

2 Timothy

I. Introduction

A. **2 Timothy 2:14-19** . . . Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers. [15] Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. [16] But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, [17] and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus (*high meh NEE uhs*) and Philetus (*fih LEE tuhs*), [18] men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some. [19] Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness.”

B. Prayer

II. Worthy reminders, worthless debates.

A. Our focus today is **vs 14** which begins with “**Remind them of these things.**” With these words, Paul was urging Timothy to remind the believers of the important truths found in **vs 8-13**. However, since you heard Marc’s teaching on **vs 8-13** just last Sunday, I won’t remind you of what these verses say. But we will talk about four important truths that we ought to remind ourselves of and remind each other of.

1. The idea of reminding each other of certain truths is not unique to Paul or Christianity. It is used by parents in raising children. School teachers use it to teach a subject like math (*repetition*), or when preparing students for final exams (*review*). Businesses use it in their advertising. How many times have you seen the “Call Sam” advertisements? Police use it when they give you a warning instead of a citation. And I could go on, but I think you get the point.
2. For Christians, this same principle is essential in relation to our thinking about God, and for living a healthy, maturing, Christian life. Why? Because we face many temptations, demands, and distractions in the course of a day that too easily divert our attention away from what we ought to be paying attention to – and that often results in thinking and doing things contrary to godliness.

- a. Therefore, reminders are helpful tools in the battle to keep us thinking as we ought to think and doing what we ought to do.
 - b. For Christians, reminding is a personal activity, a group activity, and a part of being a pastor, teacher, or counselor.
 - (1) For example, it is my responsibility to remind you of necessary truths when it appears you are forgetting them or when you need encouragement.
 - (2) As brothers and sisters in Christ, it is your responsibility to remind each other of truth – in order to exhort or encourage each other to remain faithful to God and godliness. For example, when you are in a conversation and hear something that is contrary to a proper view of God, or different from a spiritually healthy understanding of God’s word, or is lacking in godly love, that is the time to remind the other person of truth.
 - (3) And reminding yourself of truth is also an important practice. The use of personal reminders, repetition, and reviews of truth about God, His word, and specific areas of godly living can, over time, cement these truths in your mind so that they are easily recalled when needed, and so that they can become a natural part of your beliefs, values, attitudes, thinking, and behavior.
3. As stated earlier, I won’t be reminding you of the essential truths found in **vs 8-13**. But I am going to remind you four truths that are vital to living the Christian life. I say remind you because I am reasonably certain you already know them. My hope is, that you will remind yourself and each other of these four truths as we together pursue God and godly living.

B. First truth: **God is perfectly good** – and because of this, we can trust Him implicitly to always does what is right and good.

1. However, when life turns hard, when circumstances turn against us, when people don’t treat us the way we think they ought, when temptations seem to overpower us, and when sickness overtakes us, our tendency is to blame God or think of God as having failed us in some way. This kind of response to our circumstances degrades our view of God.
2. Degrading our view of God – for any reason – is foolish, because a low or unworthy view of God feeds distrust of God, motivates backing away from God – instead of drawing near, encourages

taking matters into our own hands and doing things our way instead of God's way, and results in giving only partial or selective submission and obedience to God.

- a. The truth is, our view of God – be it worthy or unworthy – powerfully influences our trust in God, our adoration of God, our reverence for God, and our humble submission to God.
- b. For example, the more you think of God the more you will want to trust Him, love Him, and live according to His will and word.
3. But can God be trusted? Is He perfectly good? The Bible says He is.
 - a. We read in **1 John 1:5**, “This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.”
 - b. We read in **James 1:17** that “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.”
 - c. And though I am just as human as you with similar passions, foolish thinking, and sinful ways, it is my experience that God is perfectly good and completely trustworthy.
 - d. Many years ago, I made the decision never to entertain any disparaging, low, or unworthy thoughts about God, or to utter words of that nature. This has been a good decision, and I am urging you to make this same kind of decision.
4. To help us maintain a proper, honorable, and high view of God, we need to keep the truths in **1 John 1:5** and **James 1:17** firmly implanted in our mind and securely held in our heart. And we can do this by reminding ourselves, and reminding each other, that God is perfectly good – regardless of what the circumstances seem to imply.

C. Second truth: **Godliness is the only path to the abundant life.**

1. We are prone to think that an abundant, happy, fulfilling, good, and satisfying life is made up of God's ways (*godliness*) **AND** some of the world's ways, combined with a few fleshly ways (*selfishness*) and maybe even one or two of the devil's ways (*sin*).
2. In other words, we tend to believe that God, God's ways, and living a godly life are not enough. And so, to get what we think is a better life now, we tend to believe we must add in a few things that are not of God, God's ways, or godly living.
3. Here again, if we turn to God's word, we find the truth concerning the path to the abundant life.

- a. **Psalm 16:11**, “You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.”
 - b. **John 10:10**, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; [Jesus] came that [we] may have life, and have it abundantly.”
4. I acknowledge that there are frequent and numerous temptations to add some ways of the world, the flesh, and the devil to the Christian life in order to make life seem sweeter, happier, and more satisfying. But these temptations, even when they come from within, are lies that if followed will only add to our discontent and unhappiness, and they will only make life harder and our own lives worse.
 5. So how do we fight these temptations? By reminding ourselves, day-by-day, and reminding each other, as often as is needed, that godliness is the only path to the abundant life. The reality is, God’s abundant life is the only life that truly and lastingly satisfies, gives us a true and lasting sense of security, brings contentment, builds inward peace, and provides a joy that circumstances or people cannot take away. And godliness is the only way to get there.

D. Third truth: **Changing what is in your heart brings about a far greater good than changing your circumstances.**

1. We tend to believe that we would be less sinful and more godly, less angry and more morally pure, less frustrated or upset and happier, less worried or fearful and more content, less self-centered and more loving, less self-ruled and more trusting of God **if** our circumstances were different.
 - a. In other words, we tend to believe our circumstances drive our thoughts, attitudes, words, and behavior.
 - b. And we buy into this lie because we would rather blame our circumstances than face the reality that the driving forces of our behavior are inward, not outward.
2. This kind of self-deception and denial of reality is so prevalent that Jesus took the time to address it. Here are two examples:
 - a. **Mark 7:21-23**, “For from within, **out of the heart of men**, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, [22] deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. [23] All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”
 - b. **Luke 6:44-45**, “For each tree is known by its own fruit (*what is seen on the outside is determined by what is on the inside*). For

men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. [45] The **good man** out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good (*regardless of the circumstances*); and the **evil man** out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.”

- c. The point is, circumstances do not make us think, speak, and act more godly or less godly, they simply prod or urge into action who we are on the inside.
 - d. In other words, circumstances simply call forth a response, and our response is determined by what is in our heart. And what is in our heart is made up of who we trust, who or what we rely on to feel safe and secure, and what we believe, value, fear, and desire.
3. Now there is no doubt that circumstances can have either a positive or negative effect on our lives. And there is no doubt that we prefer the positive effects over the negative.
 4. Yet good or pleasant or enjoyable circumstances do not make a pure heart and a godly Christian – they only provide relief from the kind of circumstances that reveal the **purity** of our heart **or** the **impurities** that are in our heart.
 5. Therefore, God places far more value and emphasis on changing who we are on the inside than changing our circumstances. And if you don’t believe me, consider the following two scriptures:
 - a. **James 1:2-4**, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, [3] knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. [4] And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”
 - b. **Romans 5:3-4**, “We...exult (*rejoice*) in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; [4] and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope.”
 6. Two questions: Do you believe life would be better and you would be more godly if your circumstances were different? Are you more committed to changing your circumstances than changing what is in you in order to respond more godly to your circumstances?
 7. I am urging all of us to regularly remind ourselves, and each other, that changing what is in our heart is far more important and far more valuable than changing our circumstances. In fact, without changing on the inside you will never experience the abundant life God wants you to experience in this life.

- E. Fourth truth: **Love according to the principles and ways of love.**
1. Our tendency is to love those around us according to the extent of our willingness to love – which is determined by how selfish we are, or according to the way we are being loved – which is based on how we are being treated (*or how we perceive we are being treated*).
 2. I want to remind you of what you’ve heard me say a number of times before: **love has its own unchangeable standards and ways.** Therefore, when you compromise or abandon love’s standards and ways, the possible outcome is to say and do what is unloving.
 3. And not that you need reminding, but the reality is, love’s standards and ways are not a human invention, but God’s – the very same God who is perfectly good, who shows us the path of life, and who leads us into the abundant life. Could He be wrong about love?
 - a. However, God not only set the standard and ways of love, He practiced them Himself in spite of how He was being treated. We read this in **Romans 5:8**, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”
 - b. Having set the example of loving according to love’s standards and ways, He urges us not to compromise or abandon the standards and ways of love regardless of the behavior of those around us or toward us. We read this in **Luke 6:27-28**, “I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, [28] bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”
 4. I fully understand that loving according to the standards and ways of love is easy to talk about, yet not so easy to do.
 - a. Loving like this goes against our self-interest, our desires to feel safe and secure, and our longing to be loved the way we want to be loved.
 - b. In other words, from a human, fleshly perspective, loving like this is more costly to self than most of us want love to be.
 5. So what are we to do? Let us commit to reminding ourselves, day-by-day, and reminding each other, as often as is needed, that whatever is less than love, is selfishness. Let us encourage one another to love according to love’s standards and ways, regardless of the circumstances or the people involved. Yet as we remind each other, let us also support one another, and use patience and tenderness when exhorting and encouraging each other to love according to love.

III. Conclusion

- A. Reminders are helpful tools in the battle to keep thinking as we ought to think and doing what we ought to do. May we use reminders in our own lives, and in our community life – for our good, for the spiritual health of our church, and for the glory of God in our personal lives and in our church life.