



“THE REMEDY FOR DESTABILIZED FAITH”

2 Timothy 2:14-19

Theme: *Destabilized faith results from distraction from the truth.*

Introduction: Each of us is battling a fight of faith – as we all prefer to walk by sight and not by faith. We are constantly being barraged by various seductive, seditious, and insidious assaults by our enemy to capitalize on the weakest point in our faith. We are encouraged by Paul in Ephesians 4 that one of the benefits of faithful and active participation in the church keeps us from being *“tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming.”* The tempter is constantly probing us to find where he can destabilize our faith. Often, when one is being so attacked, a person isolates himself from the Christian community, which merely feeds the deterioration of faith. We encounter trials or temptations, bringing defeat that can cause our faith to wane. Of course, when we neglect the spiritual disciplines of personal study of God’s Word, prayer, and other means of grace, we find our faith corroding. In whatever form and in whatever way we are weakened in our faith, there is only one solution ... to turn our eyes back to Christ Jesus and His Word. Today’s text emphasizes that *“Destabilized faith results from distraction from the truth.”* Let us turn our attention to it in 2 Timothy 14-19 ...

I. ABSTINENCE FROM CONTENTION – 2:14

A. The Worthy Focus of Our Faith

1. Paul here resumes the exhortation to Timothy to invest in those who are faithful – cp. v. 2.
2. He commands Timothy to “Remind them of these things ...”
 - a) *What are “these things ...”?*
 - b) *It refers to the things Paul has been challenging Timothy to consider – the need to “be strong in the grace,” to “responsibility to teach others also,” to expect hardship, the need to “remember Jesus Christ,” the fact that “the word of God” cannot be stopped, the blessings awaiting the faithful, and the consequences of unfaithfulness.*
3. Essentially, what is worthy of our focus are those things that promote the power of God’s grace through the Gospel of Christ Jesus.
4. He then reminds Timothy – and through him the rest of us – that we interact with the Word of God *“... in the presence of God ...”* – cp. **2 Timothy 4:1**.
5. Spiritual leaders are to constantly *“be reminding”* believers of these truths, and while *“charging”* [διαμαρτύρομαι] (pres. Middle participle) – emphasizing the authority of our exhortation *“in the*

presence of God.”

6. These are significant elements in maintaining a stable faith.

B. The Worthless Focus of Our Faith

1. He then tells us that while reminding people and exhorting them concerning truth, we are to *“charge them not to wrangle [λογομαχέω] about words ...”* – lit. “word-battle.”
2. It describes getting pulled into debates about terms and the splitting of hairs that often people who are imbalanced and are false teachers rely upon for their angle to significance and authority.
3. Engaging false teachers who are not interested in the faith once delivered and taught by Scripture should not be quibbled with regarding hair-splitting debates – we are to keep the “main thing the main thing.”
4. Such quibbling “... is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers.”
5. When we allow the focus to divert from truth to matters of speculation, theory, or spiritual innovation, people hearing such things can be led astray into imbalance or error.
 - a) *“useless” [χρήσιμος] – there is no benefit or advantage spiritually.*
 - b) *“ruin” [καταστροφή] – from where we get “catastrophe” – describes a state of total destruction where nothing is left intact.*
6. His point is that to have a stable faith, one must focus on truth, not allow oneself to be immersed in false teaching, arguments contradicting the truth, or perspectives designed to find fault with the glory of the Gospel.

II. ATTENTIVENESS TO COMPREHENSION – 2:15

A. The Diligence in Handling the Truth

1. Instead of paying attention to the aberrant views of false teachers, we are to apply ourselves to the truth – *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God ...”*
2. We interact with the truth “in the presence of God,” – and we must concern ourselves with his perspective – *“approved to God.”*
3. It doesn’t matter what others think or say about us – are we pleasing to the Lord – cp. ***Galatians 1:10.***
4. *“Be diligent” [σπουδάζω]* – is an aorist active imperative – emphasizing a resolute decision to zealously, eagerly, conscientiously, and carefully interact with truth in the eyes of God – ***1 Thessalonians 2:3-4.***
5. Instead of quibbling about hair-splitting arguments of false teachers, one with a stable faith will apply himself to the text of Scripture and diligently seek its truth so that God is honored and pleased.
6. When we diligently study Scripture, knowing that God is witness to what we do with it, we will gain insight that will stabilize our faith.

B. The Difficulty in Handling the Truth

1. But, this isn't something easily accomplished – those who accurately handle God's word are called **"workman"** – **"... as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, ..."**
 - a) *It is a difficult task to work in the text and glean from the text the truth that builds our faith.*
 - b) *The consequence of superficial exegetical work – the efforts that explain the text according to the original meaning in the context so that the author's original intent is accurately seen – is the person will **"be ashamed."***
 - c) **"ashamed"** [ἀνεπαίσχυντος] – describes the painful feeling of guilt in the eyes of someone greater when what one has done is dishonorable and useless.
2. We will all stand before the Lord and account for how we interacted with the Word of God.
3. We must apply ourselves **"as a workman"** [ἐργάτης] – one engaged in physical labor – **1 Timothy 5:17**.
4. The effort is so that one will be "accurately handling the word of truth."
5. **"accurately handling"** [ὀρθοτομέω] – describes the person who "cuts a straight line" – a term likely familiar to Paul as a tentmaker who had to create seams in the canvas of the tent.
6. The idea is that the one who interprets God's Word cannot wander around, deviating from what the text states, but must walk the "straight and narrow" interpretation so people will know precisely what the Word says and what it means.
7. God expects us to interpret His Word normally, not coming up with our theories of what it means or distorting it to our ends – cp. **2 Peter 3:15b-16**.
8. People who are lax or indifferent in their use of the Bible usually have a precarious faith – vulnerable, insecure, and quickly weakened – cp. v. 1.

III. AVOIDANCE OF THE CORRUPTERS – **2:16-18**

A. The Perversion of Heresy – v. 16

1. Paul returns to the issue of false teachers – **"But avoid worldly and empty chatter ..."**
 - a) **"worldly"** [βέβηλος] – *what is accessible to anyone and is therefore devoid of real or spiritual significance – cp. 1 Timothy 6:20.*
 - b) **"empty"** [κενοφωνία] – *lit. = "empty sounds" – illustrated by a container from which what is inside has been removed; thus, devoid of anything of value.*
2. Those who will have a stable faith must **"avoid"** [περίστημι] – such

things; that is, walk around something to shun it – cp. **Titus 3:9**.

3. This describes a deliberate effort to shun what has no value in advancing one's faith – **“for it will lead to further ungodliness”** – a reference to living consistently with a standard devoid of biblical authority and truth.
4. It will not promote godliness because it omits what promotes godliness - truth.

B. The Perversion of Heretics – vv. 17-18

1. Paul then compares the teaching of false teachers with **“gangrene”** – **“... and their talk will spread like gangrene.”**
 - a) **“will spread” [νομή]** – describes something that is rapaciously destructive: a malignancy.
 - b) **“gangrene” [γάγγραινα]** – a spreading, destructive ulcerous sore, the creeping rotting of flesh.
2. Since there is an affinity between our sinful flesh and fleshly teachings, there is an aggressive attachment of false teaching to the souls of the depraved.
3. Paul mentions the same man he accused several years earlier who was so influential – **“Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus”** – cp. **1 Timothy 1:20**.
 - a) **“Philetus”** is a new accomplice – replacing Alexander in Paul's indictment – we do not know what happened to Alexander.
 - b) **“Hymenaeus”** continued to be a false teacher who drew people away from the truth through his lies, intimidations, and blasphemies.
4. He describes these two men as standards of most false teachers – **“... men who have gone astray from the truth ...”**
5. Their betrayal was to claim **“... that the resurrection has already taken place ...”**
 - a) Their teaching on the resurrection likely claimed that the only resurrection was a spiritual resurrection from a state of ignorance and unawareness to enlightenment and knowledge (a form of early Gnosticism).
 - b) In insisting on this, they would have been denying any future resurrection of the body, something Paul later declares is a complete ruination of our faith – cp. **1 Corinthians 15:13-19**.
6. Listening to them resulted in the destabilization of faith – **“... and they upset the faith of some.”**
7. **“upset” [ἀνατρέπω]** – describes the act of causing something to be overturned, destroyed, or ruined – indicating that those in the church who have not yet truly met Christ are vulnerable to deception, prey for damnable heresies that further entrench sinners in their separation from God.

Part 2

(Read the text)

Today, we hear a great deal of societal pressure on the basis of being on “the right side of history.” The problem with humanistic assertions of right and wrong is that the standard of evaluation is corrupt when it contradicts the moral, ethical, and spiritual standards of God’s Word. Being on the “right side of history” cannot lead a person to embrace LGBTQ corruptions, feminism’s assaults on masculinity, critical theory, economic equity, woke dissent, and transgender delusions because the day will come when a person’s personal history will be assessed by a holy God who has already condemned such things. To be on the “right side of history” means a person will agree with God on everything He declares to be true in His Word.

A believer’s interaction with the truth must be pursuant of the truth of God revealed in His Word. Any innovation, emendation, or corruption of the truth brings disaster to the faith. It is on us to align ourselves wholeheartedly, with diligent study of God’s Word, to embrace the faith as it has been once delivered to the saints. Our task as part of the Church is to be conformed, through the power of God’s Spirit using His Word, to the very image of Jesus Christ. As we have seen, our text provides us with four essential components to the remedy of a destabilized faith:

- I. **Abstinence from Contention – v. 14** (stay away from arguments that are about nuance, innuendo, and assumptions)
 - II. **Attentiveness to Comprehension – v. 15** (there is enough about the Bible you do not understand to cause you to put your nose into God’s Word to study it for the building up of your faith)
 - III. **Avoidance of the Corrupters – vv. 16-18** (since false teachers desire to upset faith and re-center it on their own ideas, we must avoid people who do not accurately handle the Word of God)
- IV. ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE CHURCH – 2:19**
- A. **The Reliability of the Church**
 1. Yet in contrast with those being deceived is the stability of the genuine believers gathered together as the church – *“Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands ...”*
 - a) *“Nevertheless” is a contrasting term indicating the distinction*

between those vulnerable to false teachers and those focused on the truth of Christ and His Word.

b) **“the firm foundation of God stands”** describes the stability and reliability of the Church – cp. **1 Timothy 3:15**.

(1) **“firm”** [στερεός] describes something steadfast or solid – in contrast to what is soft and unstable.

(2) **“stands”** [ἵστημι] – to put up resistance or hold one’s ground.

c) *The idea found here is that the church will persevere in the truth without yielding to falsehood, deceptions, or teachings that draw a person away from Christ Jesus:*

(1) The **“firm foundation of God stands”** primarily because it is established by the “Cornerstone,” which sets the foundation and squares the building – **Ephesians 2:19-22**.

(2) The Apostles – those who provided the confession of our faith that Jesus Christ is the Rock on which the church is built – cp. **Matthew 16: 15-18**.

(3) As the Apostles wrote God’s Word – revealing more and more of Christ – they provided the foundation on which the church is fashioned into the Temple of God’s Spirit – cp. **1 Corinthians 3:11 & 16**.

2. Those who are placed into the Church by the regenerating work of God’s Spirit are stable – because the truth embraced by them is unalterable.
3. Hence, the stability of the Church is not attributable to our efforts – our faith, our consistency, obedience, or performance, but to the power and faithfulness of God – it is because the foundation **“has this seal”** – a reference to the mark of ownership and authority that God places upon the Gospel.
4. In the same way that the foundation of the church is sealed and thus secure, those of us who are saved and form the church are likewise sealed and thus secure – cp. **Ephesians 1:14**.
5. This takes us back to vv. 10-12a and emphasizes the truth of the perseverance of the saints.

B. The Relationships of the Church

1. This is the first aspect of the **“seal”** of God – **“The Lord knows those who are His ...”**
2. This speaks to the unique relationship between the Church and Christ Jesus – we **“are His.”**
3. This could be drawn from the situation in Numbers 16 when God distinguished Korah and those aligned with him and Moses and those aligned with God – cp. **Numbers 16:5**.
4. We remain faithful to the Lord because He knows us and is committed to protecting us - **John 10:27-28**.
5. Contrary to the assertions of Arminianism, having the security of salvation does not generate impurity but purity, as this verse continues to teach ...

where we see that “security and purity dovetail.”¹

C. The Responses by the Church

1. This relationship with the Lord is followed hard by the impact of knowing Him - *“Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness.”* – cp. **Numbers 16:26**.
2. Those who are genuinely born again, who know the Lord, enjoy the security of one’s relationship with Him by grace, and are motivated to honor and love Him by *“abstaining from wickedness.”*
3. *“abstain”* [ἀφίστημι] – describes distancing oneself from something, to withdraw, and in this context, it refers to false teaching we are to shun as we diligently apply ourselves to the truth of God’s Word so that we are not ashamed – **2 Corinthians 6:17**.
4. Those who claim to know God will demonstrate it by treating wickedness as what must be repudiated & shunned – actually, a play on words using *“apostatize”* [ἀποστήτω] **from sin**.

So What?

1. Since the Church is the “foundation of God,” what should I do to become more stable?
2. How does “the Lord know[ing] those who are His” strengthen my faith?
3. How does my involvement in the church demonstrate that I belong to Christ?
4. What is my current relationship with wickedness? ... and what changes must I make to abstain from it?

Destabilized faith results from distraction from the truth.

¹ Hendriksen, *The New Testament Commentary: Thessalonians, Timothy, and Titus*, p. 269.