

Shooting Straight

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[0 : 00] All right, as we come to the Word of God this morning, we are continuing our way through the second letter to Timothy. So if you have your Bible with you, you can open it up to 2 Timothy, and we are in chapter 2.

Last Sunday, we covered the first seven verses here of chapter 2. Next Sunday, we're going to work on verse 8 to 13, and we're going to jump ahead this Sunday and look at verses 14 to 19.

So let me read these verses for us this morning. Paul writes to Timothy, Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David.

This is my gospel, for which I am suffering, even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's Word is not chained. Therefore, I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

Here is a trustworthy saying. If we died with Him, we will also live with Him. If we endure, we will also reign with Him.

[1 : 31] If we disown Him, He will also disown us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot disown Himself.

Keep reminding God's people of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words. It is of no value and only ruins those who listen.

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved. A worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene.

Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have departed from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place. And they destroy the faith of some.

[2 : 36] Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm. Sealed with this inscription. The Lord knows those who are His. And everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.

Father in heaven, please open our eyes to see what you have said here and give us ears to hear. Fill our hearts with faith and help us to respond as you desire.

Pray in Jesus' name. Amen. We're just going to work through these few verses, 14 to 19, from the top. Starting in verse 14.

Paul urges Timothy to keep reminding the people in his church of the truths of the gospel. Specifically, the ones that are laid out here in verses 8 to 13.

And we're going to look at those next Sunday. But keep reminding God's people of these things. The job of a faithful teacher and preacher is to keep on saying the same things over and over again.

[3 : 44] It's to tell and to teach what most of us already know. These things. This gospel. These words of God.

Spoken through the prophets. Through Jesus. And through His apostles. There's a lot of other things going on in our world that we could be talking about on a Sunday morning.

Some of the false teachers who Paul spoke of in the first letter to Timothy. They had gone off into speaking and teaching about other things. But Timothy, you keep on reminding God's people of these things.

Of this gospel. Next he says, Warn them. That is, the people in the church. Warn them before God against quarreling about words.

It is of no value and only ruins those who listen. Now I know that we've heard this a lot in this journey through the pastoral epistles. These letters to Timothy and Titus.

[4 : 46] But Paul repeats himself, I think, because this is a really big issue. It can be so tempting to argue over things. And to get into squabbles, disputes.

Here specifically, are it quarreling about words? That word words, it can be used more broadly as well to refer to matters, subjects, issues. And it's so easy to get sucked into this sort of behavior.

Most of us want to understand the issues. We want to come to some sort of an opinion on the issues. And then we want to offer that carefully formed opinion to others.

And that's all good. But then what happens when others don't agree? Are we going to fight over it? Trying to convince them?

Are we going to belittle them and their view? Paul's basically saying, don't go there, Timothy. Quarreling, arguing about things is of no value.

[5 : 50] It only ruins those who listen. No value. What does that mean? It's a waste of time.

It's a waste of energy. It's a waste of breath. Zero good comes from it. That's what no value means. In fact, even worse, he says, arguing about these things ruins those who listen.

That word in the original language is actually the Greek word katastrope, from which we get our English word catastrophe. The point is, it utterly spoils, utterly damages, utterly wrecks those who listen.

And we kind of know this, don't we? Fighting over things hurts relationships. Sometimes in those kinds of debates and things, we're so worried about winning the argument that are we really representing things well?

Are we really speaking the truth? Do we have legit sources that we're drawing from as we share things? And there can be hearsay that enters into the mix and gossip and slander and misinformation.

[7 : 08] And it really can skew people's understanding of things or of other people and do a lot of damage and a lot of hurt. And so what's Timothy supposed to do?

He's supposed to warn the people in his church against this kind of behavior. In verse 15, Paul says, do your best to present yourself to God as one approved.

A worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. And so Paul gives Timothy something to aim for as he goes about his life and ministry there in Ephesus.

First and foremost, he says, aim for God's approval. You want to be approved in his sight. Work and teach and preach to win his approval.

As you live before him, you don't want to have any need to be ashamed for the things that you said or the things that you did. And very specifically here in this passage as it relates to Timothy, you will meet with God's approval by being one who correctly handles the word of truth.

[8 : 21] Now this is an interesting metaphor to translate here. If we were to do it just straight, literal, it would be to be one who cuts straight the word of truth.

And it's often this phrase used with reference to like a physical path. Meaning to, you know, to clear everything out, to cut a straight path whether it's through the forest or through the hill or whatever, through some brush.

Instead of going around the tree, cut it down, go straight through. So that's the physical image that Paul is using here.

and he's using it about how Timothy should teach the word of God. Cut straight the word of truth which probably means something like in your teaching, Timothy, don't be turned aside to these other debates and these other arguments and issues and controversies.

Stay on course. Stay on target. Teach the word of truth. You have a goal here and it's to get this good deposit that I've entrusted to you to your people.

[9 : 34] Passed on to them. So teach it. Preach it straight. Stay focused on that goal even if there are challenging circumstances going on which we know there are or challenging people in the way which we'll hear about in a moment.

And so this is how you're to present yourself to God as a worker who meets his approval and who does not need to be ashamed. Teach the word of truth and shoot straight. don't just tell the people what they want to hear in order to win their approval but tell them this word of truth that we've received from God in order to get his approval.

These are good words for those of us who teach in the church. They help us understand what our aim should be. It's not to entertain. It's not to scratch the itching ears or to tell people what they want to hear.

it's to pass on this good deposit this gospel that we've received from God to put the words of God before people.

I think though that these words are also helpful for all of us as we aim to speak about Jesus to others. Those who don't know Christ those who don't believe maybe our unsaved co-workers neighbors friends family and sometimes we can get all tied up by this thought that we have to be so careful in the way that we speak about Jesus that we don't offend anybody that we don't rub anybody the wrong way but that's just people pleasing that's trying to win the approval of men of man Jesus wants us to shoot straight with people about him we have the truth from God cut it straight tell the people the good news ask the question that cuts to the heart and tell of the hope that we have in Jesus look for the approval of the Lord Jesus himself on that day that's coming in all your speaking and sharing with others about Jesus verse 16 he says avoid godless chatter chatter because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly their teaching will spread like gangrene among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus who have departed from the truth they say that the resurrection has already taken place and they destroy the faith of some so avoid godless chatter he says what is godless chatter the ESV translates this as irreverent babble and there's really two ideas in this phrase first

[12 : 28] Paul seems to be characterizing the kind of talk or the kind of teaching as a kind that is empty or worthless now probably the people doing these kinds of teaching or talk see it as being valuable but Paul characterizes it as just chatter it's just babble it has no value and the second idea that's in this phrase is that it's godless chatter or as some translations say irreverent chatter and this word can mean a couple of things it could be that the talk or the teaching is devoid of God that it really doesn't have anything to do with spiritual things it's worldly secular or it could also mean even stronger than that that it's profane that it's irreverent that it mocks or makes light of spiritual things it jokes about serious spiritual truths or it just dishonors God by misrepresenting him and his word and verse 17 to 18 is kind of this living example of this that's right before

Timothy Paul gives the example of Hymenaeus and Philetus he says their teaching will spread like gangrene among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus who have departed from the truth Paul names two men here and Timothy knows these men and they're the example of what he means by this irreverent chatter the only other mention of Hymenaeus in the Bible actually was in Paul's first letter he talked about how he had handed over Hymenaeus and Alexander to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme and so definitely we're probably in the irreverent side of things when it comes to the way that they're talking or teaching Philetus on the other hand this is the only time he's mentioned in the whole Bible so we really don't know much about these two other than what Paul says in these two spots but Paul says that their words have spread like gangrene according to one scholar the disease that's described here involves severe inflammation which if left unchecked could become a destructive ulcerous condition and so the emphasis here seems to be on the slow eating away of the flesh rather than a rapidly spreading infection so their talk the things that they're saying it's slowly spreading and it's doing damage amongst the churches

Paul says that these two have departed from the truth some of the things that they're advocating are falsehood and Paul gives an example right here in the letter in verse 18 he says they say that the resurrection has already taken place so these are not men that are straight up denying Jesus and saying there is no God well they're saying yes we believe in Jesus but here's some other stuff that we also believe they're adding some things on where they got this idea that the resurrection had taken place we don't know the resurrection that's the great event that all of us believers are looking forward to that's the moment that Paul describes in his first letter to the Corinthians where the trumpet will sound and all who are dead but belong to Jesus will be resurrected to new life and a new body never to die again and never to become corrupt again

Paul says these guys are claiming that that's already happened and we have to wonder was it were they just saying that well no it's just a spiritual reality that somehow it just happened already inside of us or were they actually claiming that they weren't going to die we don't again we don't know the details here but Paul makes it so clear in the way that he says this that this is a bunch of baloney the resurrection that we're waiting for hasn't happened yet and sadly some were buying into these things Paul says they destroy the faith of some with this teaching again a very strong word destroy the faith of some so this is the effect of this godless chatter this profane chatter it it doesn't indeed have an emptiness to it because it's not true but it also has an irreverence to it in that it proclaims this false idea as if it were spiritual truth from god it makes a mockery of the real thing that we're hoping in the resurrection by saying oh it's already happened it's already here and so in this case with these two men it's kind of this wonky blend some of the truth of

Christ but then adding on these other things and declaring those things to be true without any real basis and it's having a terrible effect on the people who hear and are listening to these things some people are getting sucked into it and it's hurting the credibility of the message about Christ it's distorting things it's confusing things Paul says avoid that kind of talk and those kind of teachers who would be the modern day equivalent of these guys I think the key marker here seems to be people that are proclaiming Jesus plus something else maybe it's Jesus plus the earth is flat or Jesus plus you need to have had this special kind of experience or go through this rite or ritual or Jesus plus getting back to the teachings of certain rabbis or

[18 : 56] Jesus plus some other speculative historical digging that we've done that shows that every prophecy in the Bible has already been fulfilled there's a lot of different ways that people do the Jesus plus good news and often times with these kind of teachers you can kind of sense that something is off because Jesus seems to be the name that's used to really draw people's attention but then very quickly the focus the main message goes away from Jesus to these other things these side things the Bible becomes more of a springboard or a starting place and it gets us hooked in and then we go over to here and we talk about this other thing that's not in the Bible or maybe the Bible is part of it but then it's interpreted in some way that's wonky I mean you'd have to not even be really reading it in context and thinking about it to kind of twist it and get it to say that

I went to a global missions conference one time and I remember hearing this very charismatic and interesting speaker but it seemed that he was more interested in God's redemption of creation and environmentalism than God's redemption of you and me he was almost trying to turn conservation and environmentalism into a form of missionary work and it was like he was trying to recruit for that like we need to go out there we need to get the good news out there for creation we need to help God in his redemption of this and stand up to industry or different things like this again Jesus but then this main thing is really over here for them another example of this in just this week I don't know how many of you got one of these in your mailbox I think they did a mail drop here in

Davidson and everybody with a residential mailbox subscribed to getting the flyers got one of these the great controversy will two former rivals unite and you got the American flag at the top the white house and the flag of the catholic church I think that is on there and if you were like me you probably wonder what on earth is this what is this book and it's published by amazing facts ministries dot com you flip through it it's full of bible verses could be some really good stuff maybe but if you dig deeper into it what do you find you find that it was written by Ellen G White she was a follower of a man named William Miller and William Miller was a preacher who predicted that Christ would return in 1843 or 1844 and then when his prediction didn't come true most of the followers of William

Miller disbanded but there was one 17 year old girl named Ellen who had her first of supposedly 2000 visions from God and she later married a guy named James White and they began studying the teachings of Joseph Bates who promoted strict Sabbath keeping for all Christians like I'm talking Saturday at sundown Sabbath keeping and or would it be Friday to Saturday and they went all over the place telling this is what we got to do we got to keep the Sabbath just like they did in the Old Testament suddenly that was the main message and man she wrote 60 books they traveled all over the place telling about what God had supposedly told her in these visions nearly 10,000 pages of prophetic material she wrote and the

Seventh Day Adventists were born and back then she was considered to be a true prophetess of God by the Seventh Day Adventists as recently ago as 1995 the Seventh Day Adventists had a general conference and this was what they stated at their conference they said we consider the biblical canon closed what that means is we consider that this is complete all the books of the Bible are in here and we don't think God is adding new ones or revealing new stuff it's all in here we consider the biblical canon closed however we also believe as did Ellen G.

[23 : 42] White's contemporaries that her writings carry divine authority both for godly living and for doctrine therefore we recommend that as a church we seek the power of the Holy Spirit to apply to our lives more fully the inspired counsel contained in the writings of Ellen G.

White that was their statement in 95 she also preached the gospel of health and certain dietary restrictions about consuming meat which she called flesh food and how it's injurious to your health and even to your soul to eat meat and there were elements of law keeping that crept in and doctrines of soul sleep and annihilationism that hell is not forever even to the point of saying that our sins were put onto Satan as the scapegoat rather than onto Jesus and so what do we do with this we throw it in the fire pit he says avoid this kind of irreverent chatter this false teaching it's empty there's no value in it they've departed from the truth and sometimes it's a challenge to discern because that

Jesus message is there but then it's that plus it's that Jesus plus this other stuff and so look at what Paul says next he gives Timothy a couple words of encouragement in the midst of this to help him know how to know who's who verse 19 he says nevertheless God's solid foundation stands firm sealed with this inscription the Lord knows those who are his and everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness so these are two helpful things in the midst of all this two truths that can help us discern and navigate and avoid who we should truth number one is that even though sometimes we can be deceived God cannot the Lord Jesus knows those who are his sheep and he knows who are the wolves pretending to be sheep ultimately we can't rest just in our own wisdom our own discernment but we can rest in

Christ nobody is going to pull a fast one on him he knows who belongs to him and he is able to look after us and to protect us and he knows those who are pretending and how to deal with them and so Timothy look to the Lord look to his knowledge when you're unsure or in doubt about who's who and the second truth he says everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness genuine faith true repentance shows itself in a changed life it shows itself in us turning away from wickedness and embracing what's right and what's good in its place the same simple faith in

Jesus that we have at the start that saves us will also through the rest of our lives say yes Lord to what he has commanded us to do and how he has asked us to live this doesn't mean that we live perfectly or that we're never tempted that we never fall into sin or temptation again but it means that on the whole we're continually turning away from wickedness and to what's right everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness this is to be a foundational truth he says and it's a helpful one there's no such thing as a true believer who deliberately lives a wicked life on the whole for the rest of their life you will know them by their fruit said Jesus and we do have to be careful with this because sometimes even as true believers we struggle we wrestle maybe we drift away a little bit or get off track but if that faith was true when we first believed then we must and we will turn away from wickedness and turn back to the

[28 : 46] Lord we must and we will aim to live righteously we must and we will come back when we drift away it's a really helpful truth that God has given us a foundational truth for the church and it's here to help Timothy know how to think about who's who especially for those who are claiming the name of Jesus and teaching this but then look at their lives are they living in obedience to his commands if a teacher if a teacher isn't on the whole living a righteous life in obedience to God and to Christ don't listen to them avoid them and we need to be careful here I think the temptation is to to think that we've got good discernment you know I could listen to this stuff I could dig into this stuff I could really you know learn from it and sift out the bad and keep the good I don't think Paul would have us or Jesus would have us do that if Timothy

Paul's own partner in the ministry needed to avoid this kind of talk this godless chatter because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly then how much more should we we need to go back to the Bible we need to read it carefully we need to meditate on the words of God that are in here and if someone on YouTube or Facebook or TV is preaching something other than what's in here avoid them so these are Paul's instructions to Timothy in this portion of the letter as Timothy seeks to minister in Ephesus and I've already applied some of these things to us today but let me just recap quickly some of how these other things apply here one application of these words is for those of us who teach in the church those of us who lead we are to keep reminding God's people of the gospel of the truths about Jesus the resurrected descendant of David we are to warn those who are arguing and quarreling we are to do our very best to seek God's approval in the way that we're teaching and teach the word straight but for those of us who don't teach in the church what's there for us

I think we've touched on it a little bit but we are to expect to be reminded of the gospel again and again the truth of Christ we are to refrain from the arguing and the fighting over things we are to when we're talking about Jesus with those who don't know him to shoot straight and to seek the Lord's approval and not to to please the people that we're talking to and we're to avoid this empty and irreverent talk or teaching joking about spiritual things that's that's not appropriate and anything that smacks of Jesus plus this other stuff we're to avoid it and the final thing for all of us everyone everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness and pursue righteousness Christ in us leads us to change toward the good and we must surrender ourselves to his work in us we must make every effort to do that which is good and right and pleasing to him allowing him to produce his good fruit in our lives we're going to continue on with this portion in a couple weeks and see just how this was meant to work itself out in Timothy's life because Paul has even more specific instructions for him but we'll leave it here for today let's pray

Father in heaven thank you for these words and we thank you that you are at work in us and among us and we pray that these words would do their work and achieve the goal that you intended for them that we would be made wise to some of the tactics of the evil one and his desire to distract us or to pull us away from you and I pray that we would be like you encouraged Timothy to be that we would be those who seek to please you in everything we do Lord cause these words to be deeply rooted in us and lead us in the change that they call we ask for your glory Amen