

OUTLINE: 2 Timothy 2:1-21

How Do We Live Faithfully when Gospel Truth Hits the Fan?

(2 Timothy 2:1–21 ESV) 1 You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, 2 and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. 3 Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. 5 An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. 6 It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. 7 Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

1. We must be strong by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, 2:1-7.

- A. Draw our strength from the divine favor of God that we find in Christ Jesus, 2:1.
- B. Pass on the solid words of the faith that have been verified by many witnesses, 2:2.
 - (1 Timothy 4:6 ESV) If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.
 - (2 Timothy 1:13 NASB95) Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.
 - (1 Thessalonians 5:19 ESV) Do not quench the Spirit.
 - (2 Timothy 2:2 NLT) You have heard me

teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.

- C. Pay the price for faithfully passing on the solid words of the true gospel, 2:3-6.
- D. Be thoughtful as you carry out these instructions and come to understand what the Lord is doing, 2:7, cf. Romans 12:1-2.
 - (Romans 12:1–2 ESV) I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, 9 for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! 10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. 11 The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; 12 if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; 13 if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.

2. We must remember Jesus Christ as

preached in Paul's gospel, 2:8-13.

- A. We must remember to whom we must remain faithful—the Jesus Christ of Paul's gospel, 2:8.
- B. We must know that we will suffer for this faithfulness, 2:9a.

Following the pattern established in 2 Timothy 1:8–12, Paul defines the gospel (v 8) and then identifies it as the reason for his suffering. [Mounce, W. D. (2000). *Pastoral Epistles* (Vol. 46, p. 513). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.]

- C. We must trust the unbounded word of God during this time of suffering, 2:9b.
- D. We must endure for the sake of the elect, 2:10.
- E. We must understand that Christ Jesus will remain faithful to his word and his stated gospel, 2:11-13, cf. 2:5.

Commentary on 2:11-13 with Romans 6:1-8 ... Has the old man or woman ever died?

If we have died with him, then we will live with him. (Conversely ... if we have not died with him, then we will not live with him.)

- (Romans 6:1–8 ESV) What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

So has the old man or woman ever died? Have you ever said “goodbye, sayonara, farewell, see you later” to the old man or old woman? Did you ever die to your old life and say good riddance? Have you yet to give that sinner a funeral?

How might we know that this happened? There are multiple ways, but let me give two from our text ...

First is there a new you? Was there a change, a transformation? Some people say that they grew up in church and have always been a Christian ...

Here are my questions then to that person ... Where's the transformation? When were your sins forgiven? When were you brought from darkness to marvelous light? Where's the new person who has been set free from sin? **If none of this has happened, then are you saying that these things were not necessary for you? ... That you are an exception? Danger ... danger ...**

Second are you enduring as a faithful witness or do you deny him? Do you acknowledge him publicly? And by “him” I mean “him” as in ... “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my [Paul's] gospel (verse 8).”

- (Matthew 10:32–33 NLT) Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. 33 But everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my Father in heaven.
God will remain faithful, even if we are

faithless. God will stay true to who he is. A mere declaration that we “have faith” or we “are Christians” will not do. A declaration of faith without biblical clarity and detail is merely the veil over a rebellious heart that refuses to bow to the Lord of glory. We are to have faith—believe—in a specific gospel, the gospel that Paul preached, the only gospel that God will honor. The faithful soldier competes by God’s play book (verse 5)—God’s word, which means there is no variation from the gospel that Paul preached.

Faithfulness to a false gospel is the epitome of faithlessness ...

Faithfulness to a different gospel is rebellion against God and his word. It is a refusal to believe God. So you can be very faithful to the gospel of the Catholics or the Mormons or the Restoration Movement, but know this ... faithfulness to a false gospel—that is ... faithfulness to a “works salvation gospel”—is a denial of the true gospel and it is faithlessness to God. It is evidence that you do not fully believe God, and God will not deny himself to cover the sin of your unbelieving—faithless—heart.

14 Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. 15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. 16 But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, 17 and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some.

3. We must do our best to get it right, 2:14-21.

We must do our best to get the truth about Jesus Christ and his gospel right—to present ourselves to God as approved, unashamed workmen in rightly handing the word of truth.

How do we do this?

First, do your best to present yourself to God as one approved.

Second, do your best to be a worker who has no need to be ashamed.

What is more shameful than going to the word of God to use his words to support our truth? What could be more shameful than that? The approved workman works diligently to find what God says.

Timothy, then, must be a workman, not a quibbler. His work, moreover, must be such that it does not reflect shame on him and that he does not need to fear that shame will cover him when he hears the divine verdict with respect to it. [*Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles (Vol. 4, p. 262). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.*]

To “quibble” means to raise trivial objections or distinctions, especially so as to avoid the truth or importance of something.

Our text tells us to: “Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers” ... And to “avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness.”

What is heard in our Sunday School?

Let me ask this question. If someone were to sit in on one of our Sunday School classes, would he observe the people of God diligently working to

know the mind of God? Would a visitor find a group of people looking to God and his word to change their lives? What would our visitor find?

You may possibly counter that in SS that your class was discussing the Bible, or at least topics relevant to the Bible, on the day of our visitor. To which I would reply, “And so were Eve and the devil in the garden of Eden discussing the words of God when they asked: ‘Did God really say?’” So, as they say, how did that work out for them?

The question is not—Are we discussing, or even studying the Bible? The question is—Are we seeking the mind of Christ leading to godliness or merely revealing what is on our minds leading to ungodliness?

- (Proverbs 18:2 ESV) A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.
- (Proverbs 18:2 NASB95) A fool does not delight in understanding, But only in revealing his own mind.

In our various “Bible” studies, it seems that we go in one of these two directions—1) we seek to receive the mind of God, or 2) we seek to reveal our own minds. What we must know is that our opinions and interpretations of life and the Bible will never bring us to godliness.

19 But God’s firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.” 20 Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. 21 Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

CONCLUSION: God’s firm foundation stands.

In his book “Saving Truth: Finding Meaning and Clarity in a Post-Truth World” Abdu Murray describes the confusion over truth in the world in which we live.

Freedom must have no bounds. Not even reality will be our boundary. But what I’ve just described isn’t freedom—it’s autonomy. While we typically understand freedom to be the power to exercise choice without constraint, as we’ll soon see, freedom becomes chaotic in a system without constraint.

Freedom operates at its best within the confines of the truth. Boundaries are foreign to pure autonomy, which means that truth is being sacrificed on autonomy’s altar.

The word autonomy is comprised of two root words from Greek. The first root word is autos, meaning “self,” and the second is nomos, meaning “law.”

Someone is autonomous if he is a law unto himself. **And the pursuit of autonomy—not freedom—is what we are seeing today.** I would argue that the pursuit of autonomy is the root of the post-truth mindset that fuels the Culture of Confusion.

We have been pursuing autonomy since the beginning of our race. Adam and Eve sought autonomy from God. They sought to transcend the purpose for which they were made so that they could be the definers of their own purpose.

We continue that pursuit today. **What is the natural result of the unfettered autonomy we seek? Everything becomes subject to our personal preferences, even our pursuit of truth.** [*Murray, Abdu. Saving Truth: Finding Meaning and Clarity in a Post-Truth World (p. 55). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.*]