



## 2 Timothy - Chapter Two

### II. 2 Timothy 1:3-2:13 - Exhortation to Endurance for the Gospel (continues/concludes)

#### Summary of Chapter Two

In faithful obedience to his calling, Paul had always proclaimed the authentic Gospel of Christ, including his suffering and resurrection from the dead. Because of the boldness of his teaching and the wondrous works that accompanied it, Paul had made many enemies, both Jew and Gentile, and had suffered much for doing so, yet he accepted it as part of his calling, exhorting Timothy as well to remain just as faithful and accepting of it when he was called to suffer.

Paul then gave instructions on the way servants of God should conduct themselves in public, giving good instruction in the faith through the Gospel of truth. At the same time, Paul issued a warning of the pitfalls of listening to the propaganda of the false teachers or of entering into pointless debates with them. God knows whom he has called and he will protect them.

#### II.b. 2 Timothy 2:1-13 - A Good Soldier of Christ Jesus

This section resumes the call to Spirit-empowered boldness. As in 2 Timothy 1:6-14, Timothy's call to 'share in suffering' (v.3), is paralleled by Paul's own suffering (v.9), and the endurance to which Timothy is called (v.1), is mirrored by Paul's endurance (v.10).

Furthermore, both sections open with a call to stay strong in Christ (2 Timothy 1:6-7 and vv.1-2), and the exhortations are each time rooted in the saving work of Christ (2 Timothy 1:9-10 and vv.8-10).

<sup>1</sup> You then, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus;

#### 2 Timothy 2:1

My child refers to Timothy as Paul's protégé and son in the faith they share together. They shared a bond similar to that of a natural father and son. Paul had

referred to Timothy in this way in the salutation of both epistles: <<*To Timothy, my loyal child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord*>> (1 Timothy 1:2), and: <<*To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord*>> (2 Timothy 1:2).

Be strong in the grace that Paul had called to be given to Timothy, is a call for courage, strength and endurance during the trials that lay ahead, for it is the grace that is in Christ Jesus that will carry Timothy, and all other disciples yet to come, through times of trial, providing they ask God to pour out his grace upon them. The strength and endurance called for are not just physical qualities but also a mental toughness that is required to overcome the opponents of truth. Paul had given a similar exhortation to the Ephesian church directly: <<*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power*>> (Ephesians 6:10), and it should be remembered that grace was a gift to the whole world through Christ: <<*The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*>> (John 1:17).

<sup>2</sup> and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well.

### 2 Timothy 2:2

What you have heard from me. Throughout this letter, Paul emphasises the message Timothy has received from him: <<*Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus*>> (2 Timothy 1:13). As Paul faces death, he encourages Timothy to pass the Gospel on to faithful people who will in turn teach others, so that the Gospel will be authentically preserved for coming generations, as it continues to spread around the world.

Entrust to faithful people is a call to choose people who are clearly called to ministry and can be trained to faithfully take the Gospel forward. Careful selection is always called for as there are many who would wish to be leaders and teachers, but poor discernment is so often the source of much damage to a church. While it is Christ who leads the church, he calls on his current leaders to put succession planning into place, requiring them to identify the next generation of leadership, praying for them and equipping them for leadership ministry. This is what Paul is calling Timothy to do in Ephesus.

Through many witnesses. Gospel proclamation is undertaken publically and therefore there are many people who can attest to what they have seen and heard. This was not something new to Timothy and was issued by Paul as a sound reminder: <<*Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses*>> (1 Timothy 6:12).

<sup>3</sup> Share in suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

### 2 Timothy 2:3

Share in suffering is not just a call for Timothy but for all disciples throughout

history, something Paul even boasted of: *<<And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us>>* (Romans 5:3-5), with good reason: *<<For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ – if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us>>* (Romans 8:15-18), and: *<<For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ. If we are being afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation; if we are being consoled, it is for your consolation, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we are also suffering. Our hope for you is unshaken; for we know that as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our consolation>>* (2 Corinthians 1:5-7). At all times it should be remembered that God established the church by requiring his Son to suffer for all others: *<<It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings>>* (Hebrews 2:10). Those who do suffer should also understand that they are not victims but conquerors with Christ: *<<No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us>>* (Romans 8:37). In fact, the apostles actually rejoiced in their suffering: *<<They were convinced by him, and when they had called in the apostles, they had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. As they left the council, they rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonour for the sake of the name>>* (Acts 5:39b-41). Having been beaten and put in prison in Philippi, two men decided to give praise to God: *<<About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them>>* (Acts 16:25).

Like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Timothy was also called to: *<<fight the good fight>>* (1 Timothy 1:18b), although their main battle was for the hearts and minds of those they would have come to faith. A second battle was always going to be the continuous spiritual warfare in which the church is continuously engaged: *<<For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places>>* (Ephesians 6:12).

<sup>4</sup> No one serving in the army gets entangled in everyday affairs; the soldier's aim is to please the enlisting officer. <sup>5</sup> And in the case of an athlete, no one is crowned without competing according to the rules. <sup>6</sup> It is the farmer who does the work who ought to have the first share of the crops.

## 2 Timothy 2:4-6

Using three analogies, Paul sets forth the call to service and suffering.

- Verse 4 calls for single-minded desire to please God, the enlisting officer.
- Verse 5 reiterates that one must obey God's rules in order to succeed.
- Verse 6 is the least clear but seems to encourage hard work by holding out the promise of blessing as a reward.

Verse 6 has at times been misinterpreted as a call away from secular, civilian pursuits. The Bible, however, does not allow Christians to separate life into distinct realms, 'spiritual' and 'secular'. All of life is to be lived spiritually, in obedience to the Spirit and according to the Word of God. Paul does not see secular activities as being out of bounds, but is warning Timothy not to allow anything, even perhaps things that could be considered spiritual, to distract him from his task.

Everyday affairs refers primarily to the world. Just as soldiers must focus on the orders they are given to carry out, so too those enlisted to serve Christ must focus on the spiritual battle and remove themselves from the aspects of life that would hinder that. It does not mean that a person has to withdraw from the world or serve out their time in a monastic or reclusive lifestyle. It is about focusing on Kingdom issues and not the short term, short sighted lifestyle choices of some.

No one is crowned without competing according to the rules. The rule is to offer one's life in faithful service to Christ. Unlike normal athletic competitions, there will be multiple winners in the race for eternal life and all who endure to the end will receive an imperishable garland: *<<Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him>>* (James 1:12), and: *<<Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Beware, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison so that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have affliction. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life>>* (Revelation 2:10).

Who ought to have the first share of the crops. Despite the fact that the farmer prepares the soil well, sows and plants, waters and weeds, it may not always be he that has the first share for that belongs to God anyway. It doesn't really matter who reaps the harvest as long as all the workers make their full contribution: *<<The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, "One sows and another reaps." I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour>>* (John 4:36-38).

People always need to be aware of what it is they are sowing and how they are sowing. The false teachers will receive what they are due: *<<As I have seen, those who plough iniquity and sow trouble reap the same>>* (Job 4:8), *<<Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity, and the rod of anger will fail>>* (Proverbs 22:8), and: *<<For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind. The standing grain has no heads, it shall yield no meal; if it were*

*to yield, foreigners would devour it>> (Hosea 8:7).*

The Lord's brother also used the farmer as an example of one who must uphold the values that a disciple should also display: *<<Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains>> (James 5:7).*

<sup>7</sup> Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in all things.

## 2 Timothy 2:7

Paul exhorts Timothy to make the effort to think over and meditate on what he has written; as he does so, the Lord Christ will give him understanding in all things about which Paul has instructed him; the believer's efforts and God's empowering work together.

If any disciple were to think over the common links of a soldier, an athlete and a farmer that Paul spoke of in vv.4-6, they will see that all need dedication, hard work and above all self-discipline; valuable characteristics for a disciple.

<sup>8</sup> Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David – that is my gospel, <sup>9</sup> for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained.

## 2 Timothy 2:8-9

Paul continues the thought of vv.1-7 by rooting his exhortation in the realities of the Gospel: *<<who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher>> (2 Timothy 1:9-11).*

Remember Jesus Christ. Paul certainly doesn't think that Timothy is in danger of forgetting Jesus! Rather, this is a call to remain mindful of the truths of the Gospel, which is centred on Jesus, the risen Messiah, the promised offspring of King David: *<<A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots>> (Isaiah 11:1);* which Matthew deemed appropriate as the opening statement to the first Gospel: *<<An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham>> (Matthew 1:1).* Paul had written an extended version of this to the Roman church: *<<Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, including yourselves who*

*are called to belong to Jesus Christ*>> (Romans 1:1-6).

Remembering what Christ did for mankind and what God did through the power of his Holy Spirit in raising Jesus from the dead should be encouragement enough for all to continue in their own suffering, trials and hardship.

That is my gospel refers to the message of Jesus as the Christ that Paul consistently preaches, a message that was revealed to him directly by God and not received through human teaching: <<*And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual*>> (1 Corinthians 2:13). He owns it in the sense that he has absolute faith and trust in its authenticity and relevance.

For which I suffer hardship. If faithful men like Paul are so willing to accept suffering, then all others, who wish to consider themselves to be followers of Jesus, should equally accept that suffering will come to them also and that they should bear it with the same grace and fortitude displayed by those who have gone before; those who equally showed such courage and devotion in their time of service. There are still many people who profess the faith, yet of whom it could be said: <<*In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood*>> (Hebrew 12:4). Jesus was without sin and yet shed his blood unto death in order to fulfil the Father's will: <<*'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done'*>> (Luke 22:42).

Chained like a criminal. Paul's only 'crime' was to serve the one and only living God, yet it was a message offensive to so many that it had led to the point where Paul was now in prison awaiting his execution.

But the word of God is not chained, nor can it be. History has shown how man has tried to keep the Word from being spread, whether it was the church that would not allow local language translations or extremist governments that refused to allow bibles to be brought to their countries or for churches to gather and grow. This remains a reality today in some extremist Islamic states or places like North Korea, although even there the church lives on! Men and women may go to prison or be killed but God's Word must go to all nations before Christ returns: <<*And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come*>> (Matthew 24:14). It should always be remembered that no one can bind up the Word of God. It is free to go wherever God sends it, by his Spirit and through those he calls to deliver it.

<sup>10</sup> Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, so that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

## 2 Timothy 2:10

Endure everything for the sake of the elect. While there is disagreement among Christians on the doctrine of election, a biblical understanding of the doctrine does not undercut mission work but enables it. Paul endures precisely because of a certainty that, through his ministry, God will save some, indicated by: <<*For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also*

*justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified*>> (Romans 8:29-30), which explains why those who believe in Christ can be assured that all things work together for good: <<*We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose*>> (Romans 8:28). God has always been doing good for them, starting before creation, continuing in their conversion, and then on to the day of Christ's return. Foreknew reaches back to the OT, where the word 'know' emphasises God's special choice of, or covenantal affection for, his people. In the first quote from Romans, the chain that begins with the word 'foreknew' cannot be broken. Those who are predestined by God are also called effectively to faith through the Gospel. And all those who are called are also justified, that is, declared to be right in God's sight, which shows that, because not all who are invited to believe are actually justified, the 'calling' cannot refer to merely a general invitation but must refer to an effective call that creates the faith necessary for justification. Similarly, all those who are justified will also be glorified, i.e. receive resurrection bodies, on the last day. Paul speaks of glorification as if it were already completed, since God will certainly finish the good work he started, which may have given rise to the confusion in the minds of the false teachers that the resurrection had taken place!

I endure, that they may also obtain the salvation. Paul did not just work and suffer for his own salvation but because he knew it was God's will that he should do so, in order to bring others to faith. This is a key aspect of true discipleship - putting others before self! Endurance is required for those who wish to see the prize that is promised: <<*For you need endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised*>> (Hebrews 10:36), <<*For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ*>> (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

<sup>11</sup> The saying is sure:

If we have died with him, we will also live with him;

<sup>12</sup> if we endure, we will also reign with him;

if we deny him, he will also deny us;

<sup>13</sup> if we are faithless, he remains faithful —

for he cannot deny himself.

## 2 Timothy 2:11-13

The trustworthy statement, the saying is sure, moves from comfort to challenge and back to comfort:

- v.11b is a reminder of life even in the face of death;
- v.12 calls for perseverance;
- v.13 is a reminder of God's preserving power and faithfulness.

We does not just refer to Paul and Timothy but to all disciples of Jesus, and he, him or himself all refer to Christ.

If we have died with him does not refer to physical death that comes at the end

of an earthly life, but the dying to self and becoming a new being in Christ that occurs when one first accepts Christ as their Saviour and the Lord over all aspects of their life: **<<So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!>>** (2 Corinthians 5:17).

That believers will reign with him in the life to come is confirmed by John: **<<Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years>>** (Revelation 20:6). This only applies to those who endure all that this life has to throw at them and remain faithful to Christ. There will be those who fail to remain faithful and they will not be called to reign with Christ when the new creation is revealed: **<<For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind>>** (Isaiah 65:17).

In this context, to deny him must entail a more serious offense than being faithless. Denying Christ envisions final apostasy, in contrast with a temporary lapse in trusting Christ, if we are faithless. Those who deny Jesus will be judged forever: **<<The Lord is slow to anger but great in power, and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty>>** (Nahum 1:3a); but all believers continue to sin, but God remains faithful and will pardon, restore, and keep those who are truly his.

Because of who God is and what he has promised, starting with Abraham: **<<Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed'>>** (Genesis 12:1-3), given also the fact that: **<<God is love>>** (1 John 4:8b), and: **<<God is not a human being, that he should lie, or a mortal, that he should change his mind. Has he promised, and will he not do it? Has he spoken, and will he not fulfil it?>>** (Numbers 23:19), God will deliver those promises for he cannot deny himself and to fail to do what he said would be tantamount to just that!

There are some passages in Scripture that indicate God does change his mind but that is in relation to occasions where he allows his grace and mercy to withhold just punishment from individuals, as was seen with King Hezekiah: **<<Before Isaiah had gone out of the middle court, the word of the Lord came to him: 'Turn back, and say to Hezekiah prince of my people, Thus says the Lord, the God of your ancestor David: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; indeed, I will heal you; on the third day you shall go up to the house of the Lord. I will add fifteen years to your life. I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; I will defend this city for my own sake and for my servant David's sake'>>** (2 Kings 20:4-6), or nations, as was seen following the king's instructions to the Ninevites: **<<Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish.' When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it>>** (Jonah 3:8-

10). Such changes of mind come about because the people concerned repent the error of their ways, which is the outcome that God is after in all people.

### III. 2 Timothy 2:14-3:9 - Dealing with False Teachers

These verses divide into two sections. In vv.14-26, Paul introduces the false teaching (v.16) and explains how Timothy should respond to it, while ensuring he remains different from the false teachers.

In 2 Timothy 3:1-9, Paul describes the false teachers more extensively. Having exhorted Timothy to steadfast endurance, Paul then begins to address the problem more directly.

#### III.a. 2 Timothy 2:14-26 - A Worker Approved by God

Paul contrasts Timothy and the false teachers: where vv.14-19 contrast Timothy's faithful ministry with the worthless ministry of the opponents; vv.20-21 provide an illustration; and in vv.22-26, Paul exhorts Timothy not to be drawn into sinful desire and needless controversy, counselling him on how to handle his opponents.

<sup>14</sup> Remind them of this, and warn them before God that they are to avoid wrangling over words, which does no good but only ruins those who are listening.

#### 2 Timothy 2:14

Remind them. Thus far in the letter Timothy has been the primary object of the exhortations and the one who is to remember (v.8). Here Paul shifts to Timothy's teaching role, in particular, reminding the congregation, indicating that they already know the truth but have become confused due to the doctrine of false teaching. Many church-goers like to hear something new in the message they receive but Paul's instruction is clear - remind them of what they have already been told because there is every chance they are not yet living the Gospel-driven life they were called to.

Warn them before God shows the seriousness that Paul attaches to those who are not heeding the truth of the Gospel but are engaging instead in unhelpful debates that serve no Kingdom purpose.

Avoid wrangling over words. Paul is clearly willing to argue when the Gospel is at stake, for he even opposed Peter to his face: <<*But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned*>> (Galatians 2:11). What is prohibited here is meaningless argument that can only end in disharmony, causing rifts in fellowship, and providing entranceways for Satan to penetrate the church. This was not just a problem isolated to Ephesus: <<*But avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless*>> (Titus 3:9).

Does no good. The concern here, as in 1 Timothy, is a teaching that has no positive, practical impact on its adherents; refer to vv.16-17.

Ruins those who are listening refers to the spiritual harm such debates and

discussions can have. They are not harmless pastimes or entertainment, for they can cause permanent damage, perhaps even costing some their eternal hope.

<sup>15</sup> Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth.

## 2 Timothy 2:15

Do your best, i.e. be zealous, translates the Greek word *spoudazō*. The believer must zealously pursue God's approval. One way to do this is to make sure one is rightly handling Scripture, which contrasts with the meaningless disputes of the false teachers.

Present yourself to God as one approved by him. Believers should remember that God chose a people for himself: *<<For you are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession. It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the Lord set his heart on you and chose you – for you were the fewest of all peoples. It was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath that he swore to your ancestors, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt>>* (Deuteronomy 7:6-8), and Jesus continues to choose his own disciples throughout the ages: *<<You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name>>* (John 15:16), who are those that the Father gives him: *<<I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me>>* (John 17:6-8). Therefore, they are called to act as God's elect at all times, not just as a good witness to him but always remembering they are constantly in his presence.

Who has no need to be ashamed, reminds Timothy and all disciples that their sins have been covered on the Cross and therefore they can come before the throne of Grace freely because of this wondrous sacrifice. It is even more important not to be ashamed of Christ in the eyes of the world for: *<<Those who are ashamed of me and of my words, of them the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels>>* (Luke 9:26).

Rightly explaining the word of truth calls for accuracy and clarity on the part of teachers like Timothy, who are called to such a ministry. Those who are not gifted for such a role, but similarly find themselves in situations where they are called to share the Gospel, must ensure they know the Scriptures well enough for this task. No disciple, whether called to teach or not, should refuse to offer a truthful explanation to others, especially unbelievers. However, when someone asks a question that is difficult, a point of doctrine perhaps, there is no harm in either referring the person to a suitable leader, or seeking the guidance of such a leader before offering an answer.

Those who teach must be careful not to add anything to the Word or take anything away from it, in order to offer their own opinion. Personal opinions and interpretations are OK but they should be clearly signposted as such, so that people can then make up their own minds as to how they interpret some aspects of theology. The basic facts of Christ though are non-negotiable.

<sup>16</sup> Avoid profane chatter, for it will lead people into more and more impiety, <sup>17</sup> and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenæus and Philetus,

### 2 Timothy 2:16-17

Avoid profane chatter, as some are given to in the church. It serves no good purpose, and can only lead to ultimate harm as Paul expresses. The only thing that Timothy or any other disciple should do is to try to persuade such people to drop their ideas and accept the facts of the Gospel truth instead, without getting drawn into debates on other matters.

Spread like gangrene. This Greek idiom stresses the repulsiveness of the false view as well as the danger of its spreading. Gangrene is a particularly nasty condition that requires necrosis, some body mass to die, that can easily spread through the blood to other parts and is destructive enough to cause death. This can be readily applied to the effect of malicious talk or heresies if they are allowed to infect the church. Medical imagery is used to describe the bad effects of the false teaching in contrast to the healthy or sound teaching of Paul.

Hymenæus was mentioned as a false teacher previously: <<*By rejecting conscience, certain persons have suffered shipwreck in the faith; among them are Hymenæus and Alexander, whom I have turned over to Satan, so that they may learn not to blaspheme*>> (1 Timothy 1:19b-20), but Philetus is not mentioned elsewhere.

<sup>18</sup> who have swerved from the truth by claiming that the resurrection has already taken place. They are upsetting the faith of some.

### 2 Timothy 2:18

The idea that the resurrection has already taken place, referring to the general resurrection of all at the end of the age: <<*But you, go your way, and rest; you shall rise for your reward at the end of the days*>> (Daniel 12:13), and not the resurrection of Christ that had clearly occurred, seems similar to some errors Paul counters in 1 Corinthians Chapter 15, especially: <<*Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ – whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people*>>

*most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died>>* (1 Corinthians 15:12-20). Apparently some taught that believers had already entered the glorified post-resurrection state; although nothing more is known about the content of this heresy. This was a rumour that had spread to Macedonia during the early days of Paul's ministry, while he was still working in Corinth: *<<As to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we beg you, brothers and sisters, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as though from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord is already here>>* (2 Thessalonians 2:2).

It should be noted that, unlike the Sadducees, these men did not deny the resurrection but they taught it erroneously, causing many others to fall away from the truth. Such is the subtlety of Satan to mix truth and lies to confuse people, causing first misunderstanding and then leading them to sin: *<<Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden"?' The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die."' But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate>>* (Genesis 3:1-7), and the rest, as they say, is history!

They are upsetting the faith of some indicates that some believers accepted the false teaching and realised that they had not been included, thus causing them to doubt their personal salvation and therefore destroying the faith and hope they lived for through the Gospel of Christ.

<sup>19</sup> But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this inscription: 'The Lord knows those who are his', and, 'Let everyone who calls on the name of the Lord turn away from wickedness.'

## 2 Timothy 2:19

But. In spite of the work of evildoers and evil teachers, God's firm foundation, probably meaning the elect members of the church (v.10), still stands as indestructible as ever, primarily because of its cornerstone: *<<Because you have said, 'We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we have an agreement; when the overwhelming scourge passes through it will not come to us; for we have made lies our refuge, and in falsehood we have taken shelter'; therefore thus says the Lord God, See, I am laying in Zion a foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: 'One who trusts will not panic'>>* (Isaiah 28:15-16). This cornerstone is Christ and is the firmest foundation possible: *<<For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ>>* (1 Corinthians 3:11). God

has made it and no one has the power to shake it. The truth of God and the church will last for all time.

No matter who comes against it or what is said about it, God's Word is the truth and it will always endure. God's elect should also be able to endure for they have that truth embedded in their hearts. Those who fall away due to the misrepresentations of the truth or as a result of unpleasant experiences in life that cause some to dismiss God either as uncaring, for he allows people to suffer, or even that such natural disasters point to the absence of a God, were probably not those who ever truly believed to start with. God knows the heart and he knows whom he has chosen. David showed there are just two ways to be: <<*Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night. They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish*>> (Psalm 1).

Bearing this inscription. The twofold inscription that follows emphasises:

1. Divine sovereignty, i.e. preserving.
2. Human responsibility, i.e. persevering.

It was quite common for words to be carved onto a new building's foundations, a practice that continues and it is usual to see plaques marking the laying of a foundation stone by a dignitary. God himself has written on this particular foundation: <<*On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, 'King of kings and Lord of lords'*>> (Revelation 19:16).

The Lord knows those who are his. Moses had announced this in the days of Korah's rebellion against the authority given to Aaron as priest: <<*Then he said to Korah and all his company, 'In the morning the Lord will make known who is his, and who is holy, and who will be allowed to approach him; the one whom he will choose he will allow to approach him*>> (Numbers 16:5). God did indeed make his choice known and Korah, along with those who chose his false teaching perished that very day. Moses himself was one that God had taken as his own: <<*Moses said to the Lord, 'See, you have said to me, "Bring up this people"; but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, "I know you by name, and you have also found favour in my sight"*>> (Exodus 33:12).

While some believers may have apostatised (v.18), Paul finds assurance in the fact that God knows those who are his. At the same time, those who claim to be the Lord's must demonstrate this as they turn away from wickedness, for Christ has redeemed them from all sin: <<*He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds*>> (Titus 2:14).

<sup>20</sup> In a large house there are utensils not only of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for special use, some for ordinary. <sup>21</sup> All who cleanse themselves of the things I have mentioned will become special utensils, dedicated and useful to the owner of the house, ready for every good work.

## 2 Timothy 2:20-21

Paul uses an illustration to support his call to: <<*turn away from wickedness*>> (v.19).

In a large house. God's house will be extremely large and is well prepared for those called to live with him: <<*In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?*>> (John 14:2). It will be large enough for God's household, the church: <<*I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth*>> (1 Timothy 3:14-15), who will be the first to come through judgement: <<*For the time has come for judgement to begin with the household of God; if it begins with us, what will be the end for those who do not obey the gospel of God?*>> (1 Peter 4:17).

There are utensils not only of gold and silver but also of wood and clay. Just as some are called for higher office and some for lower office in terms of their Kingdom work, there are also two types of people to be considered in terms of their faithful service to God. From a human perspective it is not always easy to understand why God allows both types to serve him, in appearance at least, but God knows: <<*What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the objects of wrath that are made for destruction; and what if he has done so in order to make known the riches of his glory for the objects of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory*>> (Romans 9:22-23).

Some for special use, some for ordinary. In terms of household utensils this translation makes it is easy to understand Paul's analogy. However, many translations, e.g. ASV, ESV, NASB, use terms such as: 'some for honourable use, some for dishonourable', or similar. What is dishonourable includes doctrinal and moral error, since both are in view in the letter. In God's house there are some people who may appear to be made of gold and others of clay, but all have their purpose in the sight of God and are called to faithful service as the body of Christ. Equally, there are both good and bad people in the church, just as there are true disciples and others who are in the church for different reasons. Those who depart from such errors and avoid impurity in their lives, remaining true to their calling, prepare themselves to be useful to the master and ready for every good work. This is a promise of blessing in the pursuit of holiness.

All who cleanse themselves refers to a state of the heart. The Pharisees misunderstood this type of teaching that existed in the Law of Moses to mean the ritual washing of household items, especially those used for eating, but Jesus

challenged them over their traditions: <<Then the Lord said to him, ‘Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness>> (Luke 11:39).

The bad people and the non-Christians in the church are like dirty pots and pans that the master cannot use. He will throw them away as rubbish. Jesus used similar analogies from farming: <<He put before them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, “Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?” He answered, “An enemy has done this.” The slaves said to him, “Then do you want us to go and gather them?” But he replied, “No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn”>> (Matthew 13:24-30), and: <<‘When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”>> (Matthew 25:31-34).

The owner of the house is an analogy for God: <<When once the owner of the house has got up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, “Lord, open to us”, then in reply he will say to you, “I do not know where you come from”>> (Luke 13:25), therefore ready for every good work should be the status of all disciples of Christ.

<sup>22</sup> Shun youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

## 2 Timothy 2:22

The command to shun what is wrong is combined with the command to pursue righteousness, something Paul had elaborated on previously: <<But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses>> (1 Timothy 6:11-12), where the call to fight the good fight of the faith and to take hold of the eternal life involves both fleeing from sin and vigorously pursuing virtue.

Youthful passions. Timothy was at least in his late 20’s and probably in his 30’s by this time but would still have been considered a young man: <<Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity>> (1 Timothy 4:12). Passions, the Greek word *epithymia*, in this context refers to sinful desires in general and not only sexual desire, especially

those that tend to be characteristic of youth. Paul may hint in vv.23-25 that one of these would be a tendency to quarrel or be hot-headed. Paul would have known Timothy's personality traits very well having been closely associated with him for about 15 years. Whatever weaknesses Timothy had, Paul urged him to relinquish them for the sake of righteousness. However, it is not just young people that are at risk: <<*Beloved, I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul*>> (1 Peter 2:11).

Faith, love, and peace are all attributes of God that were taught by Jesus. They should also be characteristics demonstrated by disciples in their everyday lives.

Along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. The pursuit of right is not to be done alone but along with other believers. Connection with the community of faith is essential for both progress in sanctification and perseverance in the faith.

<sup>23</sup> Have nothing to do with stupid and senseless controversies; you know that they breed quarrels.

### 2 Timothy 2:23

Stupid and senseless controversies. False teaching produces quarrels rather than godliness and Paul clearly calls disciples to avoid them at all costs. Refer also to comments made on v.14.

<sup>24</sup> And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, patient,

### 2 Timothy 2:24

Verses 24-26 form a key passage concerning a pastor's handling of troublesome people in the church, and should become part of their personal mental operations manual, so that when trouble does arise they will be equipped to deal with it.

Servant is the common word for slave or bondservant, the Greek *doulos*, but Paul uses it also to refer to those who preach the Gospel, which of course includes himself: <<*Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God*>> (Romans 1:1), <<*Am I now seeking human approval, or God's approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ*>> (Galatians 1:10), and: <<*Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that is in accordance with godliness*>> (Titus 1:1). He refers to his friend and co-worker Epaphras in the same fashion: <<*Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you. He is always wrestling in his prayers on your behalf, so that you may stand mature and fully assured in everything that God wills*>> (Colossians 4:12). By association, all disciples of Christ become his servants. In fact, it applies to all of humankind, although many do not obey the call or want to acknowledge such a status.

Kindly to everyone. The servant should reflect the qualities of his master, who had said of himself: <<*Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am*

*gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls*>> (Matthew 11:29).

That the Lord's servant is called to be an apt teacher indicates that Paul is considering those called specifically to church leadership with the gift of preaching and teaching, rather than all his servants in the church. However, the general qualities listed should be observable in all who profess Christ, and of whom it should be said: <<*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good*>> (Romans 12:21).

<sup>25</sup> correcting opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth,

## 2 Timothy 2:25

Most interpreters see these opponents as unbelievers who do not know the truth of the Gospel message and the personal salvation it offers. The term know the truth highlights the cognitive aspect of conversion, i.e. individuals must come to understand and accept key truths in order to be converted.

Paul emphasises the importance of not dealing with such quarrelsome people in the same quarrelsome manner (v.24), but rather correcting the opponents in a spirit of gentleness: <<*I myself, Paul, appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ – I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold towards you when I am away!*>> (2 Corinthians 10:1), <<*My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted*>> (Galatians 6:1), <<*I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*>> (Ephesians 4:1-3), and: <<*But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an account of the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame*>> (1 Peter 3:14-16). Gentleness is part of the fruit of the spirit: <<*By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things*>> (Galatians 5:22-23). This verse further emphasises the sovereignty of God in granting repentance.

Those who come to know the truth will accept that the knowledge came through the grace of God, that same grace that granted them the opportunity to repent. They will realise that the living Word of God was with them all the time: <<*But what does it say? 'The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved*>> (Romans 10:8-10). When

put like that, salvation is there for everyone to reach out and accept, yet too few take what is being offered to their eternal detriment and shame.

<sup>26</sup> and that they may escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

### 2 Timothy 2:26

They may escape from the snare of the devil or come to their senses in several translations. Although the Fall, recorded in Genesis Chapter 3, brought about a destructive effect on human reason, becoming futile in their thinking to the point of foolishness: *<<for though they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools>>* (Romans 1:21-22), salvation brings the ability to begin to see reality. Paul's regular references to the false teachers' lack of knowledge and understanding, as in v.16, v.23, and: *<<As Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these people, of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith, also oppose the truth>>* (2 Timothy 3:8), points to the fact that they fail to grasp what is really true.

The snare of the devil. Paul often describes humanity as enslaved by the devil and in need of rescue: *<<In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God>>* (2 Corinthians 4:4). This was a trap that awaited the new believer if put into a position of leadership too soon: *<<He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace and the snare of the devil>>* (1 Timothy 3:6-7). King Solomon gave a wise warning and an eternal promise for all to heed: *<<In the transgression of the evil there is a snare, but the righteous sing and rejoice>>* (Proverbs 29:6).