

AN UNASHAMED WORKMAN!
2 TIMOTHY CH2:14-26

“We must be global Christians with a global vision because our God is a global God” John Stott.

Remember we talked about the “context” meaning the circumstances that formed the setting, where we ask the “What, Who, Where, Why, When and How.” In order to help us, we will continue to go over every week the following:

The key to understanding 2 Timothy lies in recognizing Paul’s altered circumstances. He is no longer free to pursue his task of proclaiming the gospel to the gentiles. Arrested (probably in Troas Ch4:13) and now a prisoner in Rome (Ch1:16-17; 2;9). Having already undergone a preliminary hearing (Ch4:16-18) and awaiting his final trial, from which he has little hope of anything except death (Ch4:6-8). Some have ministered to his needs (Ch1:16-18), others have gone out on ministries (Ch4:10,12) and at least one has abandoned him (Ch4:10). Meanwhile the situation in Ephesus has worsened with some deserting the gospel (Ch1:15) and despite his previous excommunication (1 Timothy Ch1:20) of Hymenaeus, he is still at work overthrowing the faith of many (Ch2:17-18). In the midst of these circumstances Paul sends his second letter to Timothy.

Timothy meanwhile is facing pressures from within the church Ch1:8 – distance and shame of the Gospel and its servants, Ch1:15 – desertion, Ch2:17-18 - wandering from the truth, Ch3:8 – men who are opposing the truth.

Running alongside this, Timothy is facing pressures from outside the church – Ch3:11-12 + Ch4:14-15 in the form of persecution. It is these circumstances that form the setting for Timothy, and because of these circumstances, he may not complete what God has asked him to do (Ch4:5)!

ILLUSTRATION

The Good, The Bad and The Ugly! Paul in this section wants Timothy's focus to be on how to respond to some of the pressures he's currently facing!

THE LORD'S SETTING! v14-v18

Who are the “them” that Timothy needs to keep reminding, is it the trainees or is it the elect?

THE GOOD!

How should Timothy continue?

V14 – He is to continue to remind the men of the pattern they need to follow. The apostolic pattern. The standard practice of the preacher/teacher is to call people to remember the historical context of their faith. Going back to v8 – v10 this is the pattern to remember and follow. We need to keep asking “What type of a Saviour is He?” We need to remember the gospel truth and the gospel ministry.

Timothy is to warn them before God (the most serious type of warning). It may be that Paul will not always be with them, but God will always be with them. These “word battles” must have had some attraction, otherwise Timothy would not have been told to warn the men to avoid them, because they are of no value and ruin those who listen, whereas,

GOD’S WORD WILL ALWAYS BE RELEVANT. THAT IS WHY IT NEEDS TO BE HANDLED CORRECTLY.

V15 – He needs to correctly handle the word of truth. This is the example he is to set. When he handles the word of truth correctly, he will always be speaking reality into people’s hearts. Realities, that describe the world for what it is, the heart for what it is, and the God that is always relevant.

- V14 - warn them before God
- v15 - be a workman approved by God

Timothy must keep teaching faithfully:

- v15 - Correctly handle. What does this mean? Only 3 times in the Bible does this word, a verb, “orthotomeo” to cut straight, actually to cut straight the Word of Truth!

- Proverbs Ch3:6 - he will make your paths straight!
- Proverbs Ch11:5 - make a straight way for them!

- Make straight - To be accurate and to be plain in the exposition of God's Word! The Word of truth is a road, that has to be cut straight through whatever lies in front of it!

THE BAD! The verb “astocheo” to wander, means to miss the mark. Think in terms of archery and a target! An archer who misses the target completely! The same verb is used in:

- 1 Tim Ch1:6 - some have wandered!
- 1 Tim Ch6:21 - wandered from the faith!

Picture a target and an archer who misses the mark. The Word of truth is a target that the archer, the bad workman misses! By missing the target, the false teaching has double the damage:

it produces godlessness! V16 in the place it leads people away from God!
it is gangrenous! V17 it spreads infection in the gospel community and slowly kills!

V16 – Timothy must also not indulge his own mind to these things. When we indulge our minds in the wrong things it leads to wrong living, hence, the phrase “become more and more ungodly”.

As an able teacher Timothy is also to identify false teaching. In this case it is like a virus has come into the church at Ephesus, and it is attacking its very foundations.

Hymenaeus and Philetus must at first presented as faithful Christians to have wandered away and Paul had needed to discipline Hymenaeus before in 1st Timothy Ch1:19-20.

THE UGLY!

What does Paul say the church environment is:

- v14 - quarrelling about words
- v14 - wrong kind of listening
- v16 - godless chatter
- v16 - over indulging
- v16 - more ungodly
- v17 - false teaching
- v18 - wandering from the truth
- v18 - destroying the faith of some

A DEVIANT CHURCH ENVIRONMENT!

Why not start with the false teaching first?

THE LORD'S SEALS! v19

Although the faith of men can be destroyed, not the faith of God from God, God's foundation stands secure for ever!

Their influence was disastrous –

V14 – ruins

V16 – ungodly

V18 – destroys the faith

V17 - Their teaching seemed successful. **Gangrene** infects, poisons and kills. It also suggests that it spreads quickly.

V18 – Their teaching was a false teaching.

V18a – Who has wandered away? Suggesting that they were once part of the truth, but have now wandered away.

V19 – Paul sees Timothy's leadership under threat. Lets have a quick look at Numbers Ch16. This is probably the greatest challenge to Moses' leadership and it is no coincidence that Paul uses this example to reveal what is happening in Ephesus.

Secret - The Lord knows who are His! (Numbers Ch16:5)

Public - Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness!

In Numbers Ch16, Moses' leadership is challenged, by more than 250 well known community leaders! Moses is facing a leadership contest, a vote in confidence if you like and Moses rightly so trusts in God to decide! Because God always decides who His leaders are! Moses's challenge is to allow God to decide as to who should lead Israel, because the Lord will show who truly belong to Him!

The point that Paul is raising with Timothy who is in the middle of facing, what we could say will always be typical problems in Church, sadly, confusion over challenges to his leadership as he cuts straight the Word of Truth, God knows those who are His! Always!

This is a Godly seal of ownership that cannot be broken! Never!

The second seal that God places, which cannot be broken, on His Church ***is the seal of obedience!*** His true people will always have a desire to obey God!

Paul uses his knowledge of the Scriptures in his second reference which Christopher Green attributes to both Leviticus Ch24:16 and Isaiah Ch26:13, revealing that Paul sees the rebellion as equivalent to blasphemy!

So we have two types of teachers one that correctly handles the word of truth and one that doesn't. This is the context for verses 20-21.

THE LORD'S SERVANT! v20-v26

WHAT TYPE OF INSTRUMENT?

V20 – An instrument for noble use.

V20 – An instrument for ignoble use.

V21 – Only by cleansing

CLEANSING FROM WHAT?

V19 – From wickedness!

V22 – Evil desires of youth!

Paul is not necessarily saying to avoid contact with such men, but to avoid their error (handling scripture incorrectly) and their evil (wrong living, ungodliness).

To "cleanse" oneself from these things is essentially to cleanse them from our minds and lives, by purity of doctrine and purity of living. This is confirmed by the metaphor of a large house and its articles sandwiched between v19 "***Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness***" and v22 "***Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness***".

Paul instructs Timothy to cleanse himself to be an instrument that can be used by the Master.

WHAT SHOULD THE CHARACTER OF A NOBLE INSTRUMENT LOOK LIKE?

V22 – The pursuit of righteousness, faith, love and peace, an ongoing place of transformation.

AS HE IS OPPOSED, WHERE SHOULD HIS HOPE BE?

V25 In God.

God alone can change people! Timothy is to be a workman who correctly handles the word of truth, gently, because his hope is in the word to bring change. Timothy is to model this pattern, always hoping that God will give those men of error the gift of repentance.

WHO IS TIMOTHY'S FIGHT WITH?

V26 – The devil. Not against flesh and blood, although those are the agents used, it is against the devil whom has taken them captive. This is where Paul once was.

APPLICATION

Are we clear about our calling to correctly handle God's Word?

How are we developing that calling?

How would people describe our character?

Are we continually cleansing our minds and living these truths out in our lifestyles?