

Text: 2 Timothy 2:16-19

Title: Dangers of False Teaching (Part 2, from 2 Timothy 2:14-16)

Truth: Despite dangerous false teaching, God preserves His faithful ones.

Date/Location: Sunday August 7, 2016 at FBC

Introduction

Last time we examined the minister's job description. We learned that he must remind the church of divine truth; charge them not to participate in profitless word-wars; work hard to be an approved worker before God in terms of handling the Bible properly; and shun empty talk. Earlier the pastor was likened to an athlete, a soldier, and a farmer. Now, the minister is likened to a skilled workman who has a job to do. He doesn't have time to waste on useless talk, and he certainly doesn't have time to spend on word-wars that damage his workmanship.

I believe these admonitions encompass the ideas of useless debates over stupid topics that do not serve to move forward the Great Commission or demonstrate Great Commandment love for God and others. The admonitions also include "babblings" that are baseless but not necessarily trivial. They can include false teachings that have no basis in reality. We will see just how dangerous such things are.

II. The Reasons for Timothy's Unpopular Ministry Description, v. 16b-19

A. False teaching and empty talk results in ungodly behavior.

1. Why? Well, they *are* ungodly, but also they will increase to more ungodliness. The progressive will progress somewhere alright—but not in a good direction. Creed affects conduct. Belief affects behavior.
2. Note carefully that it is something God is ASSERTING...don't doubt God's Word on this. If you are involved in worldly and empty chatter, know that this activity with this content WILL increase ungodliness in your life. Don't play with it by thinking, "it won't increase the ungodliness in MY life." It will.
3. The final end of that behavior is to be far away from God. You cannot continue stay on the straight and narrow path by walking the path of impiety. That path does not lead to godliness. The more you do it, the more ungodly you become. (The idea of indulging in it (NIV) does not seem to me to fit what the apostle is saying, as if it is only the indulging in it that is a problem. It is participating at all that is the problem. Indulging in it is even farther down the godless road.)

B. The false message spreads and affects others.

1. Another why? The message of these things will spread and destroy like cancer. The word can be translated as "gangrene" as well.

Cancer and gangrene are very different scientifically, but their effect is much the same in the end. Probably we are talking about cancer-speed here. Gangrene can spread quickly—a day for flesh-eating bacteria, or a few days or weeks for other types. The effects of sinful doctrine do not always set in so quickly. But like cancer or gangrene, sin of this sort inevitably spreads and brings death.

2. Note carefully we are talking about messages that are out of line with the Bible. This includes outright heresy or speculations or things like genealogies and myths. This can include anything that raises strife between believers.

What are some examples? The schismatic KJV-only doctrine is of this sort. Were its adherents to realize that the KJV originally included the apocrypha, or that it was written in English that is to understand today, or that it was updated in 1769, or that the Preface entitled "Translators to the Reader" explicitly debunks the philosophy of KJV-onlyism, then they would not be so quick to throw stones at those who use other translations. Worse yet, KJVO raises several dangers like the ones we will study below.

Another example is hair-splitting arguments over the atonement.

While it may be interesting to talk about different views on 4- or 5-point Calvinism (or 4.5 point!), or which view of free will is correct, or how the middle knowledge view of election works, or the order of God's decrees, I do not view such debates as profitable.

C. Biblical Example: Hymenaeus and Philetus on the resurrection.

1. When it says that they taught the resurrection was already past, it indicates the seriousness of the error. The Christian faith is based upon the historical event of Christ's resurrection; it teaches that several people have been raised from the dead in history; and it promises that all people, believers and unbelievers alike, will be raised again in the future.
2. What exactly was their heresy? Obviously the reference is to some situation in which "the" resurrection is already past. Anyone naming the name of Christ must agree that the resurrection of Christ has already taken place, so that was not the issue Paul raised. It must refer to the bodily resurrection of people, probably believers. The

implication is that those of you who are alive have missed the resurrection. Hymenaeus and Philetus may have taught a secret resurrection, or that there was no bodily resurrection, at least none relevant in the future to set before believers as a hope. Perhaps they suggested that salvation, a "spiritual resurrection" was all there is.

3. Regardless, this gives us an additional clue as to what 'godless chatter' is. It includes speculations about false doctrine. It is dangerous. Today, a popular idea is that there will be no resurrection and that Christian thinking is outmoded, religious, superstitious nonsense. People talk about other things like reincarnation or annihilation as if it is truth. It is baseless, and besides that, it is utterly false. Are these heresies "interesting concepts" to the inquisitive academic mind? No!

D. The ultimate effect of false teaching.

1. The false message about the resurrection troubled some people and **overthrew** their faith. That is a strong word that means *overturned*, *upset*, or *destroyed*. Either the people with such faith are not true believers (like the false teachers), or the text is saying that the false teachers like Hymenaeus "try" to overthrow the faith of others and actually have some bad but only temporary effect.

The latter interpretive option is possible because sometimes the Greek present tense is used that way, but it is questionable because of the reference to (deadly) cancer and the contrast with verse 19 where the text says that "God knows those who are His," as opposed to those who are not His.

The effect of false teaching can be so devastating that people "lose" their faith. They turn away from Christianity because they believe it is implausible or stupid or there is something better.

2. Entire churches have been slowly but completely destroyed by these sorts of heresies. Liberal "Christians" (the quotes are there for a reason) do not believe in the bodily resurrection of either Christ. That has been going on for the better part of 100 years in our own country. These are the spiritual heirs of Hymenaeus and Philetus in the modern era. The truth is that heresy is not a modern invention. It has attacked the church and true apostolic doctrine for centuries.

III. Confidence in Ministry, v. 19

- A. There are people, however, whom God knows – the saved – who can never be overthrown. True faith can never be erased or undone. It can never be overthrown by false doctrine.

- B. The solid foundation of God is what? Some have suggested this foundation is the church. This is not wrong just because it sounds Catholic, but it is better to explain that the church itself is built upon a truth about a Person that forms its foundation. There is no wavering uncertainty about Christ or His gospel. The true church of all the saved is built upon that foundation and cannot be shaken off of it. It has "hurricane tie downs" and "anchor bolts" that prevent it from being torn away from its moorings. These connections come from God's preserving the believer through faith and the power of God.
- C. There are two quotations in verse 19. These form a "seal" that shows God's people belong to Him and will not be taken away. The seal is not an inscription of the words or an impression of a signet ring, *per se*. The seal has two proofs: one on God's side, and one on man's side:
1. "The Lord knows those who are His." This is derived from Numbers 16:5. We know God, to be sure, but more importantly, He knows us (Gal. 4:9). God made a discriminating decision in Numbers to punish those who were opposed to Him (and Moses), and to withhold punishment from the others.
 2. "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." This is an allusion to passages like Numbers 16:26, Isaiah 52:11, Gen. 19:12, 2 Cor. 6:17, and Revelation 18:4. We have no choice as believers but to distance ourselves as much as possible from sin in any form. The proof of the pudding is that a believer departs from sin. He doesn't remain wallowing in it!
 3. These two phrases give a nice side-by-side comparison of God's *preserving* His children and His children *persevering* in the faith by eschewing sin. So the seal of God is His knowledge of His own and their separation from sin. This marks the authentic church. Anything less than this exposes a fraud.

Conclusion

We who are followers of Christ need to be on guard against the dangers of false teaching and empty talk and their ungodly outcome. But at the same time, we can be confident in our God—He knows who are His. He helps us to walk uprightly. May God help us to do so ever more as the day of Christ's return comes closer.

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