



2 TIMOTHY 2:14-19

Remind them, and Charge Them

1ST SUNDAY AFTER LENT – MARCH 5, 2017 (AM)

INTRODUCTION

Paul has just told Timothy that even though he is *bound with chains, the word of God is not bound* (9). So, he continues to labor hard, even from prison, so that *the elect... may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory* (10). Can you imagine? A man who is chained in prison, awaiting his execution, is writing to his dear friend and son in the faith, encouraging him to stand firm, to press on in his own proclamation of God's *word of truth*, and to urge the church to do the same, ignoring the *different doctrine* of the false teachers in the area, except for charging them to stop it (1Ti.1:3).

From there in 2Ti.2, however, he offers a *trustworthy saying* that has some rich promises in it, but also a sober warning: 11 ... *If we died with him, we will also live with him; 12 if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; 13 if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself*. People can be led astray. If we truly receive *Christ, we will live and reign with him*. But *if we ultimately deny him*, listening to other words, and following them, *he will also deny us* in the end. So, it's very important what words we listen to, and how we then live. And that's the instruction Paul gives to Timothy next. This instruction comes in three stages.

PRESS ON TO PROCLAIM THE WORD OF TRUTH

14 *Remind them of these things...* 15 *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth*. Paul had just called Timothy personally to 8 *remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead...*, together with all that entails. Now he's charging him to 14 *remind (his people) of these things...*, of all that he's written so far. *Remind them*, for instance, most recently, that 9 ... *the word of God is not bound* like Paul is. In God's own words through the prophet Isaiah: 55:10 ... *As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth...*, 11 *so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish*

that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. Here, it will accomplish the salvation of the *elect*. Listen to it!

With that reassurance in mind (10), Paul charges Timothy to *do (his) best* to deliver God's *word of truth* to his *people*. This charge has *three features* (L&G 215). First, Timothy is to press on diligently in his gospel ministry, like Paul, straining for the finish line, *(running to) obtain (the prize)* (1Co.9:24). Labor in this work, Timothy, like one who longs to hear Mat.25:21 ... *Well done, good and faithful servant. ... Enter into the joy of your master.* Related to this, second, he should be pressing on to be a *worker who has no need to be ashamed*. *Worker* is often used for a *farm laborer* (e.g. Jam.5:4), but here it's a laborer in God's field. *Paul is urging (Timothy) to work with such diligence that he would have no fear of shame for poor quality work* (L&G 215), like when we turn in a paper we know is poorly written. And, third, the diligent labor that will keep Timothy free of such (*shame*) is his *handling God's word of truth rightly*. *Word of truth* here surely refers to the gospel. Timothy should press hard to preach the pure, apostolic gospel that was preached to him, that saved him, and alone will save others. He should *cut it straight*. That's the image here, like cutting a straight road across the landscape (Guthrie 165), in contrast to the crooked way of the false teachers.

AVOID DISTORTIONS THAT LEAD PEOPLE ASTRAY

Hymenaeus and Philetus (17), for example, are notable among those 18 *who have swerved from the truth....* The church should be warned about such dangerous teachers—still today. 16 ... *Avoid their irreverent babble*, Paul wrote, *for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness. It will lead them astray. So, it should be (avoided).* It will have the opposite effect you're aiming for, 17 *and (it) will spread like gangrene. ...* This is either an infection or an obstruction of circulation in the body that kills living tissue. Paul is saying: *The body dies by inches when this sort of false teaching is received into it.*

So, not only are these guys not worth listening to, their ideas are not even worth discussing. Paul wrote: 14 ... *charge (the people) before God not to quarrel about their words. Before God, I charge you: Don't do it! (Such quarreling) does no good, but only ruins the hearers.* It brings *catastrophe* on them. That's the word Paul used (*καταστροφή*). It means *to tear down*, the opposite of *to build up*. That's what this crooked teaching does to the church.

Now, we could spend a lot of time speculating about what this teaching included. But, two things: first, it seems like that would have us doing just what Paul is telling Timothy not to allow. And second, Paul gives us the key element right here: 18 *(they) have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. And in so doing, they are upsetting the faith of some. And this would be upsetting to hear, that the resurrection has already happened and you no part in it!*

Paul had explained to the Corinthians how central *the resurrection* is to our Christian faith. And he'd gone into great detail to express how our present *physical body* compares to our future *spiritual body* (1Co.15:35-49). So, the only way to *(say) that the resurrection has already happened* (18) is to deny that all this change is coming, and then to spiritualize *the resurrection* to mean only that we've been raised with Christ by faith, but that there is no new *resurrection* body awaiting us—again, pretty *upsetting*.

REST IN THE LORD, HIS FIRM FOUNDATION STANDS

So, Paul finishes this paragraph with some words of great comfort. He begins: 19 *But God's firm foundation stands....* This sounds a lot like the imagery of Isa.28:16 ... *"Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation....* Typically, this text is taken to refer to the Messiah. But here Paul uses the same imagery to say that God has firmly *established* His church (Towner 904), that *pillar and buttress (foundation) of the truth* (1Ti.3:15). Even though it has been invaded by false teachers now, it will ultimately *(stand)*—it will prove in the end to be stable and orthodox (L&G 218), firm and reliable.

And it 19 ... *(bears) this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his"* This is a defining statement regarding those who are included in *God's firm foundation* of the church. Paul is quoting from Num.16 here. That is where a man named *Korah* led a rebellion against *Moses* and *Aaron*, along with two others, *Dathan* and *Abiram*, and *250 chiefs of the congregation* (Num.16:2). It happened during the time of the exodus. In short, these men swerved from the straight-cutting of the *word of truth* and led God's *people* astray. Num.16:5 *And (Moses) said to Korah and all his company, "In the morning the Lord will show who is his and who is holy, and will bring him near to him. ..."* And that is just what *God* did. He affirmed that *Moses* and *Aaron* were *his*. *The earth opened... and swallowed... up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram* with all their families (31-32). And the *250 chiefs were consumed by fire from (heaven)* (35). *The Lord knows those who are his.* And there is no way He won't establish His *people*, even in days like these.

So, Paul says, 19 ... *“Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.”* That’s what His people do. Paul seems to be referencing Isa.26:13 here: *13 O Lord our God, other lords besides you have ruled over us, but your name alone we bring to remembrance. To your name alone we cling in trusting, believing faith.* So, Paul is saying: *Let those who claim to know God display the fruit of belonging to Him— hearing His word of truth, trusting it, living free of ensnaring sin, in contrast to Hymenaeus and Philetus, and Korah and Dathan and Abiram.*

CONCLUSION

So, we see that it’s very important what words we listen to, and then how we live in response to them. Paul’s clear point here is that 15 ... *the word of truth* 16 ... *will lead people into more and more (godliness)*, just as 16 ... *irreverent babble... will lead (them) into more and more ungodliness.* Paul is calling Timothy to *remind (the church), and charge them before God,* to listen to the right words and avoid the wrong ones—to listen to the *word of truth* that brings God’s (*approval*) and steers us clear of (*shame*), that enables *godliness*, and leads us to a sure, future, bodily *resurrection*.

And once again that central theme of the gospel, the *resurrection*, is also central here in 2Ti. as Paul is strengthening his son to stand firm in the face of increasing persecution. He’s fixing Timothy’s eyes on *the promise of life through suffering and death*, our theme for 2Ti. Of all the *different doctrine* these false teachers are spouting, Paul keeps coming back to defend, and focus Timothy’s attention on, the *resurrection*. Why? Why is a future *resurrection* such good news for Timothy, and for us?

Four closing thoughts: first, we know what Paul says in 1Co.15:17 ... *if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.* So, clearly it must be defended. But there is still more to ponder.

Second, the *resurrection* is essential to our finding our hope in *Christ*. He suffered for our sins, and was raised from the dead. Heb.12:2 (*He*) *is the (pioneer) and perfecter of our faith....* Because He is raised, we will surely be raised (1Co.15:20-21). Our *faith*, our suffering will not be *in vain*. (cf. 1Co.15:14)

Third, we long for things to be better. We long (Rom.8:23) for the redemption, the healing of our bodies. The *resurrection* is our promise that this longing is not in vain.

Finally, think of it: if the *resurrection* has already happened, if it is simply a spiritual reality and we're not really looking forward to a new body, then there is no real basis to look forward to a resurrected cosmos either, a *new heaven and new earth*. And that means things will never be markedly better than they are right now. Ugh!

Listen to God's *word of truth* (15), and *avoid* the *irreverent babble* that just (*leads*) *people into more and more ungodliness* (16). And, like Paul with Timothy, center in on the *resurrection, the promise of life through suffering and death*. Therein is also our hope in this day of increasing persecution—to hear the right words (*the word of truth* (15)), and to live in obedience to them.

And now, let us come to the Table of the Lord to receive grace and strength and affirmation from Him that, indeed we *are his* (19) as we remember the broken body and shed blood of our resurrected and returning Lord.