

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 and Philetus, [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. Today, we will talk about **vs 16-19**.

C. Prayer

II. Worthless discussions; upsetting believer’s faith; God and truth stand firm.

A. [16] But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness,

1. **But avoid worldly and empty chatter** –

a. In this context, to **avoid** is to deliberately stay away from, or to separate yourself from worldly and empty chatter – be it a one-on-one or small group conversations.

(1) To **chatter** is to engage in idle or careless talk.

(2) In other words, stay away from idle and careless chatter because they directly work against living a God-approved life, and handling the word of God accurately.

b. Paul made similar exhortations in Titus and 1 Timothy.

(1) **Titus 3:9**, “But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.”

(2) **1 Timothy 6:20**, “Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge.”

c. Some examples from **1 Timothy** of worldly and empty chatter are:

- (1) fruitless discussion (*no meaningful purpose*), discussing fables, gossip, talking about things not proper to mention,
 - (2) discussing or debating controversial questions for which there is no clear or provable answer (*useless speculation*),
 - (3) disputes about the meaning of certain words in relation to God's word, the second coming of Christ, and living the Christian life.
- d. Some examples from our world today of worldly, empty chatter:
- (1) Conspiracy theories, unsubstantiated rumors, and gossip – which is information that may be true, yet either does no good or actually does harm when passed along;
 - (2) boasting, crude talk, and coarse jesting – which is an attempt to get laughs by crossing a line into foul language, sexual innuendo, or rude or racist comments;
 - (3) being critical and derogatory about someone who isn't present without going to them first with your criticism or complaint.
- e. Given the popularity of such discussions, avoiding them requires awareness, alertness, and a predetermination to avoid them.
- (1) If you cannot remove yourself, your next best option is to remain silent.
 - (2) If you are asked for your opinion, you can respectfully give an opinion of the kind of discussion taking place and why you choose to stay out of it.
 - (3) As Christians, it is in removing ourselves, or remaining silent, or giving our opinion of the kind of discussion taking place that we give those participating in such a discussion the opportunity to consider what they are doing – and possibly make a better choice in the moment, or in the future.
2. **for it will lead to further ungodliness –**
- a. Worldly and empty chatter are not the sole cause of ungodliness, nor do they make one wholly ungodly, but they do feed and encourage, and therefore increase ungodliness in those who participate in such discussions.
 - (1) The word **ungodliness** not only refers to our behavior, but also to our view of God, our submissiveness to God, our relationship with God, and the condition of our conscience.
 - (2) In other words, we cannot regularly participate in worldly and empty chatter without doing damage to our conscience, treating God as less important than He should be, ignoring

some of what God says about living a godly life, and moving away from God – rather than drawing near to Him.

(3) However, this kind of negative effect on our conscience, view of God, submissiveness to God, and relationship with God is not limited to participating in worldly and empty discussion. All sin, all repetitive foolishness, all carelessness, and all worldliness has this same kind of destructive effect on us.

- b. Therefore, as Christians, we are not only to avoid worldly and empty discussions, we are to actively pursue and participate in conversations which build up rather than tear down – which build each other's faith, encourage the discouraged, comfort the broken-hearted, remind each other of essential truths, nurture love, support the value of meaningful relationships, and exhort each other to draw ever nearer to God and to continue growing in godliness.

B. [17a] and their talk will spread like gangrene.

1. As you may recall from **vs 14** that the word **ruin** in relation to wrangling about words speaks of a slow process of destruction. The same is true in relation to worldly and empty discussions. They spread slowly yet persistently – doing serious damage to those effected.
2. It is an unfortunate reality that selfishness, foolishness, and sin spread much faster than love, sensibleness, and righteousness.
 - a. We see the truth of this in the fact that many Christians are more willing to engage in worldly and empty discussions than thoughtful, faith-building, and spiritually edifying conversations.
 - b. Therefore, the scriptures exhort us to not only avoid worldly and empty discussions, but also to pursue and participate in worthy conversations that edify those involved.

C. [17b] Among them (*those who regularly engage in worldly and empty discussions*) are Hymenaeus and Philetus, [18] men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some.

1. We don't know why Paul singled out Hymenaeus and Philetus, but we do know something about the empty, worthless, and supposedly true falsehoods they were passing around.
2. However, this kind of misleading talk was not confined to the church in Ephesus. It was also a problem in the church in Corinth.

- a. **1 Corinthians 15:12-19**, “Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? [13] But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; [14] and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain (*if He doesn't have eternal life, He can't give us eternal life*). [15] Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised (*as Hymenaeus and Philetus were saying*). [16] For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; [17] and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. [18] Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. [19] If we have hoped in Christ in this life only (*having no expectation of eternal life*), we are of all men most to be pitied (*foolish for living a die-to-self, Christ-like life*).”
- b. The falsehood circulating in the church at that time is not that there is no resurrection of any kind, but that there is no physical, or bodily resurrection at the end of the age.
- (1) The falsehood being passed around was that the Christian resurrection was only a spiritual experience – which took place at the time of one's new birth, or being born again.
 - (2) This view held that there was no resurrection of the body, and therefore, no eternal life and no eternal damnation.
 - (3) All that the Christian gains from faith in Christ is limited to this life – which is why Paul said to the church in Corinth, “If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.”
- c. It is true, however, that the scriptures speak of a spiritual resurrection – which takes place during baptism. For example:
- (1) **Ephesians 2:4-7**, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, [5] even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), [6] and raised us up with Him (*spiritual resurrection experienced in this life*), and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, [7] **so that in the ages to come** (*infernally life after death*) He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

- (2) **Colossians 3:1-4**, “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ (*spiritual resurrection in this life*), keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. [2] Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. [3] For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. [4] When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory (*bodily resurrection to eternal life*).
3. The point is, worldly and empty chatter can have elements of truth to it. What it lacks is enough truth, or it twists the truth, or it exaggerates the truth so as to be misleading.
 - a. With the advent of social media, these kinds of discussions are a growing and pervasive problem in the world.
 - b. What is truly sad, is that this has been problem since the earliest days of the church, and it continues to be a problem within the church today.
 4. Paul points out that these kinds of discussions are not without their destructive effects within the church: **“and they upset (*disturb or overturn*) the faith of some.”**
 - a. Once again, we see from the word “ruin” in **vs 14**, the words “leads to further ungodliness” in **vs 16**, the word “gangrene” in **vs 17**, and the words “upset the faith of some” in **vs 18**, that the wrong kind of discussions and conversations tear down and damage people’s conscience, view of God, relationship with God, and their commitment to the Christ-like life.
 - b. Therefore, I urge you to believe that worthless discussions and conversations are not benign. They are not without their destructive effects on the spiritual well-being of the Christians involved, and the overall spiritual health of the church.
- D. [19] **Nevertheless** (*or in spite of church folks wrangling about words, and engaging in worldly and empty chatter, and the faith of some being upset*), 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 (*depart, turn away from*) from wickedness (*that which is selfish, sinful, and ungodly*).”
1. In this context, the seal is a confirmation of what is, and this seal is made up of two confirming parts.
 - a. The first confirming part, is that God knows who belongs to Him. He knows we are His children.

- b. The second confirming part is our response to being given eternal life – that is, turning away from evil to live a godly life.
 - c. Remove one of these two confirming parts, and the seal is worthless. Both parts are required.
 - d. Jesus said it this way in **John 10:27**, “My sheep hear My voice, and **I know them**, and **they follow Me**.” (*We cannot follow Jesus and live a self-serving, sinful life at the same time.*)
2. I want to remind you that God not only knows our deeds, He knows what is in our heart – which is why He can be trusted to know the difference between those who are His and those who claim to be His, but aren’t.
 3. Our part, which is to turn away from wickedness, may not be as clear cut as God’s part, but the scriptures make it clear enough for us to know – with reasonable clarity – where we are turning away from wickedness, and where we are continuing to participate in it.
 - a. Paul said it this way in **Romans 8:12-14**, “So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—[13] for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but **if by the Spirit** you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. [14] For all who are **being led by the Spirit** of God (*lead to put to death the deeds of the flesh*), these are sons of God.”
 - b. And John said it this way in **1 John 3:7-10**, “Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; [8] the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. [9] No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. [10] **By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious**: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.”

III. Conclusion

- A. **2 Corinthians 5:14–15**, “For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; [15] and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.”