

Study 16: 2nd Timothy Chapter 2

Introduction

Paul continues the contrast to those who have fallen away and rejected the gospel, with Timothy's faithfulness, and then begins the second appeal with a contrast between opposition and loyalty. Timothy is instructed to remain faithful in handling the difficult situation.

Body of the Study

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The Soldier
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Second Appeal - Loyalty

Instructions for Correcting Error

Homework and preparation for next week:

- *Read the notes as a review of the study*
- *Read chapter 3 in preparation for the next study.*

- *Timothy was empowered by Paul to take on the task, not only of teaching, but of teaching the next generation of teachers. Reflect on the gravity of the situation that he was given, and think through how he would have felt. What responsibility do we have in dealing with the same situation?*
- *What instructions has Timothy been given for handling the conflicts in the church? How was he to go about it? Think through the practical approach that he might have taken in having to correct older Christians (even those who had been appointed elders in the church). What approach might he have taken in dealing with this?*

Notes for study 16: 2nd Timothy Chapter 2

Paul continues the contrast to those who have fallen away and rejected the gospel, with Timothy's faithfulness, and then begins the second appeal with a contrast between opposition and loyalty. Timothy is instructed to remain faithful in handling the difficult situation.

First Appeal – Loyalty (again)

Paul again addresses Timothy as "... my son..." (2:2:1), reinforcing his close relationship with him. He instructs him to "...be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus..." (2:2:1 NKJV), and uses the bridge *therefore*. This connects to the thoughts of the previous chapter, where "...those in Asia have turned away from me..." (2:1:15 NKJV). Timothy was exhorted not to be like them, but to be strong and loyal to Paul.

Timothy's role as an evangelist was not only in teaching the word, but also to ensure that it was passed on to others who could also pass it on. "...the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also..." (2:2:2 NKJV). Through this pattern, we see that the task of teaching the gospel was not just for a select few in the first century (and obviously it has to be an ongoing role, since the task of teaching the lost is a perpetual role). However, the role Paul is outlining here is not the general role of teaching the lost, but rather the role of *teaching the teachers*. This has been given to those who are *faithful*. It is not a role that can be taken on by anyone and everyone.

Next, Paul brings three examples of being prepared to serve despite the hardships that might occur:

The Soldier

"...You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ..." (2:2:3 NKJV). Like the soldier, pain and suffering is bound to occur. That very thing was happening to Paul at that time. The Christian is engaged in warfare, and is *under orders* in the same way as a soldier who is bound to follow them regardless of the consequences. "...No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs--he wants to please his commanding officer..." (2:2:4 NIV). We must not let other things distract us from the task that God has given us.

The Athlete

"...And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules..." (2:2:5 NKJV). Paul has used the athletics metaphor in several other places (1 Cor 9:24-27; 1 Tim 6:12). Not only must the athlete be disciplined (like the soldier), but he must play according to the rules (unlike the soldier who can just about get away with anything in a war situation). If the athlete disobeys the rules, then he will be disqualified from receiving the prize at the end of the game. In the same way, if we disobey God's rules, then we also may be disqualified from receiving the crown of life.

The Farmer

"...The hard-working farmer must be first to partake of the crops..." (2:2:6 NKJV). Tilling the ground and planting the crops is hard work, and it may be quite some time before the crop even appears. Then there are the weeds and pests to control, before the harvest can be brought in. The evangelist may have a similar result "...I planted, Apollos watered, but it was God who gave the increase..." (1 Cor 3:6). The idea that Paul is bringing here is not that of the labourer being paid for his work by partaking of the fruit of the crop, but like the other examples, it is one of reward for a job well done. The farmer receives the reward after he has done all the hard work.

Just in case Timothy had missed the point, Paul reminds him to ponder on them "...Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things..." (2:2:7 NKJV). There is an indication here that Paul is driving at the same point in all three examples.

Reward from suffering

A common saying is “When you’re up to your neck in crocodiles, it’s hard to remember that your primary objective was to drain the swamp”. In the same way, Paul reminds Timothy that in spite of the suffering, our primary objective is being faithful to God. “...Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evil doer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained...” (2:2:8-9 NKJV). Christ in the flesh (the seed of David) had the body of a man, and suffered greatly. Yet, despite the suffering, he was raised from the dead – he overcame and received the reward. This was exactly what Paul was teaching – *according to my gospel* – and it was as a result of this teaching that he was now suffering in chains in prison. However, his chains could not stop the gospel from being taught and spreading.

“...Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain salvation...” (2:2:10 NKJV). Paul was completely focussed on the task that he was given, as a *preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles* (2:1:11).

A Trustworthy Saying

As in the previous letter to Timothy (1:1:15; 1:3:1; 1:4:9), Paul makes a statement that can be relied on.

In this case, the trustworthy saying is the following three verses, which may be an early Christian hymn. It is in the typical form of Hebrew poetic parallelism--four "if" clauses, each followed by a balancing conclusion. The first two are positive, the other two negative. (NIVBC).

“...For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him.

If we endure, We shall also reign with Him.

If we deny Him, He will also deny us.

If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself...” (2:2:11-13 NKJV)

The first of each of these phrases is a conditional clause that requires an action on our behalf. The second phrase presents the results in Christ’s action with us.

The Second Appeal - opposition

Like the first appeal, the second has the mirrored A-B-A format, but this time it is opposition-loyalty-opposition.

Timothy is charged to be a true worker for the Lord “...Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers...” (2:2:14 NKJV). We can see here some of the things that were happening in the church, where people were engaging in pointless arguments (c/f 1:6:20). These things did not help spread the gospel, and probably did a lot of harm, causing the hearers to fall away. In contrast to this, Timothy is exhorted to “...Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth...” (2:2:15 NKJV). This verse has long been used to point out that God’s word can be divided (broken into different parts), and that it can be wrongly divided – since Timothy was to make the divisions correctly.

We can see what is happening in the church (presumably at Ephesus), when incorrect applications were being made concerning God’s revelation. The context is clarified by the next verse “...But shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort...” (2:2:16-17 NKJV). Their arguing was pointless and rather than bring them closer to God, it was leading to more ungodliness. If this was the same Hymenaeus that is mentioned in 1:1:20, then it is likely that he was one of the elders who had previously been disciplined by Paul, but had refused to leave, and *was speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after him* (Acts 20:30).

Paul clarifies for us the teaching of these men, who “...have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and that they overthrow the faith of some...” (2:2:18 NKJV). Despite the opposition that both Paul and Timothy were facing from these men, “...Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His,” and “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”...” (2:2:19 NKJV). Despite the opposition, the truth of the gospel cannot be overcome. It is God’s revelation, and His will, and man cannot overthrow it. Even though these men might seem on the surface to be faithful, the truth lies underneath, and God knows the truth. If they truly belonged to God, then they would not be continuing with their wickedness.

Second Appeal - Loyalty

Paul is clearly drawing contrasts to what is happening in the church. Not everyone is the same, and “...in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honour and some for dishonour...” (2:2:20 NKJV). It is obvious that some of the vessels are regarded with great honour by the owner and the guests who visit. Nevertheless, those of less honour (the wooden bowls and the clay pots) perform important functions in the running of the house, and the verse can be read this way. However, the problem in Ephesus is that some in the church have dishonoured it, and themselves. The owner of the house (God) regards them with dishonour. Paul clarifies this for us in the next verse “...Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work...” (2:2:21 NKJV). There are two implications from this statement. On the one hand, those who have dishonoured God need to repent and change, and it is up to them to repent. The second implication is that Timothy is being exhorted to cleanse the church from those who were causing the strife.

Instructions for Correcting Error

Timothy is instructed by Paul in how to handle the difficult situation in Ephesus. He is still a young man, and needs to show maturity in his actions “...Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart...” (2:2:22 NIV). It was not enough just to purge the church of the false teachers, he also needed to demonstrate the positive qualities of righteousness, faith, love, and peace.

But he should not be distracted by the disputes that were going on, and it could be likely that those involved in the disputes would try to turn the situation against him. “...But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife...” (2:2:23 NKJV).

Timothy needed to be gentle and delicate in handling the situation “...And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. ²⁵ Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will...” (2:2:24-26 NIV).