, it would spread and hinder others in the faith. (I know some view this as harsh, but it is the only recourse for such false teaching. The stakes are too high; eternal destinies are in the balance. We must do all we can to preserve and promote sound doctrine, while having the courage to expose and remove false doctrine. It cannot be ignored; the result of inactivity would be devastating to the health of the entire body.)

**Conclusion:** This has been a difficult passage to consider, but it is much needed in our day. We face the same threats that Timothy and the early church faced. The enemy would love to infiltrate this fellowship of believers with false doctrine. I encourage you to study the Word and learn the

eternal truth it presents. Knowing truth is the best way to expose error. If you are yet unsaved, I urge you to consider your need, repent of sin, and believe in the finished work of Christ by faith unto salvation.