

**2nd Timothy**  
**Chapter 2:14-18**  
**“Bible, Bible, Only Bible”**

**\*All scripture references are from the NASU unless otherwise noted\***

Calvary Chapel Fellowship of Enid  
Matthew W. Thoms, Pastor/Teacher  
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Remember that the context here is how to be hundred-fold fruit bearer. The “how-to” of the Lord’s Parable of the Sower from **Matthew 13 (verses 1-24)**.

But within this, Paul’s shown concern for more than just fruitful works. He’s also concerned that we be fruit-bearers that last.

Because flash-in-the-pan Christian fruitfulness is worse than worthless ... it’s harmful. It serves only to show a searching and needy world that Christ is not the answer. So, Paul’s deeply concerned that we do not misrepresent the Lord by being temporary fruit-bearers. That we stay in the fight until the last trumpet blows.

Now if we’re going to be truly honest and transparent ... we’d have to confess that that sounds pretty daunting. So, for those of us who look at that and doubt ourselves ... we have **verses 14-18 of this chapter**.

So, for those asking ... how exactly can I make sure I’m in the game all the to the whistle ... let’s jump in ...

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**Verse 14:** Paul says, “**Remind them ...**”

**Q. Who’s he talking about?** -- Well the only “them” he’s mentioned was back in **verse 2** ... it’s the faithful men that Timothy was to teach. The men he was to prepare and then send out to teach others.

So, Paul says here ... “**remind them**”.

**Q. Remind them of what?** – First, remind them of all that’s come up to this point:

- 1.** Remind them that they’re to be as good soldiers who remain single minded and focused.
- 2.** Remind them that they’re to be as winning athletes who compete according to the rules.
- 3.** Remind them that they’re to be as hardworking farmers who keep their hands on the plow and wait patiently for the fruit to come in.
- 4.** Remind them to rely on the Spirit and to remember Christ and His resurrection so that their energy will not be exhausted, and their hope will not be diminished.
- 5.** Remind them that even though a messenger of God might be imprisoned the

Word of God will always be free and active and sharper than any two-edged sword (**Hebrews 4:12**).

**6.** And remind them that they need not worry about death if they've already died to themselves.

Remind them of these things. Paul understood that these simple truths would need to be repeated. And that's still very true!

And then Paul says, "I don't want you to merely remind them Timothy ... I want you to Charge them solemnly ..." And he's gonna go on to give **a list of three things** with which to solemnly charge these men ... **the first of which is ... do not fight over words!**

Interesting! Make sure they know not to wrangle about words.

The word "wrangle" is logomacheo (log-om-akh-eh'-o) in the Greek, and it means to dispute or quarrel over trivialities of scripture.

But ... an example ... I once had a man verbally attack me because I was wearing a cross necklace with the familiar Assyrian cross rather than the less familiar, but more accurate Roman cross.

Now there's no disputing that Christ was crucified on a Roman cross which looks like a capital "T", but neither can we dispute that the Assyrian cross, which looks like a small "t", has become the recognized and accepted symbol of Christianity.

So, that man was right in his assertion that the form of the cross was inaccurate, but it's trivial. It was of no value whatsoever ... in fact, it was counterproductive. He wanted to wrangle over trivialities ... exactly what Paul says here not to do ...

And notice that Paul says the consequences, when we fail to heed this counsel, fall, not on the wrangler, but on the "wranglee". It "**leads to the ruin of the hearers.**"

The word's familiar ... even in the Greek ... katastrophe (kat-as-trof-ay'), meaning to overturn, upset or demolish.

And I can relate ... when that fellow jumped my case for wearing an Assyrian cross ... I don't know if it upset him ... but, even though I simply walked out of the room, it did upset and distract me ... because I really wanted to just punch him in the teeth.

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**Verse 15:** So, the **second thing** Timothy's to solemnly charge these men with ... is to be diligent as workmen who handle the Word of God correctly!

*The story's told of a man who was absolutely desperate to hear God's instruction on a certain matter. He felt that he just couldn't wait any longer so he thought. "I know, I'll sit down, close my eyes, flip open my Bible, point at a verse and trust that God will give me the answer about my situation."*

*So, he sat down and did as he'd planned ... his Bible fell open to **Matthew chapter 27** and his finger blindly landed on **verse 5** where he read of Judas ... "**and he went away and hanged himself**".*

*And he thought "Well, that can't be God's word to me ... something must have gone wrong" so he tried it again ... this time his finger fell on **John 13:27** where Jesus said ... "**What you do, do quickly.**"*

A good example of not dividing the Word accurately.

But notice that **this verse** doesn't say "be perfect" or "brilliant" or "innovative" ... it only says, "Be diligent"!

But not just "diligent" in a general sense ... "**diligent as a workman**" ... meaning to toil exhaustively. Spoudazo (spoo-dad'-zo) in the Greek ... a combination of effort and speed meaning, to put earnest effort into being prompt.

Get into the word early, quickly and exhaustively.

We're to go to it first ... not second or third or fourteenth and we're to stay in it longer than our flesh wants to.

**Q. And if we do that ... what happens?** – Well, Paul connects it to our ability to "accurately handle" this Word of Truth. It's a farming term, [orthotomeo (or-thot-om-eh'-o)] which means to plow a straight row or to cut a straight furrow.

And this teaches us a couple of important things:

**a.** It teaches us that a workman that pleases God is one who really digs into His Word ... not just scratches the surface.

**b.** It teaches us that God wants us to plow through it ... not just dig a big hole in one or two spots, but plow through the whole of the text.

**c.** And lastly, it teaches us that our time in the Word is purposeful ... it's literally laying the groundwork for later fruitfulness. So, it can't be a mere intellectual exercise.

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**Verse 16-17a: Third and last**, Paul tells Timothy to solemnly charge these men to avoid Godless and worldly chatter or as it's phrased in my translation ... **empty chatter**.

One of the things that makes empty babbling empty is that there's nothing to gain from it ... there's nothing to get out of it. It's empty ... there's nothing of value that can be taken from it. It's a vacuum that can only be contributed to.

But the Word of God is different. There's everything in it. Everything in it is for us to take. So, the charge is to avoid Godless and worldly chatter and by inference ... migrate toward the Word of God.

**Q. Think, for a moment, about the literal fulfillment of this ... if we really avoided Godless and worldly chatter ... what would it mean for all non-Christian radio?**

**Q. What would that mean for the music industry in general?**

**Q. What would it mean for television?**

**Q. What about Social Media?** -- In May of this year, the Psychology Department at Stanford University published the results of a fascinating study looking at just how much time Americans spend gossiping and how they do it. The result ... 52 minutes each and every day! 14% of the words we utter in a 24-hour period ... are gossip. And in the under 50 group ... 95% of that was via Social Media.

Avoid Godless and worldly chatter ... not protest it or rebel against it ... but avoid it ... and migrate toward the Word of God.

And the warning is that if we don't ... we will grow more and more ungodly and that ungodliness will spread like a gangrenous infection.

And, in truth, the church hasn't heeded this ... and guess what ... it's grown more and more ungodly and that ungodliness is still spreading.

One of my favorite Bible teachers is Jon Courson. And, among other things, he's known for making up words and phrases. And one of his many sayings ... I think fits well here. He says, "The church doesn't need a revival ... it needs a re-Bible." Just to get back to the simple teaching of the Word of God.

I think of men like Don Stewart. He was once known as the Bible Answer Man, but now he's shunned by Bible teaching ministries because he's grown more and more ungodly.

**Q. And what started his downward spiral?** – He became interested in, and ultimately obsessed with, learning all he could about the occult and the crazy. But what's so sad about that is that he did it with the motivation that he would be better equipped to minister to God's kids.

But we're warned to be equipped by the Bible and to shun everything empty and ungodly. And if we fail to heed that counsel ... well ... just ask Don.

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**Verses 17b-18:** Men who became worldly and spread the disease of worldliness.

**Q. So who are these guys?** – Well, Hymenaeus is mentioned back in **1st Timothy chapter 1**. And there he's accused ... by the context, of leading astray another man by

the name Alexander.

And Paul advocated back there that Hymenaeus be turned over to Satan so that he might learn his lesson and repent ... meaning that he would be put outside of the protection of the sheep fold ... kicked out of the church for the purposes of reconciliation but ... apparently, now four years later ... he still hasn't repented.

We don't know what happened to Alexander ... I'd like to think that he escaped that snare, but the scripture simply doesn't say.

In any case, Hymenaeus did what men like Hymenaeus do ... he went on misleading people ... spreading his ungodliness like gangrene.

Now I know that some of you hate it when I name names, but I can't read this warning against partaking of empty chatter that spreads like gangrene without some red flags going up.

I think of men like Joel Osteen. Lot's of chatter ... but pay attention and you'll notice that it's virtually void of scriptural reference and most of it has no scriptural basis whatsoever.

The words he's built his empire on are generally good words ... motivational and even moralizing, but there's a grand difference between talking about the Word of God and teaching it. And, at best, Joel Olsteen, talks about the Word of God, but teaches the philosophy of man.

And just a few years ago, I would have said something similar about Pastor Rick Warren, but unlike Harmenaeus, Pastor Rick owned up to his deficiencies and has, in my opinion, shown some real improvement. Praise God!

But because of the financial success and popularity of men and ministries like that, churches all around the world are being filled up with people looking to have their ears tickled (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:3).

And authors of the same vein are hitting the charts with their flattering words devoid of the Words of God.

Now this other guy that Paul mentions, Phyletus, we know nothing else about. All we have on him is what Paul says here.

**Q. But this topic, in general, begs the question of why we go to church. Why do you go to church? Why do I go to church?** – Let me answer that by giving you some wrong, but popular reasons for church attendance:

- 1.** I go to that church because that's where my friends are ... WRONG!
- 2.** I go to that church because it meets my needs ... WRONG!
- 3.** I go to that church because it makes me feel good and I always leave feeling

better about myself ... WRONG!

**4.** I go to that church because they have a great Children's Ministry or Youth Program ... WRONG!

**5.** I go to that church because I feel that I'm needed there ... WRONG!

**6.** I go to that church to share my pearls of wisdom ... WRONG!

The primary reason for Christians to gather needs to be to learn about God from His Word and to be equipped for His work through our study of His Word! Everything else needs to fall in line somewhere behind that.

Hopefully you're hearing the message Paul's putting out. His warning is this ... if you listen to godless babbling ... if you listen to empty chatter or worldly talk ... if you're taking that in ... it WILL cause a gangrene to begin to grow in you.

**Q. Now I know that wouldn't happen to you ... you're strong enough that it won't affect you that way, right?** – Well Paul says "... it will lead to further ungodliness and ... [it] will spread like gangrene"!

And when he says that ... what he means is that, "... it **will** lead to further ungodliness and ... [it] **will** spread like gangrene" [emphasis added]! There are no exceptions.

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**Q. Now what was the specific heresy of these two ... Hymenaeus and Philetus?** – Paul says they were upsetting the faith of some by saying that the resurrection had already come. That Jesus had already returned and that the time that they were living in was the post resurrection period. A terrible thing for them to say and do.

Now I wouldn't give the people who were upset by it a free pass on their poor understanding of what was to come, but we do want to remember that the Bible wasn't nearly as available in Paul's day as it is to us now.

The New Testament hadn't even been canonized ... that is, it was still a bunch of individual parchment writings floating around the churches. It wasn't yet bound into a book for easy access like we have.

**Q. But now that we have the Bible at our fingertips in every imaginable form ... this kind of thing couldn't happen ... right?** – Well, just a century ago, a fellow by the name of Charles Taze Russell did essentially the same thing. Mr. Russell is the founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses and they, of course, also claim that Jesus has already returned. They first said 1874, but when that didn't work out, they changed it to 1914. And to this day they claim that Jesus came back in 1914 to set up His earthly reign.

Now you and I know that **Revelation 1:7** tells us that every eye shall see Him at His return, but the JW's claim that only those with a spiritual eye saw Him.

**Q. And who has a spiritual eye?** – Well the JW's at the headquarters in New York, of course. They saw Him spiritually with their spiritual eye.

And you and I also know that **Revelation 2:27** says that at His Second Coming, Jesus will reign and rule over all ... so ...

**Q. What about that?** – They claim that He is, in-fact, ruling and reigning today. No joke ... I'm not making this up ... they claim that He's ruling and reigning from a secret chamber through these men in New York. Which means that you and I are now living in the Kingdom Age. Satan is bound ... glory to God!

I don't know about you, but if this is the Kingdom Age ... I was really hoping for a little more. I'm a little disappointed in God's ability to keep Satan locked up like He promised He would.

**Q. How in the world could the JW's get so far off track?** – I'll tell you how ... empty, Godless chatter! Leaving the simple study, understanding and teaching of the Word of God and looking rather to the foolishness of man.

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**Conclusion:**

**Q. Don't you wonder ... what ministers or ministries Paul would name if he were writing today?** – I know for sure that he'd go after every minister or teacher who tried to add to, or take away from, God's Word. And there are plenty to choose from.

**Q. So what does all this have to do with Paul's theme?** – Everything! I told you this was a "how-to" passage ... telling us how to become and remain a hundred-fold fruit-bearer. And after making sure your saved ... I'd put this at the very top of the "how-to" list. More importantly ... God puts it at the top of the list.

Man's wisdom will come and go. Man's invented doctrines and new, exciting gimmicks will blow in and blow out, but the Word of God will stand!

That means that if we hitch a ride on one of man's blow-through schemes ... we'll blow through with it. We won't make it to the buzzer. But if we'll take our stand on God's Word ... get in it and stay in it ... we'll make it all that way.

We'll bear abundant fruit to His glory all the way to the whistle.