

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

2 TIMOTHY LESSON 3 (Chapters 2-3)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Timothy Sparks and Ben Bailey.

Ben Bailey:

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). I’m Ben Bailey.

Timothy Sparks:

And I’m Timothy Sparks. Welcome to our study of the Book of 2 Timothy. This lesson is being brought to you by individual members and congregations of the churches of Christ. We invite you to visit the church of Christ in your area. Let them know how much you appreciate this broadcast, and ask them to study the Bible with you. You will find people who love God supremely, and who are interested in going to Heaven. We are making these lessons available on CD or DVD. If you would like a complimentary copy, log on to our website at www.thegospelofchrist.com, fill out the request form you’ll find there, and we will be happy to send to you whatever you need. We won’t even charge you for the postage.

Ben Bailey:

Some versions of the Bible translate the text of 2 Timothy 2:15 as, “**Study** to present yourself approved....” While the thought of studying certainly would be included in the intent of the passage, the translation of “be diligent” is closer to the meaning of the original Greek word. It means “to put forth every legitimate effort.” In other words, when we come to the Word of God, we are to do the very best we can. We must be diligent in studying God’s Word. We must be diligent in our Christian example. We must be diligent in using our time properly. We must be diligent in using our talents to the glory of God. When Paul tells Timothy, “**Be diligent** to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed,” he is stressing that he does not want Timothy, or any Christian, to fall by the wayside or to give up. He wants us all to be “workers who do not need to be ashamed.” That word “worker” is important. We are not called by God merely to fill a pew. Rather, we have been called to be workers in the kingdom. We are to do everything we can to bring glory to God. And how, exactly, are we to do that? “By ‘rightly dividing [or, as some versions say, ‘handling aright’] the Word of truth.’ We are to handle the Word of God correctly.

Timothy Sparks:

If we are to be the kind of people who “rightly divide” the Word of God, this means two things. First, we must leave passages in their proper context. Second, we must not come

to specific passages to use them as “proof texts” for something that we, personally, want to try to justify. We must handle God’s Word properly, and preach and teach it so that it will convey the message as God intended it to come across. We must be honest with ourselves, and we must be honest with the Scriptures. The type of people who are honest with themselves, and who are honest with the Scriptures, are truth-seeking people. Sadly, some people have the attitude, “Well, the religion of my parents (or grandparents) was good enough for them, and it’s good enough for me!” This is not a proper attitude. We should be interested in learning about the kind of faith that **God** wants us to have—not the kind of faith that a relative or friend wants us to have. We must not hold to the doctrines of men. Christ spoke to this problem, which existed even in the first century, when He said, “And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Mt. 15:9). Paul’s instructions in 2 Timothy 2:15 are intended to urge us to be diligent, not just in our **study** of God’s Word, but also in its **application**.

Ben Bailey:

Paul also tells Timothy, “Shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness” (2 Tim. 2:16). The idea of a babbler carries with it the idea of someone who talks too much, but says too little. Paul told Timothy to “shun profane and idle babblings.” The idea of “profane” carries with it something that is contradictory to God’s Word. It is not something that is good or right, but instead is something that is incorrect and false. The idea of “idle babblings” refers to something that is, in essence, “neutral.” These are not things that are necessarily wrong, but neither are they helpful. They aren’t helpful in matters of salvation. Paul urges Timothy to shun such things, because “they will increase to more ungodliness.” In the next verse, Paul says that such things will “spread like a cancer.” Cancer frequently starts off with just a few cells, but before you know it, the entire body is afflicted. Gangrene and cancer work like this. They may start off small, but in the end, the entire body is damaged or killed. Paul specifically mentions two individuals—Hymenaeus and Philetus—who were teaching false doctrine. They advocated the idea that the resurrection for Christians had already passed. The resurrection is what our hope is all about. We read in John 5:28-29, “The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” Matthew 25:46 teaches that at the resurrection, a separation will occur. But Hymenaeus and Philetus were teaching that the resurrection had already taken place. Paul’s response to that was to say that such teachings were “profane babblings” that were untrue. **Any** teaching that has a “hint” of truthfulness to it, yet does not contain the **whole** truth of the Gospel, is like a cancer that starts off small, but then spreads and grows until it kills the body. This cancer, left unchecked, will cause numerous problems for the church.

Timothy Sparks:

In 1 Peter 4:11, Peter said, “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God.” In other words, if you are not going to speak the truth, then just be quiet. Don’t speak at all. When people speak that which is not true, it spreads like a cancer (just as the false doctrine set forth by Hymenaeus and Philetus was spreading). And it is very injurious to people’s souls. Sadly, there is much false teaching going on today. People seem to lap it up. Whether it is televangelists, or radio preachers, people seem willing to accept almost anything as the Word of God. But we must not take **man’s** word as “gospel.” We need to take only **God’s Word** as **the Gospel!** We must test everything by the Scriptures, to see

if what is being taught is correct or not. In Acts 17:11, it is said of the people of Berea, “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” The Christians in Thessalonica **could** have had something like that said about them—if they had done what the Bereans did. What did the Bereans do that elicited such a commendation? They “searched the Scriptures daily.” We are not wise if we just “take someone’s word for it.” Rather, we are to “test all things; hold fast what is good” (1 Thess. 5:21). We are instructed, “Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 Jn. 4:1). Peter wrote, “There were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed” (2 Pet. 2:1-2). Apparently, Hymenaeus and Philetus were poisoning the minds of many people, due to the fact that the people were not being diligent or “handling aright the Word of truth.”

Ben Bailey:

One of the things that you must do with cancer is cut it out so it does not spread. The same is true of the types of false doctrines being taught by people like Hymenaeus and Philetus. There is an old saying, “One bad apple ruins the whole bunch.” The same type of thing is true when it comes to false teachers. If false teaching is not rooted out, it will spread like cancer throughout the entire body of Christ. We learn from 1 Corinthians 5 and 2 Thessalonians 3:6 that there can be a time when we have to “mark” certain people for their false teachings or actions. According to 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15, we are not even to associate with such people. But such an action on our part is not done out of meanness, or to be spiteful. Rather, we are to treat such people as a brother—hoping that they will repent. In order to stop false teaching, we must handle aright the Word of Truth, and we must withdraw our fellowship from those who are propagating the false fellowship, so that they are not treated as faithful children of God and given more opportunities to spread their error. We must let the false teachers know that we will not sit by quietly and allow such teaching to take place, because it is at odds with the Word of God. We must make sure that they understand they are not welcome in our fellowship as long as they insist on teaching such error. False teachings (like the ones that Hymenaeus and Philetus were spreading) can cause people to lose their souls. Hymenaeus and Philetus had caused people to stray from the faith. We today must be alert to teachers like them who similarly cause people to stray from the faith. God takes false teaching **very** seriously—a fact that is made clear throughout both the Old and New Testaments. Such teaching was dealt with quickly and openly. We should act in a similar fashion today. True, we must have love. In 1 Timothy 1:4, Paul told Timothy not to “give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.” Why did Paul command this? Verse 5 provides the answer: “Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith.” When we find it necessary to correct someone, we must do it out of love. Paul taught in Ephesians 4:15 that we must “speak the truth in love.” Yes, we may have to deal with error. But we must do it in the proper way.

Timothy Sparks:

In 2 Timothy 2:19, Paul says to Timothy, “Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’” If we are a follower of Christ (“everyone who names the name of Christ”), then we must abstain from iniquity. We must not “entangle ourselves in the affairs of this world” (2 Tim. 2:4). Paul wants Timothy (and us) to know that we stand on a firm foundation, because “the Lord knows those who are His.” From 1 Corinthians 3:11, we learn, “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” If you build your house on the Rock that is Jesus Christ, then when the wind, rains, and floods of life come, your house will stand firm. But if you build your house on the false, shifting teachings of men, then your house will suffer the same fate as the house of the foolish man whom Jesus discussed in Matthew 5:26-27. Jesus commented about that man’s house, “And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof” (vs. 27). If we make Christ our foundation, then the structure (our faith) that we build upon that Rock will last throughout our lives.

Ben Bailey:

In 2 Timothy 2:20, Paul says, “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor.” Paul acknowledges that there are various types of vessels, and that they can all be used “for honor.” But they first must be cleansed (vs 21). Different types of vessels can be used in different ways, but they must be clean in order to be useful. In this section in 2 Timothy 2, we find a discussion about Christian purity. Paul has just completed a section on purity in teaching, and now he launches into a section on purity in our lifestyles. Paul says, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife” (vs. 22). God can use us as a vessel of honor. Our whole purpose in life is to glorify Him. Isaiah 43:7 says, “Everyone who is called by My name, Whom I have created for My glory.” As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:31, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” Paul’s point is that if you will cleanse yourself of sin and uncleanness, then God can use you to His glory. What a wonderful idea that is! In 1 Timothy 1:15-16, Paul said,

“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.”

Paul had been an accessory to murder. He had dragged Christians from their homes, and no doubt many of them had died as a result. Paul had been an evil person. Yet when Christ came into his life, he cleansed his life of sin and began living daily for God. Look how God ended up using Paul! This is why Paul could say that he was “a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.” What about **you**? There is no limit to how God can use you, and your talents, if you will decide to live your life for Him.

Timothy Sparks:

As Paul enters into chapter 3, he is talking about the way we choose to live our lives. In verses 1-5, he says,

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, un-

thankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!”

Some people are not interested in living for God, but want to pursue their own interests instead. They are “in it for themselves.” Perilous times are ahead, says Paul. Later in this same chapter, Paul goes on to note, “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus **will** suffer persecution” (vs. 12). We today live in perilous times, too. We live in a nation where people are leaving the foundation of God’s Word. Marriage is no longer held in esteem, as three out four marriages fail. God established, as early as Genesis 2, that one man and one woman should be together for life. In Matthew 19, Jesus reiterated that original teaching, and emphasized that divorce was not a part of God’s plan. He said, “Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Mt. 19:6). When we leave the foundations of God’s Word, we do indeed enter “perilous times.” Divorce is commonplace. Homosexuality is rampant (yet is condemned by God, as is evident from the account of Sodom and Gomorrah, and passages such as Romans 1 and 1 Corinthians 6). Abortion—the murder of an innocent child—has been made legal. Yet God specifically states, “These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood” (Prov. 6:16-17). Women, we are told, “should have their own choice.” What about **God’s** choice?! Doesn’t God have any say-so in what happens to the child He Himself has created?

Ben Bailey:

In 2 Timothy 3:5, Paul says that some people “have a form of godliness but deny its power. And from such people turn away!” These are people who say things that “appear on the surface” to be right, yet who actually are teaching error. Paul’s command is to “turn away” from such people. Paul then provides an example. He says, “[Just] as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith” (vs. 8). God does not take false teaching, or false teachers, lightly! He takes both **very** seriously, in fact. We don’t know much about Jannes and Jambres, but we do know that they were men who “resisted the truth.” At the heart of the perilous times in which we live, we most assuredly will find people who “resist the truth.” But it is so encouraging when Paul says, “But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (vss.14-15). Paul’s point is that we **can** know such things as what we learned, and from whom we learned them. We **can** know “the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make us wise.” What is it that will get us through the perilous times in which we live, and that will help us chart our path through dark times? It is the Word of God! We learn from Psalm 119:105, “Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.” The text of 2 Timothy 3:15 contains an important message for parents when it says that “from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” The word “childhood” in the Greek indicates “from a very young age.” As soon as our children are able to begin learning, we must begin to teach them the Word of God. We must teach them to love the Bible, to learn the Bible, and to live the Bible. Parents can do their children no greater a disservice than to fail to teach them the Word of God, and to live the Word of God through a proper parental example. Only the Word of God will get us, and our children, through perilous times.

Timothy Sparks:

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Paul addresses the inspiration of God's Word when he says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." Paul uses the Greek word *theopneustos* for "inspired," which means that God "breathed" His Word. The Bible is the Book that God breathed! The Bible is the only Book that comes **from** Heaven, and is the only Book that can lead us **to** Heaven! What separates the Bible from all other books is the inspiration of God that stands behind it. We are not talking about the type of "inspiration" that would be typical of man-produced works like Shakespeare or Chaucer. We are not talking about writings produced by someone who had great literary ability or who was "in tune with the times." We are talking about **God's Word**—which is true, reliable, inerrant, and infallible. Some have suggested that the Bible contains errors and contradictions. Jesus, however, said, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (Jn. 17:17). How much room does **that** leave for errors and contradictions? The psalmist wrote, "The sum of Your Word is truth" (Ps. 119:160). That means that **all** of God's Word is true. Again we ask, "How much room does that leave for errors and contradictions?" There is **no** room for such error or contradictions. God has not only **inspired** His Word, but He also has **preserved** His Word for us today. We **can** know what God's Word and will are for our lives.

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR 2 TIMOTHY LESSON 3 (CHAPTERS 2-3)

1. What is the meaning of the word “diligent” in 2 Timothy 2:15?
2. Everything we do as Christians is intended to bring glory to God. According to this lesson, what is one of the ways we can do that?
3. If we want to “rightly divide” the Word of God, there are two things we must not do. What are those two things?
4. What did Jesus mean when He said, “In vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Mt. 15:9)?
5. What is the difference between a “profane babbling” and “idle babblings”?
6. Explain the impact that John 5:28-29 has on the false teachings that were being propagated by Hymenaeus and Philetus.
7. What did Peter mean when he wrote, “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11)?
8. Why were the Christians in Berea considered by Paul to be “more fair-minded” than the Christians in Thessalonica?
9. Explain the connection between 1 Thessalonians 5:21 and 1 John 4:1.
10. What did Paul command Christians to do in regard to false teachers who refused to repent of the error of their ways?
11. Paul told Timothy about “a solid foundation of God.” What was the “seal” of that solid foundation?
12. If Christians find themselves in a situation where they must withdraw their fellowship from a brother or sister, what should be the ultimate goal of such an action?
13. In 2 Timothy 2:21, Paul remarked, “If anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.” What was the apostles’s point in making such a comment?
14. Explain exactly how Paul was a “pattern for salvation” (1 Tim. 1:15-16).
15. List some of the things that Paul mentioned in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 as causing “perilous times.”
16. Who are the people of whom Paul spoke in 2 Timothy 3:5 who had “a form of godliness, but deny its power”?
17. What does the Greek word *theopneustos* mean? How does this apply to the inspiration of the Bible?