

Title: Foundational Issues
Date: May 13, 2018
Subject: Believers are to deal gently with unbelievers
Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:14 - 26

Jean and I just got back from a trip to Washington, D.C. with son Nate and his wife Sierra. The first place we visited was Fort McHenry, the site where the flag was flown that inspired Francis Scott Key to write The National Anthem. The flag was made of wool and measured 30 x 42 with each stripe 2 feet wide. It had 15 stripes. The fort commander wanted to make sure the British would be able to see it. It required 11 men to hoist the flag and a enormous pole to withstand its size. The pole was sunk deep in the ground and a cross piece was added to help stabilize the pole. They sought a secure foundation.

We're in a battle for truth but we don't have to be nervous in the service of the Lord. God has established a solid, secure and safe foundation in Christ and his Word. This is the main point that forms the brackets for the paragraph in 2 Timothy beginning in v. 14. READ

I. The foundation is secure 14 - 19

The foundation is the church of God which is based on God's truth. The Lord established the church in and through His Son Jesus Christ. He's placed his seal, his stamp of ownership, on this living breathing organism. He shouts from the heavens "These belong to me!" They're sealed until the day of total redemption when Christ comes again.

This is one of the things of which Christ followers need reminding. The phrase in v. 14 refers to what was written previously and what comes after. We shouldn't view it as a problem that we need to be reminded. It's kind of a nice thing. Unlike the man who'd been married for 40 years whose wife said she wished he'd tell her that he loved her, that he'd remind her. He responded by saying that he said he loved her when they got married and that if things had changed he would have let her know. It's good to hear things over and over. It's beneficial to hear things over and over. Cuz we get forgetful.

We also need to be reminded to let the Word of God speak. It's a constant theme in the book. Two weeks ago we saw that God's Word is unchained. The idea comes up again at the end of chapter 3 and then again in the beginning of chapter 4.

To let the word of God speak to us or through us we need to be familiar with it. There's a saying that's used when a so-so athlete makes a remarkable play: "even a blind squirrel finds a nut once in a while." The same is true for people and the Bible. Even a disinterested person with a haphazard approach can find a gold

nugget in God's Word once in a while. But we aren't to have a casual relationship where we pick up the Bible when we feel like it. We don't just stick in our thumb and hope to pull out a plumb.

God says through Paul that his followers are to take a serious approach to his Word. "Do your best" is also worded be diligent, eager, make every effort, work hard, and exert self. We're to be workmen. Workmen. Not a prince or a manager. A workman. An ordinary person who goes about his job and puts in a good day's work and isn't ashamed. It's not the skill but the labor that's put in. Then we'll be approved and not ashamed.

A.B. Simpson said, "God has hidden every precious thing in such a way that it is a reward to the diligent, a prize to the earnest, but a disappointment to the slothful soul. All nature is arrayed against the loungers and the idler. The nut is hidden in its thorny case; the pearl is buried beneath the ocean waves; the gold is imprisoned in the rocky bosom of the mountains; the gem is found only after you crush the rock which encloses it; the very soil gives its harvest as a reward to the laboring farmer. So truth and God must be earnestly sought."

The workman is to correctly handle the word of truth. The phrase is also rendered rightly dividing. Basically it referred to cutting something straight as stones to fit in a wall or fabric in a straight line. The bottom line is students of God's Word are to strive for accuracy.

Illustrate by showing the difference punctuation makes. "Women are pretty, generally speaking." Remove the comma and we get "Women are pretty generally talking."

Principles of Biblical interpretation. The simplest way to put it is with three questions – What does the passage say? What does it mean? How do I apply it to my life? Each can be fleshed out. Some of the usual "methodology" includes prayer to depend on the Holy Spirit, look at the context, the meaning for the original readers, take the literal meaning unless there is good reason to do otherwise, understand the type of literature, the historical background, grammar, compare with other Scriptures, define words, check with reliable sources.

Christ followers need to be thoroughly grounded because there are those who misuse the Bible. Some try to use it for financial gain, others as ammunition to prove their own point, and still others to gain knowledge without obedience.

Opponents of Biblical Christianity hope to draw us away from the main thing. They do this by trying to get into debates about non-essential issues. The intent of false teachers comes through in various terms. Verse 14 warns about quarreling about words. Quarreling about words refers to getting into arguments (discussions) over inconsequential words or topics like the number of angels that can dance on the head of a pin. Some versions refer to this as quibbling. Fun word. It means splitting hair. The person isn't so much looking for truth as winning. The godless chatter of v. 16 is fluff. It doesn't carry much substance. It's majoring on the trifles. It leads to more godlessness.

Two men are mentioned for their negative contribution to God's kingdom. They bought into newer "truth" that the resurrection had already come. This was within 40 years of Christ's death. Their teaching essentially was that anyone still around had missed it and were consigned to live forever away from Christ. There was no sense of purpose to devoting one's life to follow Christ.

Pop down to v. 23. READ. We don't use the word stupid much and shouldn't use it in referring to a person. And when talking to someone about an issue, it's probably not best form to say directly to him that he's using a stupid argument. But God's word labels some arguments/discussions as foolish and stupid. As could be said, they're just dumb, D-U-M dumb. They're based on ignorance and don't make such sense.

We shouldn't infer that we don't take a stand for truth and be firm in our belief that Jesus is the one and only way, the Bible is infallible, Jesus was fully God and fully human. This caution: "It would be difficult to exaggerate the debt we owe to the great champions of the Christian Faith, who by word and pen and life prevented the church from being led away by the plausible inventions of heretics. . . But controversy, if it is to justify itself, must (1) be occupied with questions which have a real bearing on faith and morals, and (2) must be conducted without loss of the peaceful temper" (Ernest Faulkner Brown, *The Pastoral Epistles*).

Someone is always trying to guide us into their version of truth and what we need. Facebook does it. Google does it. They give the stories they filter through their metrics. False teachers do it. Faithful students of God's Word seek to help each other learn. We need to make sure we have God's truth as the foundation by which to measure all "truths."

II. Example from home 20 – 21

READ. Most commentators take these verses as referencing all who claim to be part of God's church with some of the claims being false. There's also the possibility the intent is limited to only the genuine church. The point of the homey illustration is to aim to be instruments fit for noble purposes. This involves cleansing. In the context it would be from false teachers and false teaching.

Imagine you're at a friend's house and want a glass of water. You go into the kitchen and see the counter filled with numerous glasses. As you look closer, you see that everyone is dirty—lipstick, old cocoa, mold, food, etc. But behind the sink you notice a peanut butter jar that's sparkling clean. What would you use to drink out of? God is no dumber than we. He uses cleansed vessels.

III. Applied to life 22 - 26

Second quote from 19. READ.

The Lord expects believers to not partake in unrighteousness. However, we shouldn't be surprised if there are professing Christians whose practice doesn't match their profession. They behave like the world

system. Billy Sunday was a professional baseball player before becoming a traveling spokesman for Jesus. He was probably the most influential evangelist in the early 1900's with contemporaries viewing him as the greatest revivalist greatest since the days of the apostles. He was the first to say, "Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than going to a garage makes you an automobile." He preached against worldliness and "worldly Christians." He succinctly stated the implausibility. "You might as well talk about a heavenly devil!"

READ 22. Two commands provide direction. The first is flee. This means to put something behind us, not just in the rearview mirror so we can keep looking at it. Sin isn't something that we should try to reason with. It's like a person experimenting to see how much poison he could take before getting sick. It's like trying to win an argument with a tornado. Not good ideas. Need to run from sin.

Little Jeff was trying his best to save money to buy his mother a present. It was a terrible struggle because he gave in so easily to the temptation to buy treats from the ice-cream man whenever the brightly colored van came through the neighborhood. One night after his mother had tucked him in bed, she overheard him pray, "Please, God, help me run away when the ice-cream man comes tomorrow." Though young, he knew that one of the best ways to overcome temptation is to avoid what appeals to our weaknesses.

Evil desires are more than just the usual suspect of sexual desire. The problem isn't having a desire, say for doing well. It's when the desire becomes an obsession. Some of the evil desires are for superiority, pride, anger, strong will.

The first command is to run and put as much distance as we can between us and the tempting evil desires. The second command is often not mentioned but it's just as important. We need to pursue the things of God. If we just run away from something and don't run toward God's help, we'll likely relapse. We leave one thing and look ahead for other things. Some are specified. There's righteousness which is rightness of character and conduct. The next is faith or trust and confidence in God. Then comes love. And peace or harmony with others.

The others is important. The others is others in the family of God whom we are to join in the pursuit of God and these qualities. Biblical Christianity is not a solo event but a team venture.

A different group comes into view. They are those outside faith in Christ. The manner in which we engage them often carries as much weight as the message we have. And the manner is good for all relationships. READ 24 – 26.

This is the third mention of quarreling. It must be important to have so much emphasis. Don't be quarrelsome. The world is full of accusatory and inflammatory rhetoric. People readily point their fingers in blame at others and cruelly label each other. They're resentful and looking for a fight.

King David was trying to be kind to the son of a neighboring king who died and had been kind to him (2 Samuel 10). He sent a delegation to offer his sympathy. The military commanders convinced the new king that David sent the men as spies. They disgraced the men by cutting off half their beards and their clothes. They soon realized they had made a mistake and become obnoxious to David. Rather than apologizing, they hired a mercenary army. The end result was that David wiped out both kingdoms.

Able to teach. Gently instruct. The Greek word for gentleness described how ointment took the sting out of a burn. It was used for classroom atmosphere in which items would be discussed without losing temper or becoming defensive. It spoke of one who had power like a king to be vindictive and forceful but acted with control. Humility. Not be an arrogant know-it-all. It's okay to disagree as long as we don't become disagreeable. Keep our cool.

Our opponents are the audience to whom we are to communicate the truth of God's Word. And do it in a gentle way. Not beat them over the head with truth. Linus noticed a bump on Lucy's hand. He told her the way to get rid of it was to hit it with a Bible. She was mulling over the prescribed treatment when Linus whacked her on the head. We sometimes would like to do that to try to impart truth.

The goal is to win people, not to win the argument. Their souls are in peril. They're trapped by the devil. We are to offer hope.

On the way home from D.C. we stopped at the Gettysburg Civil War Battlefield. One of the heroes of the battle was Joshua Chamberlain. He had been a quiet, unassuming college professor prior to enlisting in the Union Army. He distinguished himself for heroism in holding the line on Little Round Top and later was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. His contribution to the Union victory was so appreciated by General Ulysses S. Grant that Chamberlain was designated to receive the first flag of surrender at Appomattox Courthouse. The defeated troops of the South expected to be ridiculed and humiliated by one who had been their bitter enemy. Instead, Chamberlain showed them kindness and respect. The Confederate commanding officer wrote in his memoirs that Chamberlain was "one of the knightliest soldiers of the Federal Army." Chamberlain, a committed follower of Christ, reflected the grace of Christ.

A second illustration that will hopefully warm mom's (and others') hearts and help us remember how we're to act. Before she turned two granddaughter Chloe started demanding things and had a tone to her voice when asking. Her mom explained that she should ask nicely when she wants something. So when Chloe stands by me, looks up at me with her blue eyes, reaches up her arms and wants me to pick her up, she says, "Up please, nicely." It works every time.

We are to reflect the grace of Jesus Christ as we interact with people nicely.

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Daniel B. Wallace, “There is no intrinsic dichotomy between our hearts and minds. We are to offer to God the whole person. For the minister of the Word, holiness is not an option. But neither is knowledge. I heard just this weekend, at church, someone say, ‘I’d rather know a dozen verses and obey them than the whole Bible and do nothing with it.’ My question is, why do we have to choose? We should neither put a premium on ignorance nor on disobedience. Further, the Bible is not just about behavior modification; it is also about *belief* modification. And what I believe—if I truly believe it—*will* affect my behavior...Jesus never condemned the religious leaders of his day for knowing the Bible *too well*, but for not believing it enough. Indeed, there were occasions when he chided them for not knowing the Scriptures well enough...We must be engaged in the breathless pursuit of truth.” (bible.org/article/crisis-word-or-message-pastors-and-would-be-pastors).

Terry Smith is the new Vice President for Church Ministries in the C&MA. He submitted a report to our District which was reviewed by the Committee on Leadership, Vision and Planning. They gave a review for the delegates to District Conference. “We acknowledge his observations concerning the different culture we now live in, making it more difficult to minister effectively as in the past. But Terry reminds us of the words of Jesus that “I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.” No matter what the enemy throws at us, His church will prevail over it all. We are encouraged by Terry’s statement that “The power of the church is not diminished by the culture we live in.” We receive his challenge to stop looking around us, but to “Look within ourselves, own any responsibility that we may have, for not seeing our churches advance Christ’s cause.” We aren’t living out what we say we believe: that lost people matter to God, that people are destined to hell apart from Christ, that Christ will return but we lack any sense of urgency, that God owns all we have but our giving and spending patterns don’t reflect that belief, that we respond to risk with a fear based fortress mentality to a culture that no longer presents us with favored status...his challenge of experiencing the great things God has for us in the future depend upon our owning up to the reality of our present...We concur with Terry that “The next chapter in the life of the Alliance begins with a corporate crisis experience...that where we are as a movement is unacceptable and we surrender ourselves afresh to Jesus so that we may experience a new filling of His Holy Spirit, a new sense of Spirit wrought motivation to get refocused on what Jesus has called us to do, so that more and more people come to know Jesus, so that His Church is built, and so that He receives the glory.”

Sexuality has become the determining factor instead of spirituality. All about self instead of how the self connects with God.

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With 3:16

Almost every Christian alive has heard the famous quotation from Charles Spurgeon, the great English preacher, about defending the Scripture. Spurgeon said, "Scripture is like a lion. Who ever heard of defending a lion? Just turn it loose; it will defend itself." That oft-quoted word has a great deal of truth in it. Notice that it does not deny that lions sometimes need defending; it merely recognizes that the best way to do that is to turn a lion loose and it will defend itself.