

Theme: 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.

I. The Story of Joe Pistone (Donnie Brasco)

- A. Undercover FBI agent in the mob 1976-1981
- B. He had to be pulled out as he was about to be “made” by having to kill someone!
- C. Hoover never wanted undercover agents - too much danger they would become corrupted!
- D. Beware that, when fighting monsters, you yourself do not become a monster - Nietzsche
- E. Timothy is called to protect the sound teaching and confront false teaching and those teaching it.
- F. But there is a danger that we become like what we are fighting against! How do we fight the good fight for the faith - without becoming corrupted ourselves?

II. Part 1 - The Best Defense Is A Good Offense!

- A. The most important protection against the infection of false teaching is the consistent positive teaching of the sound doctrine of the Word of God.
- B. The sound teaching of the Word of God must be joined with the positive growth and display of godly character.
- C. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers. 1 Timothy 4:16

III. Fighting the Good Fight

- A. Timothy must fight against false teachings & teachers

1. The primacy of positive teaching does not mean Timothy never corrects error!
 2. The reason Timothy was in Ephesus was to stop these false teachers
As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that **you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer** 1 Timothy 1:3
 - a. This begins with the task of positive teaching of healthy doctrine.
 - b. But when the infection of false teaching begins to spread throughout the body, Timothy must directly address the false teaching, even to the point of commanding people to stop teaching.
 3. Some error is so serious that if it is not directly refuted it endangers the health of the whole body.
- B. The key distinctives of heresy
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.”** 2Ti 2:17–19
1. These errors are deadly: **gangrene, destroy the faith**
 2. Note two key errors - denial of essential doctrine (resurrection) and/or denial of biblical morality (turn away from wickedness)
 3. Notice that Paul names the leaders, and that he had actually already handed Hymenaeus over to Satan (see 1 Timothy 1:20). This is deadly serious error!

4. The error in Ephesus seems to be an early form of Gnosticism that denigrated the body as evil, and therefore denied the resurrection, and led to immoral, unholy lives.
 - a. Gnostics denied the Incarnation of Jesus, His bodily resurrection, and the future bodily resurrection of believers - all of which placed one outside the faith.
 - b. Gnostics taught that what one did with the body did not matter - so one could engage in sex outside marriage, homosexual sex, drunkenness, stealing, etc., and still be part of God's people.
5. Modern heretics follow this same pattern, denying essential Christian beliefs such as the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, the literal, physical resurrection of Jesus, or redefining sin so that people may claim to be Christians while engaging in behavior that the Scripture clearly condemns.
6. Timothy must not be silent about such false teachings but must confront these errors so that people can repent and escape the devil's trap and return to the truth.

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. 2 Timothy 2:25–26

 - a. Timothy must instruct those trapped in error
 - b. The people must come to realize they are trapped in error and by Satan himself so that they can repent and be freed from their bondage to Satan & his lies.

IV. Two Dangers For Those Fighting the Fight

- A. The danger of fighting serious error in an ungodly way

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. 2 Tim 2:24–26

 1. Timothy must never become quarrelsome, resentful, harsh, or arrogant - this is unChristlike.
 2. Even in the 'fight for the faith' Timothy must be gentle, and always be working with the goal of winning the people rather than the argument!
 3. Timothy can never lower himself to the level of his opponents, but must proclaim the Gospel in a godly manner, and speak the truth in love.
 4. John Newton 'On Controversy' - After Hours
 5. Even when fighting serious errors, we must maintain Christlike character, no matter how others may act.
 6. Beware that, when fighting monsters, you yourself do not become a monster - Nietzsche
- B. The danger of useless quarrels (don't love the fight)

Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen...
Avoid godless chatter,
because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly...
Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels.
 2 Timothy 2:14, 16, 23

1. Avoid quarrels over words, godless chatter, foolish and stupid arguments - endless quarreling
2. These are of no value and ruin the people who engage in them, leading to ungodliness, and producing more quarrels
3. Timothy must warn other believers (v14) against these behaviors as well - this applies to all believers not just church leaders.
4. A major concern for Paul in the Pastoral Epistles
He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and **quarrels about words** that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions 1 Timothy 6:4

Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from **godless chatter** and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, 1 Timothy 6:20

But avoid **foolish** controversies and genealogies and **arguments** and **quarrels** about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. Titus 3:9

- a. These phrases are also in 2 Timothy - same concern
 - b. Note they all are unprofitable and simply result in further arguments and strife - nothing is gained
5. We must not love the fight so much we become quarrelsome people, endlessly looking for controversy, constantly in a state of anger over something
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. 2 Timothy 2:23–24
 - a. Timothy must not simply fight because he "loves the fight" - don't engage for argument's sake

- b. The Lord's servant must not quarrel - he must be gentle, kind, not resentful
- c. There is a danger that one can come to "love the fight" and become bombastic, argumentative, constantly looking for controversy, constantly stirring it up - this disqualifies one for leadership
- d. This quarrelsome approach was the way of the false teachers in Ephesus - and of many politicians, bloggers, and media people today - but it must never be our way.
- e. Beware of those who love the fight and who constantly try to keep you in a state of fear or rage!

V. Applying the Word

A. Do I see the importance of fighting heresy?

1. Heresy has always been a danger for the church
2. Heresy has one of two markers

Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. ⁴ For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord. Jude 1:3–4

- a. It denies essential Christian doctrine
- b. It denies essential Christian moral teaching

3. Both of these are a major danger today
 - a. Groups are denying the truth of God's Word, the nature of God, the Trinity, the full Deity and humanity of Jesus, salvation through Christ alone, etc.
 - b. Others are turning the Gospel into a license for immorality, denying clear biblical teachings of human sexuality and sexual behavior (Jude 1:7).
4. Do I understand these are not "differences of opinion" - they are HERESY which puts one outside the Christian faith?
5. Am I willing to stand against such deadly false ideas - no matter the cost to my reputation, position, etc.?

B. Am I giving in to the "outrage economy"?

1. We must fight serious error - but not become quarrelsome people in the process
2. There is an entire industry that exists to keep us in a state of outrage - the outrage economy
3. Much of the internet exists solely to get us to read and click - and nothing promotes this like outrage and endless bickering
4. Do I participate in the endless quarreling and bickering of the outrage economy?
5. Do I support the outrage economy, even if simply by a regular diet of consuming the posts of those who constantly stoke outrage or fear?
6. Do I spend more time feeding on the Word and prayer, or following the latest political/cultural/social controversy?
7. Engaging in the age of outrage will infect our souls and make them sick!

C. The Table of the Faith

Fighting the Good Fight for the Faith - Part 2

2 Timothy 2:14-26

March 27, 2022

Communion

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

Teaching keywords: False teaching and heresy; character; godliness; tongue and words; technology

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else.¹³ May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones. 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

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. 2

Timothy 2:14–26