

Final Words

False Teaching

2 Timothy 2:16-19

January 27, 2019 pm

HDBC

Tonight we return to Paul's last N.T. letter, 2 Timothy. He wrote it while in prison in Rome for the last time. He would not return to freedom in this life, but would be executed for his faith in Christ. He wrote Timothy to instruct and encourage him as he not only served as a pastor of a local church but as a leader of other pastors.

In 2:15 Paul reminded Timothy of the importance of handling the Word of God in the right way. Not everyone was doing so. There are those who misunderstand and misrepresent the truth of the Bible. They are false teachers. Not all of them are purposely deceptive. Some, are themselves deceived. Regardless of the motive of the one teaching, if the message is contrary to the truth of the Bible, it is false teaching and will produce negative results. Paul shares some of those with Timothy in this passage.

1. False Teaching Leads to Ungodliness (16)

One of the dangers of false teaching is that it will lead to ungodly actions and attitudes. In verse 16 Paul calls it ***world and empty chatter***. Verse 18 makes it clear that Paul is not simply writing about idle chatter or verbal disputes. Those can be destructive enough, in the church.

He is clearly writing about destructive heresies that pervert divine truth. In this particular case, the subject was the resurrection of the dead. This was no minor, insignificant topic.

The point here, is that teaching effects behavior. Bad teaching leads to bad behavior. If you want an example of this look at many of the **major mainline denominations of Christianity that have compromised their teaching**. In every case they are also compromising behavior.

If an English teacher teaches bad grammar, the students will speak and write with bad grammar. **If a parent** teaches children that they are better than others who have a different color skin, those children will act in racist ways. **If a coach** teaches his or her players that cheating is ok, some of those players will cheat.

Teaching impacts attitude and behavior. It is important that you and I guard our minds from false teaching. I am not encouraging you to live in an intellectual or theological bubble, only reading and only hearing what you already believe. It's good to be exposed to new thoughts and perspectives. **But, it is critical that everything be tested by the Word!**

2. False Teaching Spreads Quickly (17a)

Paul uses **gangrene**. It is a word that not only referred to the same thing that our modern word *gangrene* means, but was also the word for *cancer*. Neither one was good.

This word pictures false teaching in two ways. First, it is bad for the person infected. No one wants an infection, especially one of this magnitude. It can be deadly. Will talk more about the negative effects in a moment. Second, it spreads quickly. One of the problems with infection is that it does not always stay in one place. It can spread!

Medical personnel recognized the dangers of infection. They wear protective gloves and are careful not to expose themselves to it. They know how rapidly it can spread from one place to another, from one person to another. Paul says we should treat false teaching the same way.

We must remember that false teaching is not simply a fact of life. Some get things right and others get things wrong. NO! There is an enemy of the truth who wants to spread false teaching not only among those who are unbelievers, but even among believers. He (Satan) knows the power of false teaching and uses it to his advantage.

It is fascinating how quickly new fads spread. Come up with a new gadget, dance, hair style or idea, market it heavily, get someone with name recognition to embrace it, then watch how it spreads. Need examples?

Macarena. Fidget Spinners. The Floss. Lava Lamps. Rubiks Cube. Pokemon. Slap bracelets. Water Beds. Ice Bucket Challenge. Angry Birds. Pet Rocks.

The same is true of false teaching. Anyone can write a book or post a blog, give it a flashy title, claim some new revelation, package it in an attractive way, get someone with name recognition to endorse it and it spreads like wildfire. Fads are seldom harmful. False teaching always is.

3. False Teaching Weakens Faith (18)

Paul identifies two of the men who were false teachers in his time.

Hymenaeous

He has already been denounced by Paul in his earlier letter to Timothy. Clearly he had been a threat to the church at Ephesus for some time. Paul had already ***delivered him over to Satan***, which is certainly an indication that he had been removed from the church as a form of church discipline.

Philetus

In the first letter, Alexander was mentioned with Hymenaeus. Now, Philetus is the coconspirator.

The particular heresy that they were teaching was that the resurrection had already taken place. Paul does not mention which resurrection they were referring to. It makes no sense to think they were referring to the resurrection of Jesus, which clearly had already taken place. Makes little sense to think they were referring to the resurrection of the body at the return of Jesus, for they were still living in earthly bodies and graveyards had not been emptied of many of their bodies.

Probably had in mind some kind of spiritual resurrection that involved the union of believers with Christ. Essentially denying the ultimate bodily resurrection that Jesus and the apostles taught. In 1 Corinthians Paul clearly outlines the reality and importance of the bodily resurrection. If there is no resurrection of the body, then even Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, our faith is worthless. To deny the resurrection is to deny the heart of the gospel.

Paul points out that this kind of teaching will *upset the faith of some*.

Upset – carries the idea of overturning or overthrowing, indicating that some were abandoning their faith because of this teaching. The sad and tragic truth is that false teaching will wreck the faith for some who are true believers, but it will also keep many from actually experiencing **true saving grace**. That leads to the fourth thing in verse 19.

4. False Teaching Characterizes Unbelievers (19)

False teaching fits those who are unsaved. Not saying that every false teacher is unsaved, for there may be times when a true believer who is a teacher can teach wrong theology. Paul has in mind, here, those who habitually get it wrong, primarily because they believe it wrong.

I love the phrase that Paul uses. *The firm foundation of God stands*. No amount of false teaching or false teachers can crack the foundation of God. The faith of people may be upset, but the truth of God is never upset.

In this context, the firm foundation of God, most likely refers to the body of revealed truth. No amount of false teaching can chip away at truth. It remains, stronger than granite, resolutely standing against the repeated attempts by the enemy to wear it down

Having this seal. Sign of ownership. God is the owner of divine truth. It belongs to Him. He is also the owner of the redeemed, who make up the church. We belong to Him. He will keep us in the faith.

He knows those who belong to Him. We may not be able to identify those who are true believers, but He never struggles with that. He knows His own.

Note the final statement in this passage. There is a challenge for all true believers to *abstain from wickedness*. Certainly this is a general call to pure living, as we see throughout the New Testament and even the Bible. But, in this context it may point back to the subject of false teaching. Abstaining from wickedness is also a call to abstain from false teaching. That means we need to understand the truth.

The church is not made up of sinless people, or this statement would not be needed. However, the church is made up of people who doggedly reject sin. Believers hate that we sin and are devoted to overcoming it in Christ's power.

In 1775, at the young age of 22, John Rippon began serving the congregation of Carter's Lane Baptist Church in London. He served there for 63 years. Wanting to expand the role of music in worship, he published a hymns and songs that not only was used in his church, but became popular throughout Great Britain.

He included a hymn by an author known only as **K**. It was originally titled, ***Exceedingly Great and Precious Promises***. We know it today by the first four words in the first stanza.

1. How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said—
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?
2. "Fear not, I am with thee, oh, be not dismayed,
For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by My gracious, omnipotent hand.
3. "When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of sorrow shall not overflow;
For I will be with thee thy trouble to bless,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.
4. "When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace, all-sufficient, shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not harm thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine.
5. "The soul that on Jesus doth lean for repose,
I will not, I will not, desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake."