

Paul's Second Letter to Timothy
Lesson 2
Guard What Has Been Entrusted

2 Tim. 2: ¹⁴Remind *them* of these things, and solemnly charge *them* in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless, *and leads* to the ruin of the hearers.

Sometimes Christians get into a battle of words. There are words that cause strife, words that bring hurt, and words that bring absolutely no profit to the situation at hand. The heart and soul of many lives are destroyed by the words we use in senseless arguments. Furthermore, "He said, she said, and who said" wrangling only brings catastrophe and subversive destruction in the lives of not only the participants in the argument but also the bystanders who hear the dispute. Mistakes are made when we labor together, but those mistakes are quickly dismissed because the striving together has revealed the true heart. Philosophical debates over "nothing at all" such as the "exact meaning" of a word, by people who barely know each other, only overturns all the good that has ever been established. "Bricks and sticks can all be fixed, but be assured that words will surely hurt you!" The minister is to charge the church to not wrangle about words.

2 Tim. 2: ¹⁵Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth. ¹⁶But avoid worldly *and* empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, ¹⁷and 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.

It might be a bold statement but the main job of every minister that has ever lived is to "handle accurately the word of truth, God's Word. The specific position that the minister fills, be it an evangelist, an administrator, the minister of pastoral care, the minister of education, or the minister of music is all secondary to the primary responsibility of handling accurately the word of truth. Everything we write, everything we say, and everything we do must be accurate from a Scriptural standpoint. When we dream up programs and plans that are on the edge of being untruthful, the result only leads to ungodliness that spreads into the church like gangrene. These things come about when worldly and empty talk takes precedence above Scriptural truth. The two men that Paul mentions have done such damage, by dreaming up and teaching that the resurrection has already taken place.

2 Tim. 2: ¹⁹Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness."

God is the firm foundation in which all faith rests. Genuine faith relies on the Word of God that became flesh and dwelt here on earth in the form of Jesus Christ, Our Lord. It was Christ who suffered for our sins that He might bring us to God. He was the great substitution for every

soul so that each may be made righteous. If this foundation was removed, whatever could we do? The foundation of the Christ's death and what He did for each soul is as firm as the throne of God!

2 Tim. 2: 20 Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. 21 Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from these *things*, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.

The minister is to be a man of honor, sanctified and useful to the master, prepared for every good work. Timothy must keep his house clean. This is not his home made of adobe and brick, but his body that is made of flesh and bone. It must be a vessel of honor. Furthermore, the minister is to be careful with the things that he gathers around him. His possessions can not possess him and therefore take him away from his ministry.

2 Tim. 2: 22 Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love *and* peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. 23 But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. 24 And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

The vessel of the minister must be sanctified from the desires of youthful lusts. We are never too old to remember those youthful lusts that we once had. The godly minister must not be taken by those lusts, but must pursue all that is good in the Lord.

Furthermore the minister must be removed from ignorant speculations. As we saw in 2 Tim. 1:6, the minister must kindle afresh the gift of the office for which the hands of the elders were laid on him. No longer is he to desire the world, but that which is of God. Therefore the minister must be:

1. Able to teach,
2. Patient when wronged,
3. With gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

2 Tim. 3: 1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; 5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these. 6 For among them are those who

enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, ⁷always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

With this list we must look at some definitions of each word or phrase so we can understand the picture that Paul is presenting to Timothy about the ungodly people of the last days.

1. Lovers of self = selfish.
2. Lovers of money = covetous.
3. Boastful = empty pretender.
4. Arrogant = appearing to be above the status of others.
5. Revilers = against man and God.
6. Disobedient to parents = *unpersuadable* and *contumacious*.
7. Ungrateful = thankless.
8. Unholy = wicked.
9. Unloving = hard hearted.
10. Irreconcilable = truce breaker.
11. Malicious gossips = false accusers / slanderers.
12. Without self-control = discontentment and the inability to restrain self.
13. Brutal = savage.
14. Haters of good = hostile to virtue .
15. Treacherous = betrayers.
16. Reckless = falling headlong.
17. Conceited = inflated self image.
18. Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God = fond of voluptuousness.
19. Holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power = appearing to be godly but rejects and denies its purpose and strength.

People who have these characteristics must be avoided because they are only out to destroy the lives of other, attempting to bring wealth to their own lives, acting like they are growing in God, but in reality they are not growing at all. These people have depraved minds and reject the true faith in Christ Jesus.

² Tim. 3:⁸ And just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these *men* also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected as regards the faith. ⁹ But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, as also that of those two came to be.

Tradition tells us that these were the two magicians that opposed Moses in Pharaoh's court. When the Lord did a miracle through Moses, these two men would counter with their own mystical magic. But the magicians were not powerful enough to out do the Lord God. As the miracles became larger and more complex, these two were finally put to shame and their folly was seen by all the Egyptians and Jews in the land.

² Tim. 3:¹⁰ But you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, ¹¹ persecutions, *and* sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium *and* at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord

delivered me! ¹²And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Here is another argument to spur Timothy on. Timothy is no ignorant, raw recruit going into the arena, for Paul himself has already imparted to him a great deal of his own teaching. Paul refers not only to teaching, but the other things he mentions are also very important. In this verse he paints a vivid picture of a good teacher, as one who influences his pupils not only by his words, but, as it were, opens his own heart to them so that they may know that all his teaching is sincere. Paul adds other practical evidence of earnest sincerity: my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness. Such basic lessons have been given to Timothy in Paul's school. But Paul does not just remind Timothy about what he has taught him, but bears testimony to Timothy's past life to encourage him to persevere. He praises him as someone who has imitated his own virtues. Yet "out of them all the Lord delivered me!" The fact that afflictions always end happily is most consoling and goes a long way to mitigating their bitterness. If anyone objects that the happy end his claim is not always obvious, I agree that this is true as far as outward appearances are concerned, for Paul himself had not yet been set free from prison. But by delivering us often, God testifies that he is with us and will always be with us. Indeed, all who want to will live a godly life. The recollections of his own persecutions makes Paul add that everything that had happened to him will also come to all godly people.

2 Tim. 3:¹³But evil men and impostors will proceed *from bad* to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

It is the most bitter persecution of all when we see evil people with their sacrilegious boldness and their blasphemies and errors gaining strength. One worthless person will always be more effective in destroying people, than ten faithful teachers in building up, even though they toil with all their might.

2 Tim. 3:¹⁴You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*; ¹⁵and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Although ungodliness is increasing and making progress, Paul tells Timothy to stand firm. This is the acid test of our faith. With untiring zeal we should resist all the devil's schemes, and refuse to alter course with every wind that blows, and thus remain fixed on God's truth as on a sure anchor. When Paul states "Knowing from whom you learned them" Paul's intention is to commend the certainty of his teaching, for we should not persevere in things in which we have been wrongly instructed. If we wish to be Christ's disciples we must unlearn all that we have learned that is not about Him.

The fact that Timothy had been use to reading the Scriptures since his childhood was a powerful spur to keep him faithful, as this long established habit can make a person much more prepared to meet any kind of deception. They were wise in ancient times to make sure that those who were intended for the ministry of the Word should have been instructed in the solid teaching about godliness, and should have drunk deep from the sacred writings, so that when they came to fulfill their office they would not be inexperienced apprentices. So if anyone has

acquired from his youth a knowledge of the Scriptures he should count it a special blessing from God.

Scripture is commended very highly indeed when it is said that the wisdom necessary for salvation can only be found there, and the next verse explains this more fully. At the same time, Paul tells us what we should look for in Scripture itself.

2 Tim. 3:¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Paul commends the Scripture because of its authority, and then because of the benefit it brings. In order to assert its authority, Paul teaches that it is inspired, for if that is so, it is beyond all questions that people should receive it with reverence. This is the principle that distinguishes our religion from all others that we know that God has spoken to us and that we are certain that the prophets did not just speak for their own time but as instruments of the Holy Spirit uttered only what they had been told to say from heaven. Anyone who wants to benefit from the Scriptures must first of all accept this as a settled principle, that the Law and the prophets are not teachings handed on at the whim of men or produced by human minds, but are dictated through the Holy Spirit. If anyone objects to this and asks how this can be, my answer is that it is through the revelation of the same Spirit both to students and to teachers that God is made known as its Author.

Scripture contains the perfect rule of a good and happy life. In saying this Paul means that Scripture is polluted by sinful abuse when this beneficial purpose is not sought in it. He is indirectly rebuking those who trifle with it, and who feed people empty speculations, like the wind. For the same reason we may condemn today all who abandon concern for edification and make much of ingenious but profitless questions. Whenever ingenious trifles of that kind are introduced, they should be warded off with this phrase, as with a shield, 'Scripture is useful.' It follows from this that it is wrong to use it to gratify our curiosity or satisfy our desire for ostentation or provide us with a chance for foolish conversation. God meant it for our good. So the correct use of Scripture will always benefit people.

Here Paul enumerates the many uses of Scripture for teaching. First of all he mentions teaching, since it takes precedence over all the others. But since teaching on its own is often cold and lifeless, Paul adds for reproof and for correction. It would take too long to set out here what we learn from Scripture, and Paul has already in the previous verse given a brief summary of it in the word 'faith.' This is indeed the biggest part of our knowledge – faith in Christ. Next follows instruction on the regulation of our lives, to which are added exhortations and reproofs. So the person who uses Scripture correctly lacks nothing either for salvation or for living in the right way. The only difference between reproof and correction is that the second is the result of the first. To acknowledge our sin and be convicted about God's judgment on it is the beginning of repentance. Training in righteousness means instruction in a godly and holy life.

2 Tim. 4:¹I solemnly charge *you* in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: ²preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great

patience and instruction. ³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; ⁴and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.

“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead” is a reference to those whom Christ will find still alive at His coming and also to those who have already died. Nobody will escape his judgment.

“By view of his appearing and his kingdom,” both mean the same thing, for although Christ now rules in heaven and in earth, up until now His kingdom has not been made clearly visible; rather it lies in the shadow of the cross and is strongly opposed by His enemies.

In 4:2 Paul commends not merely perseverance but even aggressiveness in overcoming all barriers and difficulties. For, as we are naturally timid and lazy, we easily give up on the slightest pretext and we even sometimes welcome difficulties as an excuse for indolence. Paul tells Timothy to be ever alert to convince, rebuke, and encourage. Here Paul is indicating that we need incentives if we are to hold to the true course. If we were as teachable as we should be, Christ’s ministers could guide us merely by pointing out the right way. But, as things are, sane advice and mere moderate exhortations are not enough to shake us out of our lethargy. Thus there is need for stronger reproofs and exhortations.

“With great patience” is the most necessary qualification. Rebukes either fail to have any effect because they are too violent or because they disappear into thin air, as they are not based on sound teaching. Exhortations are no more than supports to teaching, and without teaching they have little force. We see this in people who are very zealous but who have had little instruction.

Human depravity shows just how careful pastors must be. For the Gospel would be quickly erased from people’s memories, if godly people did not strive earnestly to preserve it. Paul is saying that we must make the most of the opportunities while some people still have reverence for Christ. It is as if Paul says that when you see a storm approaching you must not take your time about your work, but you must work more diligently, because you will soon not have the opportunity for work.

When Paul says that people will not put up with sound doctrine, he means not only that they will not like it and will despise it, but also that they will actually hate it. Paul refers to it as sound because of its effect in instructing us in godliness. In the next verse he calls it ‘truth,’ meaning that sound doctrine is a pure and natural handling of God’s Word, in contrast with those who ‘wander away to myths’ (2 Timothy 4:4). These ‘myths’ are useless ideas which corrupt the straightforward Gospel. We learn from this that the more determined people are to despise Christ’s teaching, the more zealous godly ministers should be to assert it and guard it earnestly, and so ward off Satan’s attacks.

They will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires. We should note the phrase accumulate which means that in their madness they will not be content with a few imposters, but will want a great crowd.

2 Tim. 4:⁵But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

As for you, “always be sober” Paul states. Paul continues to say that the more terrible the trouble becomes, the more conscientiously Timothy must work to remedy them, and the more pressing the dangers are, the more he must keep watch. To do the work of an evangelist is to do what evangelists should do.

2 Tim. 4:⁶For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; ⁸in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

When Paul says “I am already being poured out as a libation” it is as if he was to say, ‘As long as I was alive I could stretch out my hand and help you; you have never been without my constant exhortations, my advice has greatly assisted you and my example has been a great source of strength. Now the time is coming when you will have to teach and encourage yourself and begin to swim without support. Take care that nothing in you may be seen to be changed by my death.’

We should note the expressions Paul uses to describe his death. The word departure indicates that when we die we do not completely perish.

A libation or sacrifice was a term specially suited to Paul’s death, since he was dying in order to uphold Christ’s truth. For although all godly people are sacrifices acceptable to God both in the obedience of their lives and in their deaths, martyrs are sacrificed in a more permanent way by shedding their blood for Christ’s name. In addition, the phrase poured out which Paul uses here does not refer to just any kind of sacrifice but specifically to one used to ratify a covenant. Here Paul celebrates his death by commending it as the ratification of his teaching, that it might encourage believers to persevere rather than grow weary, as often happens.

The time for my departure has come is a phrase should also be noted because through it Paul rightly removes our excessive dread of death by focusing on its nature and effect. The only reason that people should be so greatly disturbed at the slightest mention of death is that they think that in death they will completely perish.

Paul’s fight could be condemned, since it had an unhappy ending. So Paul boasts here that, no matter what the world thinks, it has been a good fight. This is evidence of his exceptional faith, for not only did everyone think that Paul was in an extremely wretched situation, but that his death would also be shameful. So who would not say that he had struggled without success? But he himself does not depend on man’s twisted judgments, but in his great courage he rises above every calamity, so that nothing can interfere with his happiness and glory. So Paul states that the fight he has fought has been a good and honorable one, and he can even rejoice at the prospect of death as this has been the goal he has been striving for.

As Paul has gloried in his good fight, the course finished and the faith kept, so now he claims that his labors have not been in vain. It is possible to make a great effort and still fail to reach

one's goal. But Paul says that he was certain of his reward. He derives this certainty from turning his eyes to the day of resurrection, and we should do the same. We see nothing but death all around us, so we should not concentrate on the appearances of the world, but should have Christ at the forefront of our minds. Then nothing can spoil our happiness.

So that all other believers may fight with the same courage, Paul invites them to share his crown. For his unbroken faithfulness could not serve as an example to us, if we did not have the same hope of a crown before us. Paul mentions an outstanding characteristic of believers when he calls them all who have longed for his appearing. For, wherever faith is strong it does not allow our heart to sleep in this world but lifts us up to hope in the final resurrection.

2 Tim. 4:⁹Make every effort to come to me soon; ¹⁰for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens *has gone* to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

As Paul realized that his death was imminent, there were doubtless many matters about the welfare of the church that he wanted to discuss with Timothy. So Paul does not hesitate to ask him to travel across the sea to visit him. Certainly there must have been very good reasons to justify asking him to leave the church he looked after in order to make such a long journey. From this we see how important meetings between people like this are, for what Timothy would in a brief time would be of lasting benefit to the churches, and the loss of six months or a year would be insignificant in comparison with the gain that would come from this meeting. But, from what follows, it appears that Paul is summoning Timothy for personal reasons as well, since he misses such a supporter so much. But Paul was not putting his own needs before the good of the church, for the Gospel itself was involved in this proposed meeting, and all believers would benefit as a result. Since Paul had to defend the Gospel from prison, he needed other people to work alongside him in this.

In the case of Demas it was disgraceful that a person could be more in love with this world than with Christ. But we do not have to suppose that he denied Christ completely and went over to a life of ungodliness and allowed the allurements of the world to take him over, but only that he cared more for his own convenience and safety than for Paul's life.

2 Tim. 4:¹¹Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service. ¹²But Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. ¹³When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments.

It was Paul's desire that Timothy bring to him the books, and especially the parchments, for on these pages had been written the revelation of the Lord for all Christian doctrine, teaching, and living. One might wonder if Paul knew the impact those parchments would have on the body of Christ in the following centuries. These parchments represent the legacy of the Lord's word and work through just one man. Likewise, our souls will never know on this side of heaven the influence we have made on this world for the Lord! Lives have been forever changed because of Paul and today lives should be forever changed because of our godly and righteous life and work.

2 Tim. 4:¹⁴Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. ¹⁵Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching.

There are some people that do so much damage in the work of the Lord that it is best just to stay away from them. Such was the case with Alexander the coppersmith.

2 Tim. 4:¹⁶At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. ¹⁷But the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, in order that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the lion's mouth. ¹⁸The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas. Commentators disagree about the meaning of the word translated cloak. Some think that it is a chest or box for books, others that it is a kind of traveler's cloak which gave special protection against the cold and rain. I incline to interpret this word to mean 'chest' since that fits in with the books, and above all the parchments which the apostle goes on to mention. It is clear from this that although the apostle was preparing for death, he had not given up reading. Where are those who think that they have made so much progress that they do not need to make any more, and which of them can compare himself with Paul? This passage refutes the idiotic reasoning of the fanatics who condemn books and all reading and just boast about their private inspirations which God gives them.

Someone may ask why Paul was asking for a cloak if he expected to die so soon. This is another reason why I think the word means a chest, but there may have been another use for a cloak at that time which we do not know about today. I am not too concerned about this matter.

2 Tim. 4:¹⁹Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. ²⁰Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus. ²¹Make every effort to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, also Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brethren.

With the mention of Prisca and Aquila we can be reasonably sure that Timothy is still in Ephesus for the church in Ephesus was in their home. The family of Onesiphorus were also citizens of Ephesus. The mention for the others tells us who is in Corinth and Miletus, plus it also tells us who is still with Paul in Rome.

2 Tim. 4:²²The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

As always, Paul ends this his last letter with the logo that he ended every letter, "grace be with you." And with this word we hear the last word recorded by Paul, the great Apostle of the Lord.