

We Can Be Different

*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses,
the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

2 Timothy 2:2

Last week we learned how Paul instructed Timothy to follow the above command. Now we transition in verse 14 to a comparison of “*faithful men*” and those who were not faithful. READ 2 Tim. 2:14. Verse 14 also leads into today’s explanation of (1) how to stay true to the Lord and relate to others, and (2) those who are unfaithful to the Lord and fall into error and sin.

Paul gave Timothy several specific commands in our passage for today’s lesson. They all would help him lead the church at Ephesus well. And some in particular would encourage him to mature in his personal walk with the Lord. These lessons speak to us as well in our walk with the Lord.

Who were the faithful men of 2 Timothy 2:2?

READ 2 Tim. 2:14: Timothy was to instruct them. *charge* = bear solemn witness

Do not strive (fight over) words – this is to no profit, useful for nothing. This subverts those who hear. *Subvert* = overthrow, injure

Paul wrote similar instructions in other places and worded it very strongly. So do not do it, and do not stay around people who do.

READ 2 Tim. 2:15: The antidote, or rather the immune booster: Be in the Word of God.

Study = diligently search and learn to know the Word well. (broader meaning of “study”)

The results – approved by God, not be ashamed, rightly divide the Word.

Rightly divide = cut a straight line, as a road or a furrow in a field. So the Word of God is to be laid out straight and true for others to follow.

This also means to treat truthfully without falsifying. This is so important for the verses that follow. Paul would explain about some who did falsify the Word, what to do about them, and how to live the Christian life.

READ 2 Tim. 2:16-18: What are we to do about those who babble uselessly and who have erred concerning the truth? Get away from them.

Shun = avoid, go out of the way, circle around to get away

Profane = irreverent to God, wicked

Babbings = empty, useless talking; increasingly damaging

Note that all this leads to more ungodliness.

Verse 17: it gets worse – their talk actually eats away like gangrene and spreads. It is not just “neutral” worldliness, not harmless.

Verse 18: Paul even named 2 people as examples. We do not know anything about them, except that they taught an error that persists even today. They said that the resurrection is past already. Possible errors then on this were (1) the idea that Jesus’ resurrection had taken place, and there would be no other; and (2) the idea that the resurrection of believers was only spiritual, that it took place when we were saved, and that there will be no other resurrection. This was already a problem in the church a decade before this letter to Timothy (1 Cor. 15:2).

Today, there are a number of variations of this error that in effect deny the soon coming of the Lord for us to be caught away – the resurrection that we wait for. Many say that all prophecy has already taken place. Others say that we will go through the Great Tribulation and so it is a false hope to look forward to the rapture. Others spiritualize away much of what is taught in the Bible.

Remember that there is a crown of righteousness for all those who love the Lord’s appearing (the rapture, not the Second Coming) (2 Tim. 4:8).

This error actually overturned the faith of some. The Bible lays out the complete timeline of history, including the future. Our blessed hope causes us to live righteously and serve the Lord as we wait for Him.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Titus 2:11-13

READ 2 Tim. 2:19: *Nevertheless* – Paul again stated how we stand firm in the Lord. This verse speaks of the “*foundation of God*” and a “*seal*” which has two inscriptions. The *foundation of God* stands sure – this is the church founded on Jesus Christ; and the *seal* on the *foundation* says (1) the Lord knows us who are His, and (2) those who have Christ are to depart from iniquity. It was customary to write inscriptions on foundations and on doorways. (We did this here in the sanctuary, on the floor, before the carpet was laid down in our new building.) This verse concerns believers, assuring security in the Lord and purity.

What about the false among us?

Mat. 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Jesus never knew them. They wanted to do works to gain salvation and acceptance.

We see in 1 John 2:19 that they were not of the true believers and so left the Church, showing their true nature (“true colors”). 1 John 2:19 *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.*

So we rest in the Lord and get far away from those who do iniquity.

NOTE that the *foundation* of verse 19 is the “invisible church” of all true believers, and the *great house* of verse 20 is the “visible church” containing all who say they are Christian. [MacLaren’s Expositions]

READ 2 Tim. 2:20: This *great house* is the house of God in general and the individual people within it. The people in the Church are the vessels: *of gold and silver – of honor; of wood and of earth [clay] – of dishonor.*

READ 2 Tim 2:21: *purge himself from these*; there are two aspects of this:

- (1) Get away from these people of dishonor, or rather stay away from their sin; and
- (2) The individual in this *great house* of God is to purge himself of any sin so that he can be a vessel of honor. Then he will be *sanctified* (set apart unto God), *meet* (profitable) for the Lord, and made ready for every good work assigned to him by the Lord.

If we have bad habits and wrong doctrine in ourselves, God cannot use us as He desires. And we become a hindrance and even an annoyance to those around us.

So what are some of the ways we purge ourselves from these things?

READ 2 Tim. 2:22: Run away from strong desires for what is forbidden; run toward righteousness, trust God, love with God’s love, and have peace (quietness, lack of strife) with believers. Paul says all these things so many times and in so many ways!

How to minister to those who are misguided, including even these “trouble-makers”?

READ 2 Tim. 2:23-26

Do not argue about their questions which are *unlearned* = ignorant, stupid (dull, senseless).

Do be gentle, ready to teach and explain, and patient; humbly and gently instruct those who oppose you. Hopefully they will see the truth and repent. Remember that the Word of God is powerful, and when we speak it (not necessarily quoting chapter and verse), the Holy Spirit uses that Word in the lives of those who hear it.

Verse 26: This is serious! The devil had taken them captive. May we minister to those who are very misguided in such a way that they may escape the trap of the devil.

This second letter of Paul to Timothy gets more serious as we go along. What would it have been like for those in the Church at Ephesus to hear these things? For the believers who stayed close to the Lord, and for those who were arguing over ignorant (stupid)

questions and false doctrine? Proverbs chapter 4 teaches about the right way of the just and the wicked way of evil men. It sums up what Paul taught in our passage for today:

Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.

Proverbs 4:14

But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Proverbs 4:18