

2Timothy 24-10-20b

Let's resume our study now, we are in one of perhaps the most well-known verses in the Bible, certainly among some of us with our particular background, 2 Timothy 2.15, be diligent, bend every effort to present yourself approved to God. And this is the key to objectivity in dealing with other people in conversation, where there is the potential for strife, for ruin of the hearers, not just the person we're talking to, but those in the periphery. And you can actually have an unconsciously bad effect on people that you're not really even talking to, because so often there is a discussion between two parties, but there are other people listening.

And when it says that if you strive over words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers, plural, you wind up representing a point of view, and someone else is presenting and representing another point of view. And we can actually be enemies of the cross, we can be a stumbling block to people that we're not even talking to, because we are doing a good thing in a bad way. We're endeavoring to present the truth, but we're not doing it in love.

We're not being objective and imagining ourselves constantly in the presence of God and seeking His approval as we speak, and to bend every effort to formally present ourselves before Him approved, not ashamed, because we are creating a straight path with the word of truth. We are not creating a difficult path, and by our presentation, making it hard for someone to walk toward God, to seek out the narrow road and follow it. We have complicated the path if we don't rightly divide the word of truth, as the King James says.

We are using the word of God in a way that makes it easy to travel toward God, toward righteousness, toward faithfulness, not divisiveness, ruin, and strife. That is the context of 2.15. All of the other things we understand are certainly valid, but I don't know that we've always caught that particular emphasis in this context, because Paul is going to return to this again and again.

And we're going to see four references that bracket 2.15 to remind us, you know, the structure of a chiasm and what's important is in the middle. This isn't strictly a chiasm, although it lends itself to comparison. You can look at the seven examples of a son, a soldier, an athlete, a farmer, a workman, a vessel, and so on, those seven.

And you can compare the first and the last. You can compare the second and the second to last with profit. I don't think Paul created an intentional chiasm because some of these allusions are in passing.

He doesn't stack them like he does the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer. He very consciously puts those side by side, and they share things in common in terms of your participation in a larger group and the effect that you have. And that emphasis carries

through this entire chapter.

That's why what we speak needs to be with sensitivity to the hearers. But our objectivity comes from being conscious that we are presenting ourselves before God, even as we are speaking to people. That is the key to being objective.

Subjectivity is what gets us off track. Subjectivity, eyes on self, eyes on people, eyes on issues that we want to pound home at any cost. That is the ruin.

That is the strife. That is the poison in the well. Consciously aware of God is objectivity.

So that is what 2.15 emphasizes. But you saw this in verse 14. Do not strive about words to no profit.

We're going to see it again in verse 16. Shun profane and idle babblings. Profane doesn't mean they're laced with profanity.

You know this. Profane, in the old use of the word, means it partakes of the world and worldliness and human affairs and human concerns and human issues, social issues, political issues, international conflicts, and things that define the world that any unbeliever can occupy themselves with. If an unbeliever can do it, it's profane.

Even charity, even seeking to benefit widows and orphans. When unbelievers do it, the secular charities that are a quote-unquote worthy cause, Wounded Warriors, the St. Jude's, and there are many wonderful causes that do a great amount of worldly good. And our question becomes, there's nobody that doesn't think helping children who have cancer isn't a good thing.

Or that helping Wounded Warriors get back on their feet, Tunnel to Towers and organizations like this. There's nobody that says, oh, that's bad and they shouldn't do that. But it is important for us as believers to recognize while they are certainly worthy and are doing a good work and there are times and circumstances in which we might actively support such organizations, keep in mind the human measure of what is worthy and good, admirable, proper, necessary, is not God's measure.

Our old pastor decades ago used to say, if an unbeliever can do it, it is not the Christian way of life. And our faith, our purpose is to glorify God. Now, if we support these secular efforts at doing good and we support it with divine principles, care for the widows and orphans.

And this is the best way I can find to do that. Care for those who are in need, the disabled and wounded soldier or sailor or airman or Marine coming back from combat without all of their body parts working. This is the man in the ditch.

And I want to be a good Samaritan, but I do it because I believe God wants me to apply

my stewardship of his resources. In this cause, and if anyone asks me, why do you support that? I don't just say, well, that's obviously a worthy cause. I do it from.

Out from as an expression of my identity as a believer in Jesus Christ and a child of God, and I do it for an expression of my spiritual life. If you spend any time around wealthy people, and I have been privileged to be in the near periphery of some very wealthy people, one of the constant challenges for them is there are any number of worthy causes. I have been approached as a pastor or as a worker in a Christian organization and a Baptist foundation by pastors and ministers and evangelists the world over who are looking for resources.

Can you send us Bibles? Can you send us materials? Can you send us financial support of some kind? Many of them are no doubt genuine, worthy, but a wealthy person has to develop standards and say, I can't support everyone. This is the lifeboat that will pick any number of people out of the chilly waters who have come off the Titanic. You can't overcrowd the boat or everyone sinks.

You can't give money away to everyone or you will not be able to meet your responsibilities. And there is necessarily a process by which we identify what God has put us on the earth to do, what God has allocated resources to our stewardship to accomplish. And there are times when it is right and proper, godly and pleasing to the Lord to say no to an opportunity that isn't sinful, isn't evil, isn't improper in any way.

But it is not a part of my responsibility. It is not my assignment. And this extends beyond material stewardship to prayer, to investing time in volunteering here or there or another place.

It isn't that the cause is not worthy. We don't decide what to do based on how worthy the cause is. We decide what to do based on, is it my assignment? If I am a good soldier of Christ Jesus, I don't go do other soldiers jobs.

I don't climb into the cockpit of the helicopter and say, I think I can fly this thing. I flew one once 50 years ago. There are pilots, that's their job.

There are logistics people and supply is their job. There are riflemen and defending a forward line is their job. There are artillerymen and operating howitzers and bringing steel on target.

That's their job. It's a wonderful job. It's a necessary job.

And there are people who have that assignment. It is so important for us when opportunities are presented to us and we say, well, I can't find anything wrong with this. I guess I should do it.

No, it is not the quality of the opportunity. It is, is this my assignment? Is this what God

has asked me to do? Because I have near at hand opportunities and responsibilities. I generally have family.

I have work and I need to be faithful. And just as I need to be a workman who is not ashamed before the Lord, I need to be a workman who is not ashamed when I draw my paycheck. And I haven't abused my access to a computer with a high speed Internet connection.

And I don't shop when I ought to be working or, you know, look at the news or watch cat videos or something when I am being paid to do a job. And nothing necessarily evil about some of these other activities, but it's not my calling. That's not what I should be doing at this place at this time.

And every opportunity, there are many opportunities for good. You get appeals in the mail. If you have a mailbox, there are charities that say, won't you donate? Won't you give? Here's some address labels.

Now we've created a sense of obligation. We mailed you a dollar bill. I got a two dollar bill in the mail from someone and they know how to manipulate a human instinct to reciprocity.

Well, since you have done this for me, I need to do a little something. For you, that is not the basis upon which we make our decisions. So when it says in verse 16, shun profane, idle babblings.

This can be the presentation of opportunities or someone trying to browbeat or guilt or shame us into participating or supporting or writing a check for something. And it may not be vain and it may not be profane and it may not be unimportant or unnecessary to someone else. I'm not living my life as someone else.

I have to fulfill my God given responsibility. I have to exercise my stewardship with whatever resources God has put in my control. I am accountable to him.

So it can be the most wonderful charity with which I sympathize greatly. There are many football players that have wonderful organizations and foundations to deal with inner city children and try to keep them from going into a life of crime. God bless them.

But I don't know any of them personally. I don't live anywhere near those. And while they are as worthy as an effort can come in the secular context, I don't support them because that is not my calling.

I support the things that I am in contact with, that if God calls me on the carpet before the judgment seat and says, why did you send resources? Why did you invest time in this? I can say, here's why. From your word, there is a window in my immediate periphery, and I know that that is my responsibility. There is a need that is defined in the

word.

I am a husband. I am a father. I am a son.

I am an employee. I am a pastor. I have obligations.

And these are my priorities before you, oh, Lord. And I am doing my best to be a good steward of what I know without question is my assignment. These things that are doubtful, if I feel convicted, if I suddenly am involved, I know someone, if God brings it within my sphere of stewardship and understanding, now I can revisit that decision.

But I can't just write a check to any old charity, wonderful though it may be. I have to know that it is a part of my God given stewardship. This is why we have to shun and shun means treat it like you turned the corner and encountered a dead body and you do not want to be defiled.

You have got to stay well away, emphatically away from that, which is not a part of our spiritual life and responsibility. It's profane, not necessarily that it's ugly or evil or sinful, but that is not mine. That is not for me.

You see people doing child training badly in public. You're in the store and someone is doing all the wrong things with their child. I have great knowledge and experience in child raising, but that is not my assignment over there.

And unless there is physical harm and you need to call child protective services because there is a crime being committed, I have to let people be accountable and responsible for what they are doing. And unless God puts me in a place where I need to intervene, I'm not going to. I will shun that which is not my assignment in the spiritual realm.

And it is idle. You can do a lot of worldly good. But if God's glory is not in it.

If God is not glorified because of it, it is idle. Unbelievers do good for one another all the time. Bill and Melinda Gates have a foundation and Mark Cuban has charities and these other people do things that they consider to be wonderful.

And from a human perspective, isn't that a good thing to be done? But God is not in it. God is not part of it. And these things will perish with the using.

They do not accomplish a long term good of eternal value. They help a distressed person in a time of need. But if it isn't connected to God, if it isn't done for his sake to reflect his glory, it is meaningless.

It is human good. And it is wood, hay and stubble. Has no lasting eternal value.

And as wonderful as people think it is. And they're astonished that you don't support it or believe that it is a good that should be praised and lifted up. And have all kinds of

laudatory comments made about it.

I am not here to benefit people. I am here to be approved to God as a workman who is not ashamed in his sight. So shun that which is entirely of the world.

The world does it. The world benefits from it. But it does not partake of the divine or the eternal.

It does not reflect the glory of God in any way, shape or form. Why? It is going to increase to more ungodliness. Notice these things are not godly.

Ungodliness. Remember we saw in 1st Timothy. Great is the mystery of godliness.

And the word was Eusebia. E-U means good like Eureka. I see a good thing.

Euphonia. It's a good sound. Eusebia is a good godliness.

This is the word Asebia. Instead of E-U for good, it's the alpha privative that means it's not good. So instead of Eusebia, it's Asebia.

It's ungodly. God is not in it. God is not of it.

God is not glorified. God is not interested in it because it is human good, human works. Lord, Lord, even in your name, did we not do these things? And the Lord Jesus says, it wasn't a part of relationship with me.

I don't know you. I never knew you. Depart from me.

You say you're doing these things in my name. I call you a worker of iniquity. And they're going to end up in the darkness, which is outside, confused because they do not understand the difference between what is profane and what is godly.

And if you engage in this, you're just going to increase ungodliness. You're helping the enemy. You're diminishing the work of God in the earth.

It will increase the more ungodliness and their message, the rationale and the pitch that they make. Look at who you're helping. Look at how these disabled people are going to be better off and so on.

If God is not in it, their message, because the actions support a point of view, that secular charity is righteousness. And this message is going to inhabit space that ought to be occupied by the word of God, that we rightly handle, that we properly express, that we communicate to be approved by God. Their message is going to replace the truth.

People are going to feel good about themselves and feel no need for God's righteousness, because look at the righteousness I do. Look at the good causes I support. I'm a good person.

God's not going to condemn me. And their message will spread. It says like cancer.

This is the word from which we get the English word gangrene. It's gangrenia or something close to that. We get gangrene from this.

They didn't know cancer per se. They just knew that people could be eaten up by death and rottenness and corruption, and that's what this word is. Their message will spread like gangrene.

It will destroy healthy tissue if it isn't shunned. When someone gets frostbite and gangrene sets in when they thaw out, when someone gets an infection and gangrene sets in, what is the universal remedy? Amputation. I have to separate the gangrenous limb, the gangrenous flesh from the rest of the body, or it will kill the whole thing.

This message that there is a righteousness apart from God is gangrene. And we can unconsciously support and encourage this kind of thinking. If we don't call it out and shun it and separate from it and have no part of it.

Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort. They have strayed concerning the truth. What did Paul say in 15? Handling properly, laying a straight course, having a path that is straight and easy to follow with the word of truth.

They have strayed from the truth. They are not rightly dividing. They are not orthotomeo with the word of truth.

What is the importance of truth? What does the word of God have to say about truth? You remember this. Just in the pastorals, 1st Timothy, Titus, and here in 2nd Timothy. We saw this in 1st Timothy 2.4. God desires all people to be delivered, to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

The Lord Jesus, John 14.6 is the truth. And you cannot come to the father except through truth. 1st Timothy 2.4. God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

It is not the truth that all charity is righteousness before God or righteous in God's sight. It's just not true. It's a gangrenous message.

1st Timothy 3.15. Paul's telling Timothy, if I delay, you need to know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and ground, a foundation, a buttress, a fortress of truth. A pillar stands up and is visible from a distance. The foundation is at ground level and supports everything that you can see above it.

You have to start and finish with truth. The whole thing has to be characterized by truth. It's a pillar and a foundation.

1st Timothy chapter four, verse three, these people that have abandoned the truth, who forbid marriage, require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. You can sort out positive actions and that which ought to be shunned and prohibited if you believe and know the truth. God created all foods to be received with thanksgiving, but you've got to believe and know the truth.

If you think it's a sin, it becomes a sin because you are knowingly violating your conscience. 1st Timothy chapter six, verse five, there is constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth. Friction is inevitable.

If you contact them, there is going to be friction. They imagine that godliness is a means of gain, that if you can see a gain, that's godliness. Look, here's a person who was addicted and now they're on a palliative course.

They've substituted. They're not as addicted as they were. They're not as mentally unstable as they were.

We've counseled them. We've helped them. God is not in it.

God's not a part of it. There's no prayer. There's no word of God.

There's no spirit of God. We've just turned this person from being a kleptomaniac to not stealing things at every opportunity. And that is good.

And that's a gain. Therefore, that's godly. That's eusebia.

I've done something good by my own definition. This is a depraved mind, deprived of truth, depraved and deprived. First Timothy six, five in our own book, we just saw it in 215 and we're seeing it here in verse 18, they have strayed concerning the truth, and this leads to error that is harmful to themselves and to others.

Gangrene spreads to healthy tissue and this false teaching, they, they're not content to just believe it and go about their own business. They've got to spread it. They want to convince others.

And anytime you see a militant proselytizer, someone who is an evangelist for Calvinism or an evangelist for progressive Christianity or an evangelist for deconstruct, reconstruct, watch out. The truth draws people to itself. It doesn't go out there and try to hammer people into a change of mind.

Wisdom can stand on the street corner. We saw this in Proverbs and cry out. The Lord Jesus went to public places and began preaching, and he was a blessing to and he was accepting of those who were drawn to him by that message.

But to go out and try to find someone who thinks differently and convert them, this is

going to be a message that just spreads like gangrene. It's not healthy. Second Timothy 2.25, and this is where we have the contrast that we saw with not arguing about words to no profit, causing strife and ruin.

Look down at verse 24 and 25, a servant of the Lord must not quarrel, but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient in humility, correcting those who are in opposition. You can still provide correction, but it is presented in humility, in gentleness. It isn't striving and contentious to no profit and resulting in ruin.

Nothing wrong with speaking the truth, nothing wrong with offering correction, but it can't lead to and end up with strife, ruin, argumentation, no profit. Humility in presenting it, gentleness in the approach. We can correct those who are in opposition if God perhaps will grant them change of mind, if God can use us to present the truth in a non-confrontational way so that they will consider it and through that presentation, God grants them the opportunity to change their mind so that they may know what? What's the last word in verse 25? To know the truth.

We are advocates for truth. We want to be people of truth. We want to speak truth, live truth, represent truth.

Some truths are hard, but that is the reason we are here. The Lord Jesus is the truth and the life he has left. We are his body and we should be people of truth.

I've thought about this. I've had the opportunity and I'm not trying to use myself as an overly worthy example, but I have a really good insurance company and when a bad thing happens to one of my cars, they will offer all kinds of amenities and the repair shop will go above and beyond and they will contact us and say, we're almost finished, but here's this problem we've not yet fixed that your insurance is going to pay for. Well, you can say, hey, great.

I've actually had that problem before the bad thing ever happened to my car. They're going to fix it and it won't cost me anything. That is not being a person of truth, but it's tempting.

You say they've got it. Insurance is paying for it. The insurance is a conglomerate.

They don't care. No harm, no foul. There's no real testimony involved.

I want to be approved to God. I don't care if the insurance company knows it. I don't care if the collision repair place knows it.

We live our lives before God and we want to demonstrate ourselves. We want to formally present ourselves to God approved as people of truth. And so I will tell the insurance company, you know, that was a pre-existing condition.

That is not something the insurance company needs to pay to fix. And as easy as it would be, as nice as it would be, it's not right because it's not true. It's not a result of the mishap and insurance should not pay for it.

If I need that fixed, God is going to see me as a person of truth. He will provide extra resources because he wants to bless me because I have stood before him approved, not needing to be ashamed. And I am applying the word of truth to myself, even as I endeavor to communicate it to others.

And I've got a similar situation now. I've got something in. It had some pre-existing conditions.

And when they contact me to say, we're still trying to get this light to turn off, I'm going to say, don't that light was on before the truck got damaged. You don't need to fix that. I will handle that separately.

And I only use this because it's a convenient example. We need to be people of truth, even in small things, in minor details. It is practice.

He that is faithful in that which is least will be faithful in that which is much bigger. And we are living our lives before God, not before people. I don't care if someone knows or they don't.

That's helpful as an illustration. It's the only reason you know it. But we need to be diligent to bend every effort that we are people of truth in things large and small.

Don't shade. Don't omit. Don't fail to admit.

Be people of truth. People need to know the truth, even when we are speaking with opponents, gentleness, so that God will grant them the opportunity for repentance, leading to a knowledge of the truth themselves. We are agents of truth, representatives of truth.

We live it. We breathe it. We absorb it.

We ask the Holy Spirit to minister it to our hearts, and we hope that the light of truth will shine and others will gain that knowledge as well. What is the problem with people who fail in this regard? Look at Second Timothy, chapter three, verse seven. Chapter three, verse seven.

There are people who are living wrongly. They are deceiving gullible women and so on. Always learning, never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

I don't want to be someone who is learning, but I'm not actually learning the truth. I'm learning something, but I'm not coming to a knowledge of the truth. There is learning, but there's knowledge of the truth.

Any learning that doesn't result in a knowledge of the truth is a waste of time. And you look at the next verse, Janice and Jambres resisted Moses. These resist the truth.

How important is the truth? Over and over and over again, this is the truth. Be people of truth. Absorb the truth.

Live in the light of the truth. Let no one deceive you. Remember all the times in scripture we are told not to be deceived.

You think of this over and over and over again. We saw it in Titus. The first verse, Paul, a servant of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ for the sake of the faith of God's chosen and their knowledge of the truth.

That's why I'm an apostle is so that God's elect will know the truth. Don't be devoted to Jewish myths in 114 of Titus and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. Testimony is true.

Rebuke those sharply who oppose it in 113. Jesus said, and we've seen this so many times, Matthew 24, four and five, see that no one deceives you, that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, acknowledging that I am the Christ, and they will lead many astray.

Don't you be one of them? And he saw to it that this is recorded in three of the four Gospels. So it's in Matthew 24. It's in Mark 13, five and six.

See that no one leads you astray. Many will come saying, I am he, and they will lead many astray. It's in Luke 21, verse eight.

See that you are not led astray. Many will come in my name, claiming to represent me, claiming to acknowledge me. They will say the time is at hand.

Do not follow them. Do not go after them. Paul in first Corinthians, we saw this in chapter six, verse nine.

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Those who approve, condone and accept sexual immorality, idolatry, adultery, those who practice homosexuality are not going to inherit the kingdom. Don't let anyone deceive you that these things are OK and that they are not abominable in God's sight, as is a common belief and understanding in the progressive and postmodern church.

First Corinthians 15:33, do not be deceived. If you keep bad company, it will corrupt your good morals. Bad company corrupts good morals.

Bad teaching is going to spread like gangrene and it will take healthy tissue and destroy it. If you maintain contact with gangrene, you're going to be corrupted by it. And of course, Galatians 6, 7 and 8, be not deceived.

God is not mocked. Be not deceived. God's not kidding.

People can't flaunt God's truth. They can't ignore God's word. They can't run counter to God's plan and purpose.

His standards, His calling, His election. We have to be people of truth. Do not be deceived.

What you sow, you're going to reap. If we deny, He will deny. If we are faithless, He's going to be faithful.

And one of the things He's going to be faithful to is if you sow to the flesh, you are going to reap corruption from the flesh. It's fleshly good. It's earthly good.

It's approved and acknowledged and looked up to and praised by humanity in general. You're sowing to the flesh and you're going to reap gangrene. You're going to reap corruption.

We sow to the spirit because sowing to the spirit, we reap everlasting life. Ephesians 5, verse 6, let no one deceive you with empty words. They sound good.

I was just quoting. I never get tired of quoting Shakespeare. Life's poor player strutting his hour on the stage, strutting and fretting his hour on the stage.

Sound and fury signifying nothing. Empty words. People are in the audience watching.

He's chewing scenery. He's reciting lines. But it's a stage play.

Sound and fury signifying nothing. No ultimate eternal significance. That's the problem with human ideas of what is good.

Let no one deceive you with empty words. Because of these things, people deceive themselves into thinking are worthy and valuable. The wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

That's Ephesians 5, 6. Well, how important is the truth? There is nothing more important. It is what the Lord Jesus Christ himself embodies and what we should embody and reflect and express. Well, we'll continue here in 2 Timothy 2 next time.

We'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the clarity, the incisive truth that we find in your word, that the Holy Spirit can use as a sword to divide us asunder, to open us up so that we can see where we need improvement. Your word can be as a hammer that breaks the rocks in pieces, a fire that consumes that which is not proper, not necessary, not helpful.

We want to be those who judge themselves now and remove the wood and the hay and

the stubble so that in the day of the judgment seat of Christ, we reveal in our lives that gold and silver and precious jewel that reflects your glory and vindicates the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross on our behalf. We thank you for him and his example and we pray that we will remember by means of your Holy Spirit these truths and find the ability to implement them in our lives. We ask it in Jesus name.

Amen.