

A Father's Farewell

2nd Timothy

Fighting the Good Fight for the Faith - Part 2

Key idea:

To fight the good fight for the faith we must confront error clearly without being quarrelsome or argumentative, but always speaking and acting in a manner that works for the restoration of those trapped in error.

Key text:

2 Timothy 2:14-26

Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. ¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. ¹⁶ Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. ¹⁷ Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, ¹⁸ who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some. ¹⁹ Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness." ²⁰ In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. ²¹ If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work. ²² Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. ²³ Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. ²⁴ And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. ²⁵ Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

Key points:

1. The most important protection against the infection of false teaching is the consistent positive teaching of the sound doctrine of the Word of God, combined with the positive growth and display of godly character.

2. Some errors are so serious that if they are not directly refuted they endanger the health of the whole body. These errors are not over minor matters but strike at the heart of the faith and are thus heresies.
3. Heresies all have one of two markers:
 - a. They deny essential Christian doctrine.
 - b. They deny essential Christian moral teaching.
4. Two dangers must be avoided when fighting the good fight to protect the truth and confront serious errors:
 - a. We must not fight serious errors in an ungodly way, becoming quarrelsome, resentful, harsh, or arrogant.
 - b. We must not begin to 'love the fight' so that we engage in constant quarrels over smaller issues.

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's text and teaching stood out most to me? Why?
2. Why does Paul use medical terminology like sound/healthy teaching and the gangrene of false teaching? Why is this particularly appropriate when thinking of a church?
3. How would I define "essential Christian doctrine"? What are some examples of doctrines that are essential? What are some examples of doctrines that are important but not 'essential'?
4. Why is it so serious to deny essential Christian moral teaching? Can I think of examples where this was done in the times of the New Testament? Can I think of examples where the same thing is being done today?
5. Why is it important that I not become quarrelsome, resentful, harsh or arrogant when confronting even serious errors? What excuses might I give to 'allow' me to harbor such attitudes and actions? Why are they still wrong, even in the face of serious error?
6. What are the proper reasons for confronting serious errors? What should my goals be?
7. Why is Paul so worried about quarreling, godless chatter, and foolish and stupid arguments in the Pastoral Epistles (see 1 Timothy 6:4, 20; Titus 3:9; 2 Timothy 2:14, 16, 23, 25-26)?

8. When I think of much of the discourse in our culture at present, how much of it do I think could be classified as “quarreling, godless chatter, and foolish and stupid arguments”? Am I ever tempted to be drawn into such quarrels?
9. How do these dangers relate to my arguments over non-doctrinal matters? How do they apply for example in disagreements with my spouse? With my children? With other members of BRCC? With anyone with whom I find myself in disagreement?
10. Who will I call to encourage this week? What specific members of BRCC will I commit before God to pray for and call?

Preview of Next Week: 2 Timothy 3:1-9