

The Danger Of Doctrinal Error – Part 2

2 Timothy 2:19-26

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As I've introduced the book just about every Wednesday night, Paul is in prison. He's writing his last words to his young protege, Timothy. Paul's in Rome in prison. He's not expected to live, and in this first chapter he encouraged Timothy to, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example," and he encouraged him to, "...stir up the gift of God, which is in thee," and so forth; but in 2 Timothy 2, and we're kind of in the thick of it tonight when we'll wrap it up, is that Paul is giving Timothy pictures of the pastor. He's doing that because there were false teachers who had come into the church in Ephesus where Timothy was the pastor. He wanted Timothy to know truth from error. He met with these same elders in Ephesus in Acts 20 and said, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock," and some will lead people astray. They will come even from your own midst.

It's so prevalent today. There's so many false teachers that are in the church but are not really of the church. You see, the church that we're going to see in the text tonight, the church visible or the church that is professing, is made up of wheat and tares. It's a metaphor for true believers and false believers. Just because a person is a member of a church or attends a church or has been baptized doesn't mean that they have really been born again and become a part of "the church," the body of Christ, and it's important that we make that distinction.

The pictures that we've seen thus far are that of a soldier (verse 3). The pastor is in a spiritual war. He's a soldier, and we as believers are also soldiers in the Lord's army. He is not to get entangled with the affairs of this life and wants to please Him who has called him. The minister is likened unto an athlete in verse 5. He's to run the race and keep the rules. Thirdly, he is to be a farmer (verse 6) and is to sow the seed, the Word of God, and it brings forth the fruit.

Last Wednesday night we saw the fourth picture or image, and it was that of the workman (verses 14-18). Let's go back and read it again. He says, "Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit," it won't help them if they wrangle and argue and quibble over words that are not important, "but to the subverting of the hearers." The word "subverting" comes from a Greek word that we get our word catastrophe from, so it brings shipwreck to them spiritually. I'm going to point that out more in just a moment. He exhorted young Timothy, this pastor, to "Study to shew thyself approved," and the word "study" means be eager, be zealous, be devoted. It doesn't mean open your books and study Greek, Hebrew, the history, and the background of the Scriptures. It means actually be eager, be excited, be devoted to being, "...a workman," there's the image there, "that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 16 But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness," that is, these vain babblings, which is empty chatter, useless discussions, will increase or cause a growth in the area of ungodliness. 17 And their word will eat as doth a canker," where we get our word gangrene from the word used there translated "canker." It's an infection of the blood. "...of whom is

Hymenaeus and Philetus,” he names these two false teachers that had come into the church at Ephesus. “Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.”

I confess to you it's very difficult for me not to preach this whole passage again a second time. If you've ever taught the Bible, you never feel like you do it justice or really do a service to the text, and it often frustrates me. Actually, last Wednesday night I went home and studied the text again until about midnight before I went to bed and felt like I wish that I could really do it justice and make it clear. This is such an important passage, but the imagery or the picture there is that of a workman, rightly dividing, cutting straight, the Word of truth. Notice what he is to handle: “...the word of truth,” which is sacred Scripture or the Word of God.

It's interesting that there are some basic things that we learn in this workman image that I will go back and share, I want to point out; that is, the kind of work the Christian workman does is teaching. He is called to handle God's Word of truth. I continue to be very clearly convinced that the pastor's, the elders of the church, their number one job and responsibility is biblical preaching and teaching. The church is to be a learning place. It's to be a place where we hear the Word of God. There's a shift right now in contemporary Christianity, and that shift is toward music and worship. Now, we are called to worship and that's our highest priority, but we can't worship God rightfully or truthfully if we don't know who God is. It must start with the Word of God. There's a lot of churches that are all about worship and all it's all exciting, but they don't know Who they worship or why they worship. They don't even know what's going on. It's more of an emotional experience. It's all about the emotion and the experience. They are not really focusing on who God is and worshiping Him in truth.

In John 4, Jesus said, “...and they that worship him,” those who are truly worshiping God, “must worship him in spirit and in truth.” You can't sacrifice that truth. You must know the God in whom you worship, so it's to be a teaching ministry; and in handling God's Word, the pastor-teacher is to rightly divide it or cut it straight. I talked about some principles of how to properly interpret Scripture. Remember, the Bible is the authority—not tradition, not reason, not experience; and remember the context—always take a text in its context. This whole chapter is talking about false teachers and the need for real true teachers of the Word.

Thirdly, I pointed out, remember the text of Scripture has only one meaning and should be interpreted literally. It doesn't mean that there aren't metaphors or similes or figures of speech or allegory, but you take those into consideration. You basically approach the Scripture as God said what He meant and meant what He said. There can be a danger in what's called hyperliteralism. That's when you have an allegory or metaphor or parable and you read into it what it was never intended to have. Whenever you're studying the Bible, ask yourself what kind of literature am I in? You say, “Well, what do you mean by that? Isn't all the Bible the Word of God?” Yes. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” but the Bible contains different styles of literature. We call it genre. There's history, poetry, prophecy, the epistles of Paul and the general epistles (they are what's called didactic or doctrinal, they are instructional), so you have to ask yourself, “What kind of material am I in? Am I in the Old Testament or am I in the New

Testament? Who was this book written to? What's the historical setting? What's the context of the verse?" There are hundreds of preachers taking hundreds of verses and hundreds of sermons out of context. They're not rightly dividing the Word of truth because they don't take these things into consideration and they're not slave to the text.

When a preacher preaches a text, there are two ways he can approach it. First, he can have an idea. This is what's very popular today. (I said I wouldn't go into this. I haven't even got to my verses yet.) This is what he's doing today—this is kind of my passion—is he has an idea and he flips through the Bible to find something to support what he wants to say. That's a very common way to preach. The other way to preach that's more biblically centered—expositional preaching—is that he goes to a text first and finds out what the text says and means, and then preaches that text, and preaches its meaning in its historical, grammatical, and theological context. I propose that the majority of Christians sitting in churches today don't know the difference. All they know is whether the preacher is funny or entertaining or captivating or exciting or has a great personality, and they read some verses to justify it's a Christian message. They don't really teach the Word. They don't rightly divide the Word of truth, and that's so important today. That's the only way the church can become healthy and we can bring glory to God and light to the world, and I will move on.

The second point I wanted to make about this workman was that there are two kinds of workmen—those who are approved and those that are ashamed. We're going to see also in our text tonight in verse 20 that there are vessels of honor, those are the ones that are approved; and there are vessels of dishonor, those are the ones that are going to be ashamed. Come judgment day before the Bema, the rewards seat of Christ, there are going to be preachers who are going to be ashamed because they didn't rightly divide the Word of truth, and then there are other preachers that will be approved by their Master because they faithfully taught the truth of God's Word.

The third observation I would say is the difference between these two categories concerning how they treated the Word of God, the Scriptures, and the good deposit; so they're workmen handling God's Word, they'll either be approved or ashamed, and it's based upon how they handled God's Word and whether or not they rightly divided God's Word.

Now, we come to verse 19. At the end of verse 18 Paul actually said to Timothy, "Who concerning the truth," these two, Hymenaeus and Philetus, "have erred," so they are the false teachers. They are the ones who will be ashamed—listen to me carefully—they won't get the approval of God, they are not vessels of honor (we're going to see that tonight), and they are teaching things that aren't true. So, "Who concerning the truth have erred," that means they've missed the mark, they didn't cut it straight, "saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some." Most likely, they're saying that there's no future bodily resurrection and overthrown the faith of some.

Notice now the change in verse 19, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of

Christ depart from iniquity.” Let’s go on and read the passage. “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. 21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.” So, Timothy, you’re to, “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” The image here now goes to the pastor or the minister of God, the teacher of God’s Word, of being a vessel. There’s this big house and in this great house there are different kinds of vessels. I’ll go back to that, but go back with me to verse 19, “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure.”

There’s an intended contrast between verses 14-18, especially the end of verse 18 where, “and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure,” in other words, Jesus said, “I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” I confess that there are times I look around at the church, universal, and I get discouraged because of the lack of good teaching and preaching and the sad, sorry plight of Christianity in so many places. We need to understand that in this professing church there are wheat and there are tares, so there are genuine and there are false. There’s the real deal and there are those who aren’t the real deal, but as far as the real deal goes (verse 19), “the foundation of God standeth sure,” so in the true church, they’re on a foundation built upon Jesus Christ and God’s Word, and it’s a sure foundation.

Now, they have this seal, those that are true believers. The word “seal” there speaks of three things. It speaks of ownership, security, and a guarantee. Do you know the Bible tells us that all Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise and we’re sealed unto the day of redemption. The moment you are born again, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside of you. That’s the indwelling. Do you know what else the Holy Spirit does for you the moment you are saved? And, by the way, when He does it, you don’t feel anything. You say, “Whoohooo! I just got sealed. That was awesome!” There’s no sensation of, “I just felt it.” Now, I’m all for feeling, and God has created us with emotions, but emotionalism is not the same as being spiritual. You can be all emotional and not even be a Christian. You don’t have to be a Christian to be emotional, so we need to be careful that we don’t get into emotionalism and that we love God with all our heart, with all of our soul, with all of our strength, with all of our mind. The Bible says that the moment you are saved, and here’s another thing a lot of Christians don’t do, they don’t take the time to understand all that happened to them the moment they were born again. Pretty much the extent of it is, “I got saved! My sins are forgiven! I’m going to heaven.” No. There’s a whole lot of other marvelous blessings that happened to you the moment you were saved—you were taken out of darkness and translated into light, you were made a child of God, you were sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, and you were taken out of Adam and placed into Christ.

The sealing of the Holy Spirit speaks of three things. It speaks of ownership. It was a mark of ownership, so these are the real deal. They belong to God. It speaks of security. Cut it whatever you want, you can’t get around this that when a letter was sealed with a seal, no one could break the seal except the sender and the receiver. In our salvation, God is both the

sender and the receiver, and God's not going to break that seal. It speaks of the believer's security. We're sealed unto the day of redemption. It's also a guarantee, and this is a really cool concept. Do you know when God gives you the Holy Spirit the moment you're born again, you're sealed with the Holy Spirit? Do you know what it is? It's God's engagement ring. What's an engagement ring? It's an intention that we're going to get married. It's a sign of we're serious about this. It's a pledge or a promise, "Will you marry me?" "Yes, I'll marry you. Here's an engagement ring," and you get all excited and the date may be set. Even if the date isn't set, you know you're going to get married. You're engaged. It's a pledge of a commitment. What God does is gives you a downpayment. The word engagement ring is downpayment, so God gives you this engagement ring and one day you're going to be wed to Christ in heaven. It's a guarantee that you will go to heaven and be with Christ. So, He has this seal that the Lord knows those that are His. And then he says, "And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

I want you to note something important in verse 19. There is the divine side, God's knowledge—He knows them that are His. Do you know that only God knows people's hearts? You can look around this church group here tonight and we don't really know who are saved and who are lost because God alone knows the heart. You might come every week and might look really like a Christian and you fool me and everyone else, and everybody thinks you're saved, but God sees your heart and knows that you're not. The Lord knows those that are His. If you belong to God, and you're His, that's a precious thought—He knows I belong to Him. He knows my name. He's chosen me by His grace. This is what we call the sovereign elective purposes of God in the divine side. Notice the next statement, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." That is the human side, so there we have the balance. You have the divine side, the Lord knows those that are His, and we have the human side.

How do we determine who are saved and who are not saved? By observing their life, by the way they live, by the words that come out of their mouth, by their attitudes, by their actions. We observe the way a person lives. If they're living a godly life, if they're living a holy life, and we can say, "I see the fruit of the Spirit in their life. I really believe they're saved. I can't see their heart, but I can see the fruit of their life." The Lord knows those that are His, but we only know by looking at a person's life, so there's to be the living. The Bible says that we're to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. It doesn't say to work for your salvation, that's impossible; but once God works in salvation, then we work it out by the way that we live. I love this statement here, it speaks of the divine side—the Lord knows those that are His—and it speaks of the human side—if you are a Christian, the child of God, then you need to depart from iniquity. In the context, I believe that that iniquity is false teaching that results in false living. Bad doctrine leads to bad living and bad behavior, so you need to depart from that iniquity.

Just a little footnote, at the end of verse 19, when Paul says, "And, Let every one the nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity," and "The Lord knoweth them that are his," it's taken from the book of Numbers. There are two references there from Numbers. The first is from Numbers 16:5, "The Lord knoweth them that are his," and the second Scripture is actually taken from Numbers 16:26, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

Here's the context of where it's taken from the book of Numbers when Korah and Dathan and Abiram actually rebelled against Moses and his leadership. Moses actually says, "The Lord knows those that are His. Let every one who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity," and he put them in two groups. There was this rebellion against the leadership of Moses, and Moses said, "Okay, whoever's on the Lord's side, come over here. Whoever is on Korah's side, you go over there, and may the Lord make it clear who's right and who's wrong." Do you know the story? The Bible says that the earth began to shake under their feet and the earth opened up and Korah and Abiram and Dathan and his group all got sucked right down into the ground. The earth opened up, sucked them into the ground, and then it closed back up. I can imagine Moses saying, "Okay, who else wants to rebel?" Wouldn't it be amazing if God dealt with church divisions like that today? You know, "Everybody on this side," and "everybody on that side. Whoever is wrong, may the Lord take care of..." SWOOP! the ground opens up and half the church is sucked into a pit. The earth opens up, and they're gone. Thank God, He doesn't do that, but it did happen then.

How about in the book of Acts when Ananias and Sapphira conspired to lie to the Holy Spirit and to make as though they were giving all of the proceeds from their property. They were actually struck dead in their service and were drug out by the ushers. The Bible says, "And of the rest durst no man join himself to them," the church. It's like, "Man, they're dying at that church. God takes that serious. Don't mess around!" This Scripture is actually a draw from the book of Numbers there at the end of verse 19.

In verse 20, Paul gets into this image or metaphor, there is a great house. I believe the "great house," and I'll try my best to just kind of explain the text and not get too sidetracked because I don't want to preach as long as I have on Wednesday nights lately. The "great house" is the professing church, not the church, the professing church. You say, "Well, what's the difference?" The difference is the professing church or the visible church has people who are saved and are not saved. When you come to this local church, just because someone comes into this building doesn't mean they're born again, it doesn't mean they're saved. The professing church is made up of wheat and tares. Jesus said in Mark 13 that they'll grow together and you can't tell the difference, but God will come and separate them—He'll separate the wheat from the chaff. This "great house" is a picture.

This is actually what's called a metaphor. Paul is using a picture of a large estate, a house. He says, "In a great house there are not only vessels," or containers. The word "vessel" is used of any kind of a container. It could be a glass, a dish, a bowl, and there are vessels in these great large houses, "of gold and of silver," and there are other vessels that are made "of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour." What does he mean by this great house and these two kinds of vessels? I believe that the vessels of gold are the vessels to honor, and they are true, faithful preachers and teachers of the Word. He's not talking about individual believers, though it does have application to them; but in the context, he's talking about false teachers—true and false teachers—and just mentioned Hymenaeus and Philetus erred concerning the truth and their false doctrine, so the whole context is true and false. It's just another metaphor he's using to drive home this point, and he's using a homely illustration.

You're home right now at your house, and if we went into the kitchen and opened up...there may be beautiful china. It just sits there and you hardly ever use it. Maybe if the pastor comes over for dinner you get out the china. You want to impress him, but there's also Tupperware, and maybe paper cups. There is very expensive, very fine utensils and then there are those that are less expensive that the kids can go out and put dirt in and make mud pies with and it's not a big deal. He likens these different utensils and these vessels in this great house to the true teachers of the Word who rightly divide the Word of truth and who will be approved by God. They are vessels of honor. They are gold and silver. To the false teachers, who don't rightly divide the Word of truth, they are vessels to dishonor, and they will be ashamed one day when they have to give an account unto God.

In Acts 9:15, when Ananias was called to go to pray for Saul who had been converted on the way into Damascus, He actually told Ananias that Saul was "a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles." The Bible uses this concept of those who are serving God or used by God as a vessel, an instrument for God's purpose. In 2 Corinthians 4:7 (if you want to write that down), Paul's talking about ministers and likens them unto pottery or clay pots. In the image there, he's not talking about truth or error or real teachers or false teachers, he's talking about the frailty of the teacher and that God actually uses cracked pots; so if God's using you, you're a crack pot and God just uses you to glorify Himself. Again, you're a vessel and God fills you and then God uses you. I do believe, and I for years, I believe, misunderstood this passage and thought that it was just a general reference to believers that we're all the vessels of the Holy Spirit, and I believe that now it's more accurately to interpret it a reference to true and false teachers.

Notice what Timothy is supposed to do. Paul says, "If a man therefore purge himself from these," what are the "these" that Timothy is to purge himself of? He's to purge himself from the false teachers. He's to purge himself (verse 20) from those that are "wood and of earth," those vessels that are to dishonor, that are false teachers. So, "You get away from them. You purge yourself from them." Then, "...he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet," fit "for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." So, he's to, "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Now, there's some amazing instruction for the pastor here, and I believe it has application as well to the believer; that is, you should stay away from false teachers. Don't affiliate with them, don't associate with them, don't accompany yourself with them. There's no way that you can avoid them entirely because, again, in the professing church there's the true and there's the false. But when you know that they're false teachers, you're not to be supporting their ministry or working along with them, so you're to purge yourself from these. What happens then is that you become a vessel unto honor. Again, the whole chapter, you're rightly dividing the Word, you're going to be approved of God.

Notice these three things in verse 21. A good minister is sanctified, which means holy, set apart or consecrated to God, living a holy life, and they're fit for the master's use. God wants to use a holy vessel—fit and ready to be used. What an awesome privilege that is to be used by God. And (verse 21), they're "prepared unto every good work." I think that every pastor should

have a desire to be that, set apart, that he should want to be fit for God's use, and prepared for God to use him for a good work. Every believer should want the same thing. We should want to live holy lives, we should want to be fit for God's use, and we want to be prepared for whatever God calls us to do. If God has a job for you, you want to be ready, right? "Here am I, Lord, send me." You want to be fit and ready to be used by God.

The vessel must be clean as well as fit and prepared, so he tells him (verse 22) to do two things, "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness," now here again is the negative and the positive. The word "flee" actually means to run from danger. It was actually used when Moses fled from Pharaoh and feared his wrath in Egypt. It was actually used when Mary and Joseph took the Baby Jesus and fled to Egypt to get away from the wrath of Herod. It has the idea of running from danger. That's the negative. The vessel must be clean.

Back in verse 19 it says, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his," but notice how verse 19 ended, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Now, jump down there to verse 22, "Flee also youthful lusts," now, don't misunderstand that statement "youthful lusts." If you are maybe in your forties, fifties, sixties, or seventies, you say, "Phew! That doesn't apply to me. I'm not a youth anymore." You can be in your eighties and still be yielding to youthful, lustful desires. By the way, when it uses that term "youthful lusts," the minute we hear the word "lust" we think of perverted sexual lust, but it doesn't just mean that. It could be pride, greed, selfishness, self-centered ambition, your sinful ego, unforgiveness, or jealousy. It's those sins of youth that it's a sad thing when elderly men or women get involved in sins that should be forgotten or dropped a long time ago in their lives. He's warning Timothy. By the way, it's believed that Timothy, who he's writing these words to, was about 35 years of age. He was still considered pretty youthful, so he says, "Avoid these youthful desires," so you flee.

Notice now the positive, follow. Let me give you a principle that's clear from the Scriptures. For you to live a holy life, it takes a negative and a positive. You can't just follow, you must flee. You must say no to sin and run from it, and you must say yes to righteousness and follow after it. Actually, the word "follow" is the antithesis, it's the opposite, of the word "flee." If flee means run away from danger, follow means to pursue after, go after, and seek after. So, you want to live a holy life? You want to live a godly life? You want to live a righteous life? Then, you have to actually make an active attempt to flee from sinful desires and then give it all you've got to pursue and to run after good and godly desires. Remember when Paul was writing to the believers in Philippi and said, "...forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth," or I strain, the same concept from the Greek. I reach, I agonizo, I try to reach "for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." That's what all of us need to do. It's not just for pastors. We need to say, "No," to sin and "Yes," to these things. Notice it in the text, "...righteousness," that's living a right life before God and man, and "faith," we're not real sure what kind of faith Paul has in mind here, but no doubt, trusting in God, believing in God.

I believe that as Christians we should grow in our dependence on God. I like that concept that Paul is telling Timothy as a pastor, "You need to grow in your dependence and reliance upon

God living by faith. The Bible says, “The just shall live by faith,” and the King James Bible translates it, “charity,” but it’s the word love, agape. So, you “follow righteousness,” you try to grow in “faith,” and you follow “love,” that would be love for God and love for people. That’s the mark of a true believer, and “peace.”

This Sunday we look at the Beatitude, “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.” We are to be following after peace with God and with others, and we’re to do it (verse 22), “with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” You do it in concert with others. You do it in community with others. You do it in fellowship with other believers. You can’t live a good godly life apart from believing friends and fellowship of the saints.

We move in the last picture (verses 23-26) to that of the servant. He says, “But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. 24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, 25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; 26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.” I want you to notice in verse 24, here’s the sixth and last picture of the pastor. He is to be a servant. The word “servant” in the Greek is the word *doulos*. It literally means slave, not just slave but bondsman. A bondsman was a slave by choice. He voluntarily gave himself to his master for life. There was no opting out. You voluntarily said, “I love my master. I want to serve my master.” They would put a ring in your ear, and you would become a *doulos*, a bondsman. By the way, all believers are likened unto *doulos*’, bondsmen. You are to be a servant of Jesus Christ. You are not your own. You have no property of your own. Everything you are—your time, your talent, your treasure—all belongs to God, and you’re to be His servant, His *doulos*, His servant, His slave, actually.

You’re not to strive over questions. It’s interesting and very practical. He seems to keep coming back to this theme in this chapter about foolish and unlearned questions which gender strife. Don’t get into silly arguments is what he’s saying. They just gender strife and tension, but if you’re a servant of the Lord, you “must not strive; but” you must be marked by gentleness (verse 24). Jesus was kind and gentle with those that he dealt with. And, you must be able to instruct. You have to be gentle, you have to be kind, and you gotta be patient. This is a challenge, but we need to be patient, we need to be kind, and we need to be gentle with others. Again, Jesus was our example; and then, the positive—teaching, instructing, and patience.

In verse 25 Paul tells him to be meek, “instructing those that oppose themselves,” those who are contrary to the truth, those false teachers, “if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth,” in other words, God might open their heart, open their eyes, and they surrender their will and obediently come back to God and get grounded and growing in the truth. It’s so very important. “And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil,” I want you to notice in verse 26 who’s behind false teachers—the devil. It’s in the Bible. It would be very foolish to not believe that there’s a personal devil who opposes and resists God and is using his instruments, these vessels, these men who don’t rightly divide the

Word of truth. They're instruments of the devil, these false teachers; and they have been "taken captive by him at his will."

Good Greek scholars are uncertain as to that closing statement in verse 26, whether or not those "who are taken captive by him at his will," is a reference to satan has taken them, the false teachers, captive at his, satan's will, or whether or not God grants them repentance and he's talking about true repentance, they come back and God takes them captive by His will. Either way, we can't be sure about how that's to be interpreted, but satan is involved with these false teachers. You know, the first recorded statements in the Bible from the mouth of the devil are in Genesis 3:1. Do you know what the words were that came out of the devil's mouth the first time it ever speaks in the Bible? You say, "You want us to know what the devil said?" Yeah. I want you to know what the devil said. He actually questioned God's Word. He said, "Did God really say that?" And why is that important? Because that's what he's always attacking—God's Word. "Did God really say that? Is the Bible really God's Word? Is it really important for you to read, study, believe in the Bible? How do you know the Bible's really God's Word?" His number one point of attack is God's Word, and if he can get people to teach false doctrine in the name of the Lord, in the name of being pastors, then he deceives people. He leads people astray. It's so very important.

The imagery or the pictures that we saw in this chapter by way of quick review, the soldier (verse 3), the athlete (verse 5), the farmer (verse 6), the workman (verses 14-18), the vessel (verses 19-22), and the servant. One thing they all have in common? Hard work. It's hard to be a soldier. It's hard to be an athlete. It's hard to be a farmer. It's hard work being a workman. The vessel has to be clean and pure. The servant must be gentle and patient, but all of it is difficult and challenging. All of it is a picture of what a pastor's to be and to do in light of false doctrine and false teaching. Again, this is a passage that a lot of people either misunderstand, misinterpret, or they avoid altogether. It's important to understand what a pastor's supposed to be and to do, but let me close by saying this: All of these are to be true of every one of us as believers. You are to be a soldier. You are to rightly divide this Word of truth. You are running a race, you are an athlete. You are to be sowing God's seed as a farmer sharing the good news, the gospel of Jesus Christ. You are to be a vessel that is clean, fit for the master's use, and you are to also be a servant, a *doulos*, a slave of Jesus Christ. Amen?