

Text: 2 Timothy 2:14-16

Title: The Pastor's Ministry Description

Truth: The pastor has a job, and the church is in great danger if he doesn't do it.

Date/Location: Sunday July 31, 2016 at FBC

Introduction

If you read carefully, you will notice the ideas of *words*, the *word of truth*, *babblings*, and *message* throughout this section. These have to do with teaching, and indicate that the theme is the teaching ministry of the pastor and the church. I do not believe this is limited to "leaders" from 2 Timothy 2:2; instead, I believe this applies to the entire church.

I. The Minister's Job in the Face of Doctrinal Error, v. 14-16a

I call a minister's job description his "ministry description." Although his work is like a job, it is more than a job. It is a calling of service to God and His people. The term "ministry description" helps us remember that.

A. Continually remind Christians of sound doctrine. "These things" (above) are to be the subject of our church's message on a continual basis. The best defense against error is to be constantly reminding about truth before the error comes.

1. Remind yourself too, pastor. The minister not only has a public-facing portion of his ministry, but he also has to concern himself with his own life. He needs to be reminded of God's truth and to practice it.
2. This also requires active participation on the part of the listener. I can remind you, but you have to "be reminded." And don't go off and act like you don't remember. You've got to remember! You have to *apply* what we learn here every week to your character and behavior and priorities and decision-making. It is imperative, or what we do in church is useless.
3. So go back to 11-13, and be reminded of dying with Christ, reigning in the kingdom with Him, not denying Him, etc. These are foundational truths that put a lot of other things into perspective.
4. To *remind* means to repeat and go over again. You should know these things already unless this is absolutely the first time you have been exposed to Christianity. If you have been for some time a Christian, then this should not be brand new.

B. Charge Christians not to strive about words. There are to be no "wars of words." This is a solemn charge because it is "before the Lord." We not

only remind about truth, but we also we explicitly reject error. Why? Because the words are:

1. Profitless. There is nothing useful or beneficial or advantageous about these word-wars. We call useful or helpful things "edifying" because they build up. If the words do not build, they do nothing or they tear down. It takes some discernment and spiritual maturity (but not a lot) to know when this sort of thing is happening. You recognize it by looking out a move or two ahead, like you do in chess, and seeing what the Biblical profit might be. If it is not clear that there is any profit, defined Biblically, then get out of the conversation.
 2. Ruinous to the hearers. Those hearing are not necessarily those doing all the talking. They could be church members listening to a pastor rant on about some useless detail of theology; or an audience listening to two people debating about such things; or a group of people listening to a panel discussion. The word *ruin* can mean total destruction (2 Peter 2:6) or intellectual ruin in terms of "messing up their minds." The latter can lead to the former if a doctrinal mess persists in someone's life. That is to say, a messed-up theology leads to messed-up life. These things build up strife rather than godly character. They add confusion and doubt rather than clarity and help. They are catastrophic. Do we take such things seriously? Maybe we think, "whatever" or "it's humorous to listen to." No!
- C. Be a diligent worker, to "make a good grade" before God your judge, by means of properly handling the truth.
1. We start by getting a handle on the correct translation. The KJV is *not* a good translation in 2016 English: "**Study** to **shew** thyself approved unto God, a workman that **needeth not** to be ashamed, rightly **dividing** the word of truth." Each of the bold words needs to be fixed, something like this: "**Make every effort** to **present** yourself approved before God, a worker **who is not** ashamed (of his work), **correctly handling** God's word."
 2. Some details: The **word of truth** is passed down to us in the Bible, so this basically means "the Word of God." To **study** does not refer to what I do in my office each week with Bible and books and typing my notes. It means to expend effort, to take pains, to be conscientious in discharging an obligation. That obligation is that every pastor is a servant of God, and like a worker doing a job, he wants to come before his Master with some good work to show Him. Otherwise, the pastor would be ashamed before His master. As a servant stands

before his master with a job well done, or a student before an examining body of teachers with a good grade, or an employee before his boss with the project completed on time and under budget, so a pastor wishes to be before God, with a strong church and results to show for his labor.

3. **Dividing** is a terrible translation. "Dividing" is great ammo for the anti-dispensationalist who says that we "wrongly divide" the word of truth.
 - i. The word comes from the verb "orthotomeō". BDAG says this word, "plainly means 'cut a path in a straight direction' or 'cut a road across country (that is forested or otherwise difficult to pass through) in a straight direction', so that the traveler may go directly to his destination." It is not a cutting like cutting a piece of paper. It is like "cutting across that field," meaning "walking across it." Live the truth. Make it obvious what direction the believer should go, like clear signage along a hiking path.
 - ii. **Rightly handling the truth** is a good translation, for it encompasses not only translation and interpretation, but also how you use the Word in every-day situations.
 - iii. The idea is of a straight shooter, someone who "cuts it straight." It is referring to how you handle the revelation of the good news—straight instead of crooked. Correctly teaching and accurately handling the Bible is essential.
 - iv. Do not be sidetracked by stupid arguments over words. Prov. 3:6 and 11:5 use the word in Greek translation.
4. We need to note that the pastor must look to GOD for approval, not to men. He is not trying to be unashamed before men, as if men are his boss. He needs to orient his thinking and ministry around what God wants. This has a rather obvious application for all Christians. If we seek to please men and gain their approval, we are not doing what God wants (Gal. 1:10, 1 Thess. 2:4). Paul does not tell Timothy to be energetic to get the approval of men. He is to be interested in the approval of God. That is an entirely different ballgame played in a different park by different rules.
5. You might lack in the area of mental acumen, but that is no matter. What counts is hard work in doing what God wants.
6. As a worker, Timothy is not to get caught up in the wars of words that over-zealous theologians sometimes get into, nor in idle conversation around the water cooler and coffee machine in the break room!

D. Finally, shun profane and idle babblings.

1. Shun is a strong word. It means to **go around** something to avoid it (also used in Titus 3:9).
2. What the pastor must avoid is worldly and empty, profane and vain. These are lightweight, useless subjects, similar to the profitless words mentioned in verse 14. But the following context shows that they are more than harmless things. They are dangerous false doctrines, with no basis in truth, made-up things with a worldly character to them. For instance, the false resurrection doctrine mentioned in verse 18 is one of these. It is a heavyweight attack on Christianity. It is empty in that it is devoid of truth. There is nothing heavenly in it.
3. Avoid these things!

E. **Application:** Wrong doctrines are taught everywhere today. And where there is not outright wrong, there is a lot of lightweight fluff that must be avoided. These are taught by TV preachers (actors), news anchors and writers (in magazines, newspapers, nightly news), etc. What do they teach?

1. Any sexual behavior is OK and to be celebrated. Abortion is applauded.
2. It is not only OK, but it is *imperative* to reject God's design for marriage (husband and wife and their natural and assigned functions).
3. Divorce is common, so go ahead and do it.
4. It is a good thing to reject God's gift of gender.
5. Pervert the minds of children with these teachings and practices from the earliest possible age.
6. Truth is what you want it to be. What works for you is good.
7. Saying "no" to behavior I want to do is intolerant. That is unacceptable. The only acceptable intolerance is toward conservatives and Christians.
8. Reject traditions and laws that have been passed down to you. They are outmoded and useless, if not downright dangerous.
9. It is highly desirable to spend hours and hours in the land of fantasy and pretend and comedy.

This is the world of news and media today. Reject it. Get away from it. It is worse than dangerous.

Conclusion

Next time we will emphasize just how dangerous it is for the church when the pastor's job is left undone.

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