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2 Timothy 2:14-26 Fellowship Bible Church; Woodbridge, NJ

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Introduction: Though Paul has more to say about enduring hardship, the second half of Chapter 2 is devoted to refocusing Timothy on his work and warning him of the harm that can be caused by useless strife and false teaching. Paul, trying to encourage the young leader, brings him back to what really matters in his work.

He told Timothy to raise up other men to teach (2:2). Now he tells him to remind them of the things he's been saying, with perhaps the creedal sayings of 2:11-14 especially in view. Then he adds the admonishment not to be hung up on *words*; that is, *small details* that can be *major distractions* and sources of *dispute* while not amounting to anything that would *edify* anyone. The ministry of the teacher is to edify, to build up people in the faith. There were those who had already created disturbances in the church with their false teaching, particularly concerning the resurrection. They had been disciplined, apparently expelled (1 Timothy 1:20). Now Timothy was to move ahead with a clearer understanding of the teaching role in mind. He is commanded to be diligent in study and focus on what is important: *God's approval and the edification of others*.

The Chapter ends with a poignant reminder about a key element in the ministry of teaching: *you are dealing with people*. And so after telling Timothy to study and to avoid foolish disputes and the teachers of such, he tells Timothy to remember his own conduct and attitude when working with church people. Chiefly, he must be gentle, patient, and humble. We do not change people's minds. We lovingly minister the truth to them. God alone grants the changed mind.

1. Verses 14-23 - Recognizing the real work of the Lord, and avoiding the trap of useless arguments

- v.14 - **Remind them...** the "faithful men" of v.2. **these things...** likely the statements of vv.11-13, especially the statement concerning endurance. **charging them...** Timothy was to charge solemnly the "faithful men" not to get entangled in arguments about things that had nothing to do with edifying people. It is utterly useless, promotes only pride, wastes time and energy, can lead to all sorts of error and confusion, and in some cases can **ruin** a teacher's **hearers**. *We can not waste time trying to win arguments about things that will not edify anyone!*

- vv.15-16 - Timothy was to strive to win **God's** approval, not man's. How? Diligence, hard work, and right handling of God's **word**, the Scriptures. In contrast, he was to avoid time-wasting talk which promoted pride, division, and sin.

- vv.17-19 - **their...** the "babblings" of v.16. Such conversations are **like cancer**. They **spread** and destroy; they get carried away and result in error and false teaching! *Be careful - it is easy to get hooked into such foolishness!* **Hymenaeus** was mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:20 as having been put out. **Philetus** was a similar promoter of strife and error. **the resurrection is already past...** this gives insight into the nature of the erroneous, false teaching. v.19, apparently concerning: 1) those who are saved and who are not; and 2) the conduct of those who profess to be saved, gives insight into the *ramifications* of the arguments and useless strife: people, thinking because of some foolish argument that the resurrection had past, began to doubt their salvation and live carnal lives! We must avoid foolish strife! It leads to error and discouraged Christians! Correct false teaching, yes indeed. But *if the result of a disagreement is NOT the edification of Christians, do not engage in the disagreement*. Stop, ask yourself (or better, as God): "is this worth it?" Refute falsehood, but do not get entangled.

- vv.20-21 - Some household bowls, basins, etc., were used for dining, others for cleaning, etc. Some were for pleasant, clean uses, others for "dirty work". These articles were not stored together or used together; they were not mixed up. **cleanses himself from the latter...** Keep yourself away from the arguers, the debaters, the strivers over minor, fine points that lead to pride, strife, distress, confusion, and ultimately error, and then you will be **useful for the Master**. Keep yourself free to serve God where and when HE wants you to.

- vv.22-23 - v.22 points to what Timothy should apply his energy and diligence to; v.23 points to what he should avoid with equal vigor.

2. Verses 24-26 - Important characteristics of the true servant of the Lord.

- vv.24-25a - These verses are all one sentence. **must not quarrel...** "quarrel" = *machomai* in Greek. It means to fight, to strive. That is not how we minister! Rather, the path for the **servant of the Lord** is to be **gentle... patient...** and be in **humility**. You can see here why the exhortation to endure is so important! The true minister deals with people, trying to help them grow in their faith. We accomplish nothing for the Lord by angrily, proudly conquering people in arguments. We speak the truth in love and gentleness, and allow God to win their minds, win their hearts. Correction must be with grace and patience, as God has dealt with us!

- vv.25b-26 - **God** is the One who grants repentance and correct understanding. He is the One who brings people **to their senses**. He sets them free from the traps of the **devil**. The true servant of the Lord never forgets that we serve God, we do His will, His way, preaching His word. He does the inner work in the heart of a man. Therefore, do not engage in striving and arguing. If someone is not open to the truth, leave them, pray for them. And of course, you yourself be open to correction and training!