

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Danger of False Teaching

Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:14b-19

Code: 55-9

We return for our study of God's Word to 2 Timothy chapter 2 where we left off. This morning I want to take us through verses 14 to 19, 2 Timothy 2:14 through 19. Let me read it to you.

"Remind 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. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth. But avoid worldly and empty chatter for it will lead to further ungodliness and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus; men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection is already taken place and thus they upset the faith of some. Nevertheless, 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."

Scripture clearly affirms that God is truth, that God speaks truth and that God cannot lie. Scripture also affirms that Satan is a liar and the father of lies and goes around deceiving people. God reveals Himself as truth and Satan therefore is revealed as the antithesis to God, lies. That particular dichotomy descends from the conflict of God and Satan to pervade every area in the universe. There is conflict between the holy angels and the unholy demons and there is conflict on the earth between the truth and the lies of Satan. The people of God have always been plagued with false doctrine. The invasion of false prophets, false teachers, false apostles, false Christs has been something which the people of God have endured through all the ages of time. Satan attempts to oversow the truth with lies. He attempts to confuse the world so that they cannot perceive the truth of God by drowning them in a sea of deceit. It was Satan's evil intended and clever misrepresentation of truth to Eve that plunged the whole of the human race into sin. We have existed in the morass and the muck of sin ever since, drowning in an ever deepening morass of deceit. A steady stream of false teaching has been cumulative so that it is wider and deeper now than it has ever been in human history. False teaching about God, about Christ, about the Bible, about spiritual reality is pandemic.

And the father of lies is working to destroy the saving sanctifying truth that God has given to us in His Word and in His Son.

The effects of false teaching have been devastating and damning. That is why the Bible calls them damnable, or destructive heresies which lead men to destruction. And I believe that as we get closer to the coming of Christ, these deceptions, lies and falsehoods, misrepresentations will increase.

Now any servant of the Lord then must be aware of false teachers. Any servant of the Lord must be warned about lies.

That is why in Acts 20 the Apostle Paul for three years night and day with tears warned the believers in Ephesus and the leaders in Ephesus of those who would come from among them and from outside of them with lies.

Timothy is a young man in the faith, as you know, in his mid thirties. He has been given the assignment of setting things straight in the church at Ephesus. The church at Ephesus had a wonderful beginning but was the victim of false teaching and false prophets and false apostles and, if you will, false elders and pastors. They had bought into false doctrine and therefore were living an ungodly life style. Paul sets Timothy in that congregation at Ephesus to straighten them out. Writes him two epistles to help him in the process of straightening the church out, to strengthen his hand and to call him to the things that are most needful.

The issue of false teaching is not isolated to the section we're looking at now. In fact in the first epistle of Timothy in chapter 1, chapter 4 and chapter 6 it's a major theme. In 2 Timothy in chapter 1, chapter 3, and chapter 4 it's a major theme as well as here in chapter 2. It then becomes incumbent upon any of us who is a servant of Jesus Christ in the church to be very much aware that we are set for the defense of the truth, that part and parcel of what we exist to do is to save people from drowning in the sea of deceit which Satan propagates.

Part of Paul's challenge then to young Timothy is to get him to hold the truth and then to pass the truth to the next generation, to avoid the insidious and debilitating and damning influence of false teachers and false teaching. And as I said a moment ago, I believe that the stream, the polluted corrupt vile and filthy stream of false teaching is deeper and wider than it's ever been in human history because it's cumulative. There's so much of it today. It's all around us in the cults, in the isms and the false religions and the lying teachers that are abounding in our society and whose teaching abounds because of the media capability of making it more widespread than ever it could have been in any past generation. Denials of the trinity, denials of the deity of Jesus Christ, denials of the inerrancy and authority of Scripture, denials of the salvation by grace alone through faith which God has provided, counterfeit gospels, false ideas of true spirituality, misrepresentations of the character, nature and work of God, misrepresentations of the character, nature and work of Christ, misrepresentations of the character, nature and work of the Holy Spirit abound. There are a myriad of people espousing all kinds of lies in the name of God's truth.

I watched a man who puts himself forth as a preacher of Jesus Christ the other night on television and as far as I could tell almost everything he said was not true and was a misrepresentation of Scripture. The text before us then is not only essential for Timothy to hear, it's essential for me to hear

for all who minister in behalf of Christ to hear and for all of you to hear as well.

The text before us in verses 14 to 19 gives us reasons to avoid false teaching, reasons to avoid doctrines of demons. And it demands that they be avoided because of their severe danger.

Paul, you know, has been calling Timothy to be a faithful servant of the Lord in the Ephesian church, to rise above the influence of ungodliness, to rise above the influence of evil teaching, to rise above the influence of evil people, to sacrificially give his life to set that church right. And one of the major issues in setting it right is to make sure your mind is clear on the Word of God, on the truth of God. And to be sure that you avoid and have your people avoid the insidious impact of false teaching.

And so, as we come to this verse there is a transition in our passage, let's look at it together, verse 14. Paul begins this section by saying, "Remind them of these things."

Literally, "Remind of these things." "Them" being added because it just gives us an identification point of who it is that's being reminded. "Them" has reference to the whole of the congregation as well as the faithful men who will teach others also mentioned in verse 2. "Remind them of these things." What things? Well he's looking back with that statement, the things he's just said in verses 1 to 13. Remind them of the responsibility to be teachers who pass things on to others.

Remind them that they are soldiers who are to endure hardness.

Remind them that they are athletes who are to run to win and make the necessary sacrifices to compete at the maximum level. Remind them that they are to be hard working farmers who plant and enjoy the result of the crop. Remind them, he says, that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. Remind them in that sense of the preeminence of the Lord they serve. Remind them of the power of the Word of God which cannot be bound. Remind them of the purpose of the work, verse 10, that those who are the elect may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory. Remind them of the reward which is theirs, indicated in verses 11 through 13, if we endure we'll reign with Him. Remind them, Timothy, of the positive call to duty. Remind them of the preeminence of the Lord they serve. Remind them of the power of the Word and the purpose of the work and the promise of reward.

That's all positive.

If you want to encourage your people, remind them of the nobility of the cause they serve. Remind them of the loftiness of the gospel ministry. That's the positive.

But the transition then takes us to the negative. Look at verse 14 again. "And solemnly command them..." We'll stop at that point. Now we turn a corner. Not just continually reminding, and that's a

present tense verb, be continually all the time reminding them of the noble cause which they serve. But further command them, solemnly command them, diamarturomai is an intense verb, solemnly command them.

And what is it that we are to command them? "Command them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words which is useless." Now we get into a negative. Up to now it's all been positive. Now it's going to be negative, there's both sides that are necessary. If I'm going to be a faithful servant of Christ, I want to know the noble cause for which I must give myself and I want to know what to avoid, right? The positive says here's what to do. The negative says here's what not to do. The positive says here's what to immerse yourself in. The negative says here's what to avoid. And from verse 14 to 19 he tells them to avoid false teaching and gives them a handful of reasons why...why.

First of all, because it...follow this...it ruins the hearers, verse 14, "Solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers."

The first thing you want to realize about false teaching is it ruins those who listen to it. Let me go back for a moment to the word "solemnly charged." Again it has the idea of a constant reminder and a constant command. Constantly reminding them of their positive duty and constantly warning them to stay away from false teaching. The warning is serious because of the use of the verb diamarturomai, it has to do with a solemn command. But it's made even more serious by the next phrase, "Solemnly charge them in...whose presence?...the presence of whom?...of God."

In other words, call them to duty with a sense of the presence of God, that is to say a healthy fear. This is intended to put fear in the heart. That kind of command with the presence of God is also given in chapter 5 verse 21 of 1 Timothy, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels to maintain these principles without bias." That, too, is a solemn charge. Chapter 6 verse 13, "I charge you in the presence of God who gives life to all things and of Christ Jesus who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach." Second Timothy chapter 4 verse 1, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead, preach the Word."

Now those are all very serious commands. Not just commands but solemn commands. Not just solemn commands but solemn commands in the presence of God which is to bring God in as the authority who will judge the one who disobeys the command.

That's the idea. It's intended to put fear in the heart.

I thought a lot about the idea of the presence of God, the presence of the Lord and so I looked up all the Scriptures that refer to it. And I found there were a few of them that had reference to the presence of God as a positive thing, a comforting reality. For example, Psalm 68:8 says, "The heavens also

dropped rain at the presence of God." Luke 1:19, "The angel answered and said to him, I am Gabriel who stands in the presence of God and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings." Hebrews 9:24, "Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands which are copies of the true but into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God for us."

In Genesis 27:7, "Bring me game and make savory food for me that I may eat it and bless you in the presence of the Lord."

And then that wonderful statement in Judges 18:6, "May the presence of the Lord be with you on your way."

Well there the presence of God, the presence of the Lord is meant to comfort. But the vast majority of references have to do with judgment.

Psalms 68:2, "As wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God." Genesis 3:8 tells us that Adam and his wife after sinning hid themselves among the trees of the garden in order that they might not come across the presence of God. In Psalm 97:5, "The mountains melt like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth." In Psalm 114:7, "Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob." In Acts 3 it talks about repenting and being converted and your sins begin blotted out so that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. In 2 Thessalonians 1:9, "These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power."

So while there are times when the presence of the Lord is meant to increase our sense of comfort, there are more times when it is meant to increase our sense of accountability. I stand in the presence of God. We are always in the presence of God. We are always in the presence of the Lord but it's that perspective that is a control factor in how we live. When I read the horrible things that I read in the press about these people in the PTL scandal who have behaved the way they have behaved, the thing that shocks me is how they could do that recognizing they live and move in the presence of God and name the name of Jesus Christ. That should strike fear to the core of the heart...fear of disobedience. He reads the heart. He monitors the life of every one of us, this is a solemn charge in the presence of God.

And it carries accountability before the Holy One who keeps the record of everything and judges righteously.

Now this is serious then. And what is it that it says here?

It's amazing, you might think he's was going to name some really, really vile wicked gross evil that we are to command people to withdraw from in the presence of God, but look what he says.

"Solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words." What does he mean by that? Well let me tell you this, whatever it is it must be very very serious, very serious. It seems initially a pretty innocent deal for such a solemn command, doesn't it? But you see, the word here *logomachia* means to wage a war of words. But it has a larger context which you want to understand. It has to do with the typical characteristic of false teachers who use words to argue against the Word of God.

Paul calls for avoiding the kind of debate and word battle, get this, that pits divine truth against human philosophy and makes the Bible answerable to man. Or the kind of word battle that attacks the simple truth of Scripture with the sophisticated or quasi or supposedly sophisticated philosophy and rationalizing of man.

The point is there's no common ground for such a war of words. You stand on the Word of God, they stand on a demonic Satanically inspired religion, that's not common ground. So you never subject the Bible to a debate with a nonbeliever with some supposedly erudite philosopher theologian who rejects its authority. And you never allow people to be exposed to such a thing.

I remember some couple of years ago when Phil Donahue's show kept calling us. They called every day for about two weeks and some days they called three or four times a day. And I remember in frustration we said we're not interested in being on. Finally the secretary said, "I don't think you realize this is the Phil Donahue Show." And personally in my own heart I believe that there are few people if any in America who have done more to spell the demise of morality in this country than Phil Donahue because under the guise of intellectual and open forum he has given a place to every aberration imaginable and allowed them to espouse the jargon and the words that tear down truth. But I wouldn't go on that because that's not a place for me to go. I will not subject the truth of the Word of God to speculative debate and the attack of human reason. Now it's good for people to discuss the Bible, to debate a certain interpretation of a biblical text, to use varying passages of Scripture to discuss the essence of a biblical doctrine, to talk about how to apply the Word of God to life, but what is to be avoided is a word battle that is not centered on the revelation of God but rather places the Word of God alongside human philosophy which is supposed to refine and explain it.

C.S. Lewis in *Screwtape Letters*, I was reading this week the first letter. It's a marvelous approach and it's one older demon writing a younger demon telling him how to deal with Christians to be effective. The first letter, *Screwtape letter*, is written to Junior Demon Wormwood and it goes like this, "Your man...that is the Christian you're trying to influence...has been accustomed every since he was a boy to have a dozen incompatible philosophies dancing about together inside his head. He doesn't think of doctrines as primarily true or false, but as academic or practical. Jargon, not argument, is your best ally in keeping him from the church," end quote.

The demons know that if you can just fill up a person's head with a bunch of terminology, a bunch of words, human reason and philosophy, you can confuse them about the simple truth of God's Word. It's going on in colleges, in seminaries all over this land. And in false religious systems it's being espoused by evangelists and preachers on television who don't speak the truth...the barrage of verbiage coming at the church is absolutely unbelievable. And if you don't think it's had an effect, then ask yourself how the church ever got to the place where it advocates abortion which it does in many quarters? Ask yourself how the church ever got to the place where it accepted theistic evolution and starts to deny the creative work of God in six days as recorded in Genesis. Ask yourself how it is that the church has allowed women preachers, homosexuality, divorce for any reason. Ask how the church has allowed unholy leaders to rise to leadership, demonstrate their unholiness and stay right there where they are. Ask yourselves how it is that husbands no longer head their homes and wives have no commitment to the lives of their children as the priority of their life. Ask yourself how the church has bought into materialism, and pride, self-esteem and the psychology of contemporary human thought. If you don't think the jargon has invaded us, you're not looking very close.

And every false doctrine from other religions have invaded the church so that now we have sort of a hybrid mysticism that we know as a Charismatic movement.

And all these things in the church are the words of men.

People say to me, in fact I was asked last night, "What is binding Satan mean?" I said I don't know it's not in the Bible.

And I was asked last week, "What does it mean to be slain in the Spirit?" I said I have no idea, it's not in the Bible. And I read a book, it said if you're not slain in the Spirit at least three times a week you can't get on with your spiritual life.

Jargon...confusing talk that mitigates against the Word of God.

And there's varying levels of its extreme impact, of course. But whatever it was that was attacking the church in Ephesus was very very serious. And no doubt it was some kind of sort of insipient gnostic philosophical heresy that took a lot of highsounding fancy words and undermined the simple teaching of the Apostles.

These things are in the church because the church is willing to listen to the world. And the church is willing to set the Bible alongside the reason of man and let the reason of man pump its jargon into the issue so that the Bible becomes confused in the minds of those who look at it. He says here it's useless, it's of no profit. It has no spiritual benefit. And worse than that it's demonic, 1 Timothy 4:1, it's the doctrines of demons which are spawned by seducing spirits through hypocritical lie speakers.

And what does it do? What is the result of it? Look what he says. "This kind of stuff leads to the ruin of the hearers."

The word "ruin" is catastrophe, that's the Greek word, katastrephe. It means to overturn, subvert, upset or overthrow.

False teaching has the effect that is opposite of edification.

It doesn't build up, it tears down. It doesn't strengthen, it weakens. The tragic effect, beloved, of people who listen to false teaching is it ruins them.

Now what does that mean? What kind of ruin is he talking about? Well, he's talking here about the people who are those who are in those systems that espouse false teaching. And it ruins them. In what sense? That word katastrephe is only used one other time in the New Testament, let's see what it means.

The other time is in 2 Peter 2:6 and it talks about God condemning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to katastrephe by reducing them to ashes. Katastrephe there means total devastation, the total destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was a katastrephe. And he's using the word here in the same sense, totally destroys the hearers. This is talking about damning their eternal souls...total destruction, total holocaust, total devastation. That's why 2 Peter 2:1 calls these destructive heresies that bring swift destruction.

In 2 Peter 3:16 it says, "The untaught and unstable distort the Word of God as they do the rest of the Scriptures to their own destruction." So it's that kind of destruction. It's the ruination of an eternal soul in an eternal hell. And the opposite would be to hear the Word of God and be saved. And so, beloved, we are called to realize that we have to stay away from false teaching because that stuff damns the eternal soul of the people who are under its influence. Tragic...tragic.

There's a second danger, not only does it ruin the hearers but secondly it shames the teachers...it shames the teachers.

Notice verse 15, a very familiar and popular verse to most Christians, maybe you'll get a fresh understanding of it this morning. "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed handling accurately the Word of truth." Literally I could preach on this verse for five months there's so much here. But let me see if I can do it in a few moments.

The key word is "ashamed." Anybody who teaches anything other than that which is accurately reflective of the Word of truth ought to be ashamed, that's the idea. That's the key word.

The dictionary describes shame as the painful feeling arising from the consciousness of having done something dishonorably.

The painful feeling arising from the consciousness of having done something dishonorably...shame. Anyone who propagates any false teaching ought to be ashamed and has reason to face God and be ashamed. This has reference over the shame that we have for the work we have done when it's inspected by God. In other words it's worthy of condemnation, not commendation.

Let me put it simply. Anyone who misrepresents, who misinterprets, who ignores or distracts from God's Word by giving false teaching or confusing people with useless human reason has cause to be ashamed no matter how many degrees you have, or how many PhD.s or how erudite you think you are, if you violate the Word of God or misrepresent its glorious truth, you have every reason to stand before God in shame. And you should feel painfully the consciousness of having done something dishonorably, and that is mishandling God's precious Word. So the issue here is that it shames the one who teaches it. So he says in verse 15, "Be diligent..." That's the first principle.

How do you avoid being a shameful teacher? How do you avoid being ashamed before the Lord? First of all, be diligent. I know the Authorized version says "study" but that's really not the word, the word spoudazo means to give diligence, to give maximum effort, to give persistent zeal, to do your best, to be eager. Simply put it this way, make a maximum effort...make a maximum effort.

You know how you avoid being a shameful teacher? By making a maximum effort. This verse is close to my heart, you know that. And I think being a teacher that is not ashamed starts with making a maximum effort. You have to give your whole life to it. That's why 1 Timothy 5:17 says, "The elder who labors in the Word and doctrine is worthy of double honor." It's a labor.

It's a work to the point of sweat and exhaustion. It demands a maximum effort. It demands a commitment to excellence.

Secondly he says, "Be diligent, or make your maximum effort in order to present yourself to God." Oh, this is a wonderful word...paristemi, it means to stand alongside...para means to be alongside. We talk about parachurch or anything that has to do with something alongside being in that way...parallel.

What is this? This means you want to come alongside God.

You want to be able to stand alongside God. And then this key word, "approved...approved." Boy, what a thought. That means proven to be worthy after testing...proven worthy.

What is the goal of the teacher? To make a maximum effort so that he may someday stand alongside the very holy presence of God unashamed because he has proven himself to be worthy. Boy, what a

wonderful, wonderful goal. To be able to take your place, that...that's...that's the marvelous thought...alongside God as a worthy teacher of His truth, approved.

What makes a person an excellent teacher of God's Word?

One, he makes a maximum effort. Two, his goal is not to please men, it is to stand beside God approved. You get your focus beyond men. Paul says to the Galatians, "Am I a man pleaser?"

Not at all...not at all." The heart of the Apostle Paul was that he might please God. He did what he did for that purpose and that purpose alone. First Thessalonians 2:4, "Just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak not as pleasing men but God who examines our hearts." That's the issue. The teacher who does stand before the Lord and hears, "Well done, good and faithful servant," is one who made a maximum effort and whose focus of life was that some day he might stand along the side of God, be considered worthy because he was proven trustworthy.

The word "workman" is a marvelous word, ergates, it has in it the idea of energy. And it has to be a worker or a laborer.

The issue here is not a student, even though King James translated it said "study." It's not the picture of a student, it's the picture of a hard worker, of a laborer who is so committed to a maximum effort and so committed to coming before the one who is his master and showing him a work that is worthy, that's the idea, so that he will never be ashamed, never be ashamed.

And the heart of it all is how he handles the word of truth, look at it. "Handling accurately the word of truth." That is such a rich term. We could take time just developing that. But let me give you the idea. The literal Greek is to cut a straight line, orthotomeo, to cut a straight line.

Now what was it used to refer to? Well, many things. Any way to cut a straight line or any means...or rather any operation in which a straight line was needed, this word could fit. It was used, for example, of cutting a straight line with a saw. You wanted to put together a table or a chair or whatever, you wanted to cut a straight line. It was used for making a straight path through the woods as you blazed a trail and you cut it through, or even through a mountainous or rocky area, you cut a straight path. It was used of building a building very frequently. And it could involve cutting a straight edge on a stone so that as you stacked the stones together to make the building they went up level and they fit the plumb line and the cross line that had been laid there so that you could keep on a square edge.

It was used of cutting cloth on a straight line. It was used of cutting hides on a straight line to piece them together, to make a tent if indeed that was what was being made. Any kind of straight line that had to fit together with something else.

Now let me follow that up. Paul was a leather worker. We often say he was a tent maker but the Greek word is leather worker. That is, he used hides and skins and perhaps the woven hair of goats from time to time to make things...tents, perhaps.

And you can imagine that a man who made a tent would have to piece together a lot of hides. For example, if you were making a tent out of hide, there was no one goat big enough to be your tent, obviously. So you got a numerous amount of goat hide and then you just started to cut them and you had to cut each piece right or it wouldn't fit together. It's like making a dress or you ladies know if you don't cut the pieces right the thing won't go together right. It's how you cut the individual pieces that makes the whole thing come together.

And that is exactly what he's saying. And I've said this through the years. If you don't know how to cut the pieces, you can't make the whole thing fit...the point being you can't be a theologian until you've been an exegete. You can't develop your system of theology unless you put the parts together right. And that is to say that everyone must then handle accurately the Word of truth, cutting every part of it straight so that it fits together. And any student of the Bible understands that concept.

And if you don't cut the pieces right, you can't make the whole fit together. Interpreting the Scripture accurately is so very very important. But there's a fast and loose attitude toward Scripture today that just concerns me, and people do it all the time. They just throw around any old interpretation of anything that fits their whim.

I was kind of surprised yesterday to hear, just for example, and I think it was inadvertent but the wife of Presidential candidate Pat Robertson was interviewed about having conceived their child out of wedlock. And Pat had made the statement that in the eyes of God that constituted their marriage, which of course it doesn't in the eyes of God. You need to be reminded of that. You don't want to legitimize that kind of behavior. But his wife was asked about how she felt about all this coming out and so forth. Her answer was this, and I thought it was interesting. She said, "Well, now I understand the meaning of John 8, 'And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.'"

Dear friends, do you understand that John 8 has nothing to do with somebody finding out that you had an illegitimate relationship and produced a child before you were married. I mean, what do people...do they think that any Bible verse can just mean anything they want it to mean? Now I don't think in a sense that that's a reflection of a lack of a view of the Scripture. I don't think...I think that she believes the Bible and all of that, but it indicates to me how people play fast and loose. John 8 when it says you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free, Jesus is talking to the Jews about knowing the truth of who He was and how they could be saved and enter into the freedom of salvation...not the freedom of finally having your closet uncovered...and let out some sin that you committed. And again, I don't want to pick on that situation other than to say it was a pretty graphic

illustration to me of the way people play around with the Scripture.

You see, 2 Corinthians 2:17 says, "We are not like many peddling the Word of God...or huckstering the Word of God."

Using the Bible for some personal gain, twisting it, turning it to fit our little deal. People take Scripture and twist it around...I was thinking as I was reading the other day about Jessica Hahn who said that posing nude in Playboy had drawn her nearer to God. Did you read that? Unbelievable. James 4, "Draw near to God and He'll draw near to you," what a great truth and what an incredible blasphemous vile desecration of that truth.

But people play fast and loose with Scripture.

And here the Apostle Paul says, "Look, you have a solemn command before a holy God in whose presence you are at all times to avoid any encroachment on Scripture that is useless from those whose teaching ruins the people they teach, and you also must realize that anyone who doesn't handle the Word of truth with great accuracy has reason to stand before God and be...what?...ashamed." That's a serious thing. Better not trifle with God's Word.

Now what is the Word of truth? Well, first of all, it's used several other times in Scripture. In Ephesians 1:13 and James 1:18, it definitely refers to the gospel. It says there the gospel of...in Ephesians 1:13 it says, "The word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." So the word of truth has to do with the gospel. In James 1:18 it says, "He's begotten us with the word of truth," again referring to the gospel by which we're born again. But it goes beyond that because the word of truth is all of God's revelation, John 17:17, Jesus said, "Thy Word is truth." So he's saying handle it all right, the gospel and everything else. When you think about handling the gospel right, you've got to acknowledge, folks, that there is an awful lot of preaching today that doesn't handle the gospel properly. In fact, I've been writing a book for about five years and I want you to pray for me...if you'll just pray for the next 60 days, I can get this book finished. It's on the gospel. Here we are in 1987 having to write a book to clarify the gospel. It's absolutely unbelievable. But there's so much confusion about it.

I read a Master's dissertation over the weekend on what is the gospel...written by a seminary student bringing together all confusing elements of what the gospel really is and how one appropriates it in his or her life. We have to handle the Word accurately so that we don't misrepresent the gospel and wind up with still birth instead of new birth. And then we have to represent all the Word of God, not in a flippant offhanded way, but in a proper way.

And what does it demand? You remember...you see what it demands, diligence, or excellence. It demands a desire to be approved by God not men. And it demands that you be a workman, a

craftsman, that you know your craft, that you have the kind of preparation that allows you to study. We're craftsman who handle the Word of God, we better be.

Avoid false teaching then. He says it ruins the hearers and it shames the teachers. Thirdly, it leads to ungodliness, verse 16, "Avoid worldly and empty chatter, it will lead to further ungodliness...further ungodliness." The "but" there refers to contrast...in contrast to handling carefully God's truth, handle that, but avoid the rest. Don't handle it at all, it is what he's saying. And what is it that we're to avoid? The word means to walk around...walk around it, shun it, keep clear of it, shift yourself to avoid it.

What will you avoid? Chatter, talk, more words, jargon, the dribble of human philosophy, manmade religion. He calls it worldly, that's profane unholy unsacred, bebelos means common, not set apart. Just the common earthy profane unholy, unsacred talk of men. And then he calls it empty. And that means it has no benefit. It yields no return. But I want you to know something, empty words soon become evil words because empty words are like a vacuum. I have a vacuum in my garage I used to vacuum out the car. Every once in a while it sucks up something that I don't want it to suck up...you know, you're vacuuming your car and up goes your pen and your money and all kinds of things. But that's the way a vacuum is. Whatever gets near the vacuum rushes into the vacuum and empty words become evil words because they suck up sin. Useless talk on useless matters becomes wicked talk. Words not of God are soon unholy words. False teachers claim to be advancing our thinking, expanding our minds, leading us to new truth.

Yeah, they do lead us but look what it says...it says in verse 16, "They lead us to further ungodliness. It will lead us but it will advance us down not up, more and more deeply into ungodliness. They're ungodly and they pull the people who hear them into more and more ungodliness with them. False prophets bring in these destructive heresies, Peter says in 1 Peter 2, and many will follow their sensuality. That's right. Many will follow their sensuality. You get right into the flow of all that garbage and it leads to greater ungodliness. Ungodliness simply means Godlessness, unrighteousness. Ungodly conduct is always the fruit of ungodly doctrine. Ungodly doctrines spread, proliferates ungodly living.

It's incredible to me...we were talking about this some weeks ago. You look at the PTL scandal and the only thing you can ask yourself, at least the only thing I ask myself again and again, is: how in the world can people develop a theology that lets them live like this? But the legacy of false doctrine is ungodly living. And that's exactly what is pervasive. And so, false teachers not only ruin the people who listen, shame...are ashamed when they teach, but they proliferate ungodliness. You see, false teaching can't change the heart. It can't restrain the flesh. It can't produce godliness. It just can produce more and more and more ungodliness.

Fourthly, and in verse 17 he says it spreads like gangrene.

Or it is contagious...it is contagious. It not only ruins the people who listen, shames the people who teach, leads to ungodliness among them but it has the power to spread like gangrene. Look at verse 17, "Their talk will spread like gangrene," it says. Do you know how fast gangrene spreads? Very fast. The Greek word gangraina has to do with a spreading consuming disease, an insidious fast moving disease. Do you realize that gangrene can start with a small pin hole in the human body and engulf the whole body in a few moments of time with its poison, that in curing gangrene people are put into a pressure system to retard the speed of the gangrene in order that a penicillin injection can take effect? That's how fast it goes.

It's like a prairie fire with its malignancy. That's why in Jude 23 it says when you get near anybody in a false system, snatch them like a bran from the burning and watch out that you don't get your garment spotted by that stuff. It's a malignancy, it eats up the neighboring tissue and spreads its corrupting doctrine to infect other people rapidly. It runs rampant.

You see, the people of the world love false teaching as opposed to the truth because it's all a part of the system to which they belong. Do you understand that? I mean, the whole world, as my grandfather used to say, is divided between the saints and the aints. And the saints love the Word of God and the aints love the word of Satan, and the whole system of false religion is the word of Satan. They're the children of the devil. They buy the line of the devil. They operate on the world, the flesh and the devil. So give them a religion that's Satanically inspired, they'll buy into it. It will go like wild fire, like gangrene.

The danger of false teaching, it ruins the people who listen...it shames the people who teach...it increases ungodliness...and it spreads like gangrene. Fifthly, it overturns the faith of some...it overturns the faith of some.

Verse 17, it says, "Among them...these false teachers...are Hymenaeus and Philetus." He names names here. He doesn't pull any punches. Hymenaeus, by the way, was named in 1 Timothy 1:20 as one of the ring leaders, probably one of the false teaching pastors in Ephesus, whom Paul himself put out of the church.

Paul put him out. But apparently when he was put out of the church he set up shop down the street and he was still espousing his lies. And now he got a guy along with him by the name of Philetus and the two of them are communicating this demonic doctrine. And so he names them just so Timothy will know exactly who they are and he can tell the church to avoid them...Hymenaeus and Philetus, men who have gone astray from the truth. They're like those in James 5:19 and 20 who have strayed from the truth.

They are apostates, dear friends, gone astray, deviated from, erred from, missed the mark of the truth. They're like those who having once been enlightened and tasted the heavenly gift and seen the powers of the age to come and partaken of the power of the Holy Spirit have fallen away and it's impossible for them to be renewed to repentance. They have apostatized. Hebrews 6.

They are those in Hebrews 10 who have trodden under foot the blood of the covenant, counted Christ's blood an unholy thing, done despite to the Spirit of grace.

In other words, known the truth, rejected the truth, gone into terrible error, straying from the truth. And what was their particular aberration? It says in verse 17 that Hymenaeus and Philetus have gone astray from the truth, that is the revelation of God, by saying the resurrection has already taken place. Well then what in the world do they mean by that? Probably they had the idea that the resurrection was nothing more than some...some mystical experience that you experienced when you went from...from the unenlightened life to the enlightened life. They were probably buying into some kind of heresy, some kind of philosophical heresy that was pervasive in that time. We really don't know the answer to that. Some think that they bought into the Greek philosophy which said the only after life is that a man should live in his children. In other words, there was only one continuing life and that is the life that continues in a child.

And whatever it was, they had denied the resurrection of the body. They had maybe gotten into philosophical dualism which says the body is something to be discarded and only the spirit lives on. There will be no bodily resurrection at all. We don't know what it was. We don't know whether it was a mystical thing.

Whether it was the philosophical sort of thing that says we live on in our children. Or whether it was the gnostic kind of dualistic view that we'll live on in spirit but not in body. But anyway, they denied the resurrection.

You say, "Is that important?" Yes it's important, 1 Corinthians 15 written seven or eight years before this, Paul says if there's no resurrection then is Christ...what?...not risen? And if Christ is not risen, then we are not risen. And then we are miserable. And there's no resurrection. In other words, you cut the heart out of the gospel. They were denying the gospel with their "resurrection is passed already" view. In denying the resurrection of the believer's body to come, in denying the resurrection which was the hope of every believer, yet in the future they were denying the resurrection of Christ and its implications because he was the firstfruits of our resurrection, they were therefore denying the gospel, they were denying the hope of those who belonged to the Lord. This is a denial of the foundation of the Christian faith...denial of eternal life in a glorified body like Christ. They were denying Christianity at its heart.

So, he says...as a result of it, upset the faith of some.

Now what does he mean by that? Upset means literally to overturn. Well what level of faith was this? Well obviously it was an illegitimate faith. It was a nonsaving faith. These are the unstable souls that Peter talks about in 2 Peter 3:16, the untaught and unstable. Second Peter 2:18, speaking out arrogant words, false teachers, of vanity...they entice by fleshly desires and by sensuality those who barely are barely escaping the ones who live in error. In other words, it pictures the person who is sort of looking for God and wanting to believe and beginning to open up and they get under this kind of lying false stuff and it literally destroys their faith. It's a person with weak faith, one who never really belongs to the Lord but they're sort of...they're sort of moving toward religion, toward some answers in life and they get... Listen, don't you understand how true that is? Don't you know that the false systems of doctrine and the false religions are sitting out there waiting for the people who are feeling the pain and pressure of life and are looking for answers and they're just wanting to suck them in? Those who are initiating some kind of belief system become prey to these false religionists.

But they can't be the real ones because you can't overthrow real faith. We'll see that in the last point in verse 19, look at it. The final thing I want to share with you, number six, is that false teaching is dangerous because it characterizes those who don't belong to the Lord. It has to be avoided because it characterizes the unsaved. And he backs into this issue in a wonderful way...a wonderful way.

Notice verse 19..."Nevertheless..." oh, I love that word, it's emphatic. "In spite of those ruined, in spite of those shamed, in spite of those ungodly, in spite of those corrupted by the gangrene of false doctrine, in spite of those whose immersing belief is upset because they have been trapped in false systems, in spite of that...that's what nevertheless means...in spite of that the firm foundation of God stands." Boy, what a statement...what a statement. I wish I had time to take you through the whole process of discovering what that means. But let me just give you the end of the process.

What is the firm foundation of God? Beloved, it's the church...it's the church. It's the redeemed. And the majority of commentators affirm this. It has to do with the redeemed. We are the true people of God who form the solid immovable foundation that false teachers can't uproot. The false teachers will ruin some, they will shame some, they will lead to ungodliness some, they will corrupt some, they will overturn the faith of some, but not the elect of God. Do you see that? The firm foundation of God stands. We are a building not made with hands. We are the temple of the living God. We are the church which Christ will build and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. We are those who having had a good work begun in us, that work will be performed until the day of Jesus Christ, Philippians 16. We are those who can never be separated from the love of God in Christ. We are those of whom Jesus said, "All that the Father gives to Me will come to Me and I have lost none of them but shall raise them up at the last day," John 6. This is a tremendous truth.

Beloved, all that garbage and all that false teaching can come flying across the scene and it may devastate souls of people. And it may confuse believers from time to time. But the foundation of the church of God in Christ is firm. First John 2 says, "You are strong in the Word and you have overcome the wicked one." God called out a people for salvation, chosen before the world began for eternal glory and that people are intact when eternal glory begins.

And what is the guarantee? Look at this, this is tremendous. Verse 19, "Having this seal." What a thought. What was a seal for? Ownership...ownership, a mark of ownership. As a builder put on a cornerstone, he put his name, this was his building and the purpose for that building. Sphragis is the Greek word, it means ownership. It means that it belongs. It's marked out as the possession of its owner. And so are we. The foundation of God, namely His church, has a stamp, a stamp of ownership, authenticity.

Look at this stamp, twofold. First, "The Lord knows those who are His." Did you get that? Now listen carefully. That, dear friends, is sovereign election. The reason the church could never be touched by all the false teachers is because we are His.

He knows who we are, He holds us in His sovereign power. We are His for eternity. We are His forever. He knows who we are by sovereign choice. The first seal we have is we are elect. This is a seal affixed to God's foundation. It guarantees permanence, it makes dissolution impossible. God put the seal on us, this is Mine. He put it on us in eternity. And that settles the matter forever. Oh, what a thought.

"There are some who will come and say, Lord, Lord, and He'll say, Depart from Me, I never...what?...knew you. I don't know you...you workers of iniquity." But they won't disturb the divine foundation, it will stand...it will stand because we are the elect and the Lord knows who we are. And He holds us. God has chosen you, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, from the beginning for salvation. He knows who belong to Him. And all that belong to Him will come to Him and He will lose none of them, John 6.

So, the first aspect of the seal is sovereign election. The second aspect is personal sanctification. Verse 19, and the second seal says, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness." To name the name of the Lord means to be identified with Him. If you belong to Him, abstain from wickedness. This is the corollary. Not only are God's people elect but they're called to righteousness. God's election is always an election to holiness. He didn't elect us to be saved, He elected us to be holy. So you have predestining mercy and inevitable duty. We are bought with a price, therefore we glorify God in our body and our spirit, which are God's, 1 Corinthians 6. So it's twofold. If we name the name of the Lord, that if we claim to be a believer, we'll abstain from wickedness. It is both an exhortation and an affirmation. The one who names the name of the Lord will not apostatize. He'll not defect. He'll turn away from sin, unrighteousness is the term here. God's

election is an election to holiness.

Now these two quotes are interesting because none of...neither of them is exact but they seem to be generally from Numbers chapter 16. You remember the story of Numbers 16? Korah rebelled against God and a lot of people rebelled with him. And God came in terrible judgment against them. The first statement, "The Lord knows them that are His, or those who are His," reminds of the saying in verse 5 of Numbers 16, "The Lord will show who are His." Now that statement was made by Moses to the rebellious friends of Korah. When they gathered against Moses and here was this big rebellion of apostate people, Moses said, "The Lord knows who's His," He knows who belongs to Him.

The second was Moses' command to the people in verse 26, "Depart I pray you from the tents of those wicked men and touch nothing of theirs." So there's that twosided thing again. One, God's going to come in judgment but He knows who He'll spare because they belong to Him. And how do we know who they are?

Because they will depart from the tents of wickedness. From the divine side, they're elect. From the human side, they're obedient. The security that we have, listen, false teaching and false teachers and lies and seducing demons and all the rest of that garbage can come across our path but we nevertheless will stand sure if we are part of the foundation of God and those who are elect on the one hand and who manifest that having been elect because we are obedient.

Just as the rebellion under Korah ended in judgment, so will that of the false teachers. So will those in the church, but the elect will be spared because they are elect and because they are holy in life. What a great hope...what a great promise. That's our security. Let's bow together in prayer.

Thank You, Father, for this word to us, so much more in our hearts to say but we accept the fact that You've committed this to us today. Help us to be faithful. Lord God, help us to be faithful, to be diligent, giving the maximum effort in order that we may stand alongside God without shame, worthy because we have handled accurately the Word of truth. O God, help us to give no place to that which ruins and shames and leads to ungodliness and corrupts and overturns and characterizes the ungodly, but help us to be people of the book, people of the truth, people of the Word who are not intimidated by the supposed intellectualism, or mysticism of those around us but who live simply and humbly in submission to this Word and proclaim it fearlessly and boldly for the sake of the One whom it reveals, even our glorious God. This we ask in the name of Christ. Amen.

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