

2 Timothy 2 (Part 2):14-26 • Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

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Second Timothy chapter 2. We're looking at the second half of chapter 2. We're taking it up in verse 14 and going through the end of the chapter. So, follow along with me as I read, and then we'll get into it, okay? It says,

¹⁴ "Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. ¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. ¹⁶ But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, ¹⁷ and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, ¹⁸ who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some. ¹⁹ But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

²⁰ "Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. ²¹ Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work."

²² "So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. ²³ Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. ²⁴ And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, ²⁵ correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will." (ESV)

Stop there. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, as we get into your word this morning, I just pray for the ministry of Your Spirit to reach and to touch every heart. Lord, it's our desire to

receive today, but we know that even as receivers, we need your help. We need the grace to understand. We need Your Spirit to open our heart and mind, and we need you, God, to just fill us with the ability with spiritual ears to hear your voice.

So, we pray that you would help us, Lord, and then give us the courage to put into practice the things that we learn from these scriptures. We ask that you would be with us, Father, in the name of Jesus, your Son, amen. Amen.

You know, we have been making the point right along through our study of First and Second Timothy, that this is a letter written by the apostle to a young man who is involved in the ministry. He was involved in pastoral ministry in Ephesus. Paul was writing from Rome.

But Timothy is a youngish man who's involved in setting up and establishing the local church there in Ephesus. And so, a lot of the things that Paul is saying to him apply to that specific context. But you know, that doesn't mean that there aren't things that we can't gain in a general sense.

You know, this letter is also very beneficial for those of us who are just in Christ and want to learn more about walking with him. But we see here first, as we look in verse 14, once again, in your Bible, that Paul exhorts Timothy to do two things. First, he says,

“Remind them of these things,” (and then secondly, he says,) *“charge them before God.”*

So you have two things that Paul is reminding Timothy to do, two directives, if you will. And the first one is *“remind them of these things.”* Now, what's interesting about this is in the Greek, this word that is translated “remind” is in what we call the present imperative tense. And that's a fancy way of just saying it's meant to be ongoing. It speaks of an ongoing action.

So Paul is saying to Timothy, keep on reminding them, keep on telling them the things that they need to know, the things that they need to hang on to. And this is something that, frankly, a pastor can never get tired of doing.

I've heard in the past about some pastors and teachers, they have so many messages, you know, in their repertoire, and when they get done, it's like, well, it's time to move on to the next church, you know. I've told them everything I know.

Well, boy, if I'd have followed that thing, I'd have been gone probably a long time ago. But, you know, I've been here for almost 31 years teaching you the Word of God, but I haven't been teaching you anything new. I'm just reminding you. That's what I do every Sunday and every Wednesday. I just remind you of what the Word of God says, what the Bible teaches. And, you know, you'll remember that Peter, in his letters, said the same thing. Let me show you on the screen. Second Peter, chapter 1, 12 and 13. He says,

2 Peter 1:12-13 (NIV)

So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body,

And then he goes on in chapter 3 to say,

2 Peter 3:1 (ESV)

This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder,

So this is what we do as pastors and teachers. We just we keep reminding the people of what the Word of God has to say, because I think we kind of leak. Yeah. You know, I mean, have you ever thought about that we hear the things we hear the Word of God and then we just kind of, you know, forget it seems somehow. We need to be reminded. I need to be reminded.

You know, it's kind of interesting. I've noticed over the years that God has given me a gift of recall of scripture. I don't always get the address right. Last Wednesday I was teaching in Ezekiel, and I quoted a passage and I said, I think it's in Ecclesiastes. And everybody came up to me afterwards and said, actually, it's in Lamentations. It's like, "Okay, fine." You know, so I don't, I remembered the verse. I didn't remember where it was.

But even though God has given me that ability to kind of recall scripture, do you want to know when I forget what the Word of God says? When I'm going through a hard time. When I'm going through a scary time. It's like I just can't dredge up a single promise from God's Word.

You know, if I'm putting together a Bible study, oh, no problem. But you know, when I'm going through a hard season, I'm just I kind of start to fall apart and what I need to be reminded and I need people to remind me of what the scripture has to say. So when you ever, if you're sharing with somebody and you're saying, well, hey, you know, in the word it says..., and if they say to

you, I know what the Bible says, you just tell him, I know that you know, but you need to be reminded, right?

It's one thing to know here, (pointing to the head) and it's a different thing to know here, (pointing to the heart) right? So you might have it in your head, but you need to walk it out and live it in your life. And that's really the important thing. So, you know, reminding is what a pastor needs to do. But it's not all of what he needs to do.

Paul says, you also need to “*charge them before God.*”

And the word “charge” in the Greek means to solemnly warn. And so this isn't as fun, perhaps as reminding. When you have to warn people about maybe the track they're on. It might be a dangerous track or a destructive track, and you have to warn him.

Hey, don't go there. Don't go near there. In Paul's case, he's telling Timothy to warn the people not to quarrel about words here, he says. Tell them not to warn him or

¹⁴“*charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers.*”

Quarreling about words. I guess they did that a couple of thousand years ago. It's a good thing we don't do it today. Yeah, that's not true, is it?

We still, there's something about human nature that we just... We have a tendency to major on the minors and we quarrel about words dancing on the head of a pin. And it is still very much going on today.

Not long ago, I had somebody write me a note and said “Pastor Paul, let me ask you a question. When you baptize people, do you baptize them in the name of Jesus, or do you baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit?”

Now, for some of you, you're kind of going, huh? Some of you might come from a particular religious persuasion where you know what that question is all about. And you know that in some certain areas of Christianity, that's a big question. The formula of how you were baptized in water.

And these people will tell you if you didn't get baptized with the right formula, you might not even be saved. See for them, it's a big deal. I can tell you that it's a bunch of hoof.

There's nothing, you know, significant about it at all. You know, but let me say something, there are arguments, quarrels going on about these things in the body of Christ today. And it's nonsense. It is. It is utter nonsense. And you know what? It does exactly what Paul said it does. It ruins those who hear it. It just ruins their faith.

So Paul goes on in verse 15. Notice in your Bible, he says,

“do your best to present yourself to God as one approved.”

There's an interesting thing. The words “do your best” as they're translated here in the English mean be zealous. Be zealous to present yourself to God as one approved. This is a very important thing for a young pastor to hear. You are to present yourself to God for his approval, not to man.

A pastor and a leader, a church leader is never to be concerned about or worried about the approval of men and women. Because that's a trap. Because if you're focused on that, first of all, you're not going to be focused on being approved by God. And secondly, you're not going to be telling people what they really need to hear. Because sometimes what people really need to hear is hard to hear. Well, it's hard to say, too. But if you're seeking their approval, right, you're going to hold back on things that might otherwise be challenging to hear. Like charging them, for example, to stop quarreling about words and so forth.

So Paul says to Timothy, your overarching aim is to be pleasing and approved by God. And then he says, seeking not to be ashamed. Did you catch that? He says not being ashamed. You have to ask yourself the question, why would a pastor ever be ashamed?

Well, I'll tell you. There's one thing that about a pastor, you know, we're constantly telling people about God's Word. I get up here every Sunday and every Wednesday and I tell you what God's Word says. And I tell you about how to help you understand how to apply that Word. Well, what happens if I'm not living it?

What happens if you find out I've been exhorting you on the Word of God and I'm not doing it myself. That's a reason for me to be ashamed. And in fact, even

disqualified. Let me show you what Paul said to the Corinthians. 1 Corinthians 9:27 he said,

1 Corinthians 9:27 (ESV)

...I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

And what that means is by my own lack of following that very Word that I've shared with you. There's a disqualification process when a pastor speaks something and then doesn't walk it out. And so Paul is exhorting young Timothy here. *"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed."* Right?

And then finally he says you are to be one who is making certain that you *"rightly handle the word of truth."*

Your Bible may say *"rightly dividing the word of truth."* And the Greek word translated "rightly handling" or "dividing" literally means "cutting a straight line." He's saying, Timothy you need to cut a straight line when it comes to the Word of God. And that means you don't veer to the left and you don't veer to the right you go straight down the line on this thing. You keep to what the Word says and you don't add your own opinions. And you don't say, well, I think, and, wouldn't it be cool if, and is not all about that. It's about cutting a straight line with the Word of God, rightly dividing the word of truth.

And we've gotten away from that in the body of Christ, largely. And one of the, you guys know, I've harped on this for almost 31 years, one of the main reasons we've gotten away from rightly dividing the Word of truth as the body of Christ is because we have ignored certain parts of the Bible. We don't take it Genesis to Revelation. We only take chunks.

And you know, if a pastor hasn't been raised in a tradition of teaching through the Bible, the whole Bible, chapter by chapter, verse by verse, he's going to, he's going to do what comes natural, and what comes natural is to hang out on passages that you feel comfortable with.

You see, I wasn't raised initially in the tradition of teaching systematically. My first church experience was all about teaching topically. And so when I started doing my own teaching, I thought, well, that's the way you got to do it. You just come up with a topic and then you teach on it or preach on it. I didn't really, I wasn't even dialed in yet on the difference between preaching and teaching.

So, and I got to tell you something, when I first started pastoring, I hated Saturday nights because that's when I would do my preparation. And I was like, I mean, Saturday nights were just the worst. I was like, oh, what am I going to talk about? I've got to think of something to talk about. Maybe I'll kind of look through Isaiah. There's got to be something good in Isaiah. Read through a few chapters of Isaiah. Nothing really hits me there. Oh, let's go to Matthew. What about something in Matthew? And I'm sitting here just waiting to get struck by inspiration. What a dumb thing to do!

And then I started hearing people teaching through the Bible and it was, ding, you know. I never have to wonder what I'm going to teach about tomorrow. It's the next chapter, you know?

But there was something else that took place when that happened. I started realizing people were getting the whole counsel of God's Word. They're not just getting bits and pieces of it. They're getting the whole thing and they're getting more mature and they're having a better understanding of God's redemptive plan as it courses through the whole of scripture rather than getting these little nuggets here or there. This is incredible!

I've come to understand that rightly dividing the Word is taking all of it, not just some of it. And you know, let me tell you something else that I think really keeps us from rightly dividing the Word, it's when we join theological camps. And you've heard me talk about this, some of you. But a camp is a particular theological thought or process that people kind of jump into to kind of define what they believe.

And there's the Calvinist camp and there's the Arminian camp and there's this camp and there's that camp and people always want to, they want to see what camp you're in. And I have people ask me pretty frequently, so are you a Calvinist? I say, no, I'm not a Calvinist. Oh, then you're Arminian. No, I'm not Arminian. I'm not. I'm not either one. And that messes with people's minds because they only thought there were two options.

And here's the problem with camps. And there's lots of different camps. All right, I just gave a couple of examples. The problem with a camp or joining a camp is that you begin to see scripture through that, the lens of that camp and you begin to read the Bible in a way that really just buttresses or enforces your camp's position, and you stop reading the Word to see what the Word has to say for itself, right?

You're only looking for things that are supportive. In other words, you create this bias. That you look through the word or through to the word and you only gather from the scriptures what supports your bias. And you know what happens? You know what the result is? You stop rightly dividing the truth and you're just supporting your camp. So don't be in a camp. Get rid of camps. The best thing we can do is dismantle them.

Let's just get into the Word and let's believe what the Word says, right? And forget about all this other stuff. Because it's very dangerous when the Word of God is misinterpreted according to a bias or whatever the case might be. It becomes very, very dangerous.

In fact, I believe reaching a person who has had the Word of God tangled in their minds is more difficult than reaching someone who previously has flatly rejected the Word of God. In other words, I would rather talk to somebody who says, I don't believe in the Bible, than somebody who says, I do believe in the Bible, but they got it wrong. They're tougher to address. They are tougher to deal with because you have to untangle this web of just gnarly, perverted junk that got messed up along the way.

Because here's the point: in order to straighten somebody's theological tanglings out, you know what you have to use? The Bible. That's the only way to do it. So here they got the Bible tangled. The only thing you can do to get it untangled is use the Bible. But the problem is they don't see it your way because they've got tangled and it's very challenging and they have to come to a point of saying, I've been misled. And do you know that's hard for people to do? It doesn't seem difficult to understand, does it? For somebody to look at you in the eye and say, I've been misled. I was misled for years, and now I see what the Bible is really saying. That's a very challenging thing for a person to do. And believe me, there are plenty of things that people get misled on and get tangled up. I decided to make a list. Here's a short list, okay?

Subjects in the Bible that have not been rightly divided

- Water baptism
- Sabbath keeping/the Law of Moses
- Gifts of the Spirit
- Generational curses
- Predestination
- God's sovereignty vs. Man's freewill
- Spiritual warfare

Water baptism. I spend every week untangling people's issues about water baptism. What it is, what it isn't. How you have to be baptized, when you get baptized. People are so messed up.

Sabbath keeping and just the relationship of a believer to the Law of Moses. This one is really tweaked, and people struggle with it. They don't get it, and they're confused because they hear confusing things about keeping the Sabbath, or our relationship to the Law of Moses as believers.

The gifts of the spirit is another one. There's been a ton of misapplication and not rightly dividing the Word, and by the way, this one's messed up on both sides of the coin. You got the Pentecostals over here who are messed up in their understanding of the gifts of the spirit and you have the Cessationists over here who don't believe the gifts are for today and they're just as messed up. And they're arguing with each other because they believe different things, but they're both wrong. And it's just craziness because they haven't stuck to the Word.

Generational curses. I probably get, you know, one note a week wanting to know about generational curses and what they can do to be free from them. And they're all messed up on how they even take place and what a generational curse even is.

Predestination. That one's a constant. That's a constant. People really get tweaked over that one. Because a lot of people have been led to believe that predestination basically means, biblically speaking, that since God knows everything ahead of time, that means it's fixed and you have no choice in the matter, which is not true. It is not true. That's not what biblical predestination means. And yet you'd be shocked how many...

I had a gal write me just yesterday, all upset about what she'd been told concerning predestination. They weren't rightly handling the Word of truth. And she was all upset about it.

God's sovereignty versus man's free will. This is closely related to the whole predestination argument too, but people have just the most strugglesome time understanding how God can be sovereign and he can also receive free will from God. They just don't get it. They're like, I don't get it. And I tell him, you probably never will but the Bible says that both exist.

And then spiritual warfare. You got people cussing out the devil all over the place and doing weird, crazy things all in the name of spiritual warfare. And it's

just, they've been mistaught and the things have all gotten tangled up in their minds. And do you know what Paul calls biblical topics that have not been rightly handled? At least here in the ESV, he calls it irreverent babble. Look at verse 16 in your Bible. He says,

“but avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene.”

Isn't that an illustrative kind of a picture? Even names a couple of guys that were involved in doing it. And look at what they were saying verse 18. He said these guys

“who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened.”

The resurrection is already taking place. You missed it. Sorry. And he says they're *“upsetting the faith of some.”* I cannot imagine.

So you see, this is what happens when people don't rightly divide the truth. They go around just half-cocked saying what is on the top of their head. It's not in keeping with the scripture. And what does it do in their lives? It creates instability and confusion and a lack of peace.

So Christians, can I just tell you something? If you're at work or wherever and somebody says something and it just strikes you like your peace goes away when they say that or you need to listen to that and you need to go home and you need to open your bible and pray and seek God's face and find out what the truth is. Because when we hear the word as it is rightly divided, it brings peace into our lives and joy and stability.

When we are hearing from others and they are not rightly dividing the truth, it brings instability and a lack of peace. And what did Paul say about peace? He said,

“let the peace of Christ rule in your heart.” (Colossians 3:15 ESV)

And that word “rule” means “referee.” Let the peace of Christ call it for you.

If the peace isn't there, go back and look at it again. Go back and investigate. See what the word has to say. God will give peace when the word is being rightly divided. Okay? There will be peace in your heart. Very important that we understand that.

And that's why, you know, as we're talking about all this confusion and instability, verse 19, Paul says,

"but God's firm foundation stands."

And that means, even though there are people out there who are not rightly dividing the word of truth, that doesn't affect God's foundation of truth. His foundation of truth continues to stand, right?

So, poor teaching, bad exegesis, doesn't matter. God's firm foundation stands. His plan will go forth, and there are two seals on this foundation. He says the first is, in verse 19,

"The Lord knows those who are his," (and), *"Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."*

And now, as he goes on in verses 21 through 22, he's going to enlarge on that idea of departing from iniquity.

And he begins to use this example of a house. Notice he says in verse 20,

"in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver,"

and that's precious vessels. But then there's also things that you don't really care that much about. And, you know, we know that today you got things in your house, you got a trash can, or something out in the garage that you throw garbage in or something like that. It's not that important. And once it's kind of wrecked, you just toss it away. But then you've got things in your home that are very important. They're very precious to you. We call them keepsakes, or we may use them for some special thing.

When special people come over, we bring out the good, you know, dinnerware or something like that because it was given to me by my mother and her mother before her. So it's precious, right? This is the point of what Paul is saying. Now, what he's saying to you is that if you cleanse yourself from worldly passions and desires, then you're going to be like those precious things in your home that are used for special purposes, honorable purposes. And the point is, God is going to use you that way.

You see, as believers, we can act like a trash can, or we can act like something that's very precious. In the house of the Lord, something very honorable, and God sees you as something very honorable. You already are a temple of the

Holy Spirit. If you have received Jesus Christ as your savior, the Holy Spirit is living inside of you. And that is a very precious thing. And it makes you a very precious vessel in his sight. So you already have the honor.

The question is, are you living like an honorable vessel or are you living like a trash can? And that's the point of what Paul is saying. And so his point in verse 22 is, so, and this is the response, so,

“flee youthful passions.”

By the way, you don't have to be young to get caught up in youthful passions. You could be old like me and still run after youthful passions, right? He says,

“flee youthful passions,” (and instead) “pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace,”

Pursue those things, *“along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”*

So he's just exhorting us to live in a way that is in keeping with our calling and our position in Christ. You are a valuable, honorable vessel in the house of the Lord. Now live in a way that's consistent with that. Right?

He goes on in verse 23, he says,

“Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels.”

So once again, he deals with this issue of quarreling, but this time it has to do with the bringing up of foolish controversies, things that aren't going to make a difference. He says all it does is just start people quarreling and do you guys know where quarreling comes from? Because James tells us, let me show you James chapter four.

James 4:1 (ESV)

What causes quarrels? What causes fights among you? Is it not this that your passions are at war within you?

And that word “passions” in the Greek literally means pleasures, but it's talking about carnal pleasures. There is pleasure that we gain from arguing with people and quarreling and bringing up controversial subjects just to see how people are

going to respond. But in the end, it shows immaturity. It shows immaturity when we do it.

I mean, there are things we need to talk about, but we've got to be circumspect about how we talk about them and where we talk about them. And are we talking about them in a place where it's only going to cause people issues because it's going to start a quarrel, you know?

At this time of year, I always get a bunch of emails about Halloween. It happens every year. I can count on it every October. And I've written about it on my blog. And so I just basically point people to my blog and be done with it for the most part. But I know that it's going to happen. And there's a place to have a conversation about that topic. So it's an important topic for a lot of people. They're working through those issues and they want to know. As a believer, you know, how they should respond or be responsive.

That is a different issue. I mean, writing your pastor or calling your pastor and talking to another friend about it and saying, what do you think about this? That's one thing. It's another thing to be in a Bible study where you're, you know, there's 10, 12 of you in there and you bring up a subject just to kind of get the quarreling started. You know, it's kind of like throwing a grenade in the room, you know, and then running and closing the door behind you just... and there's going to be a mess.

So there are ways to deal with these sorts of things. And Paul is telling Timothy to not allow this kind of controversial talk to go on because it only is going to breed quarrels and it's not going to help anybody. So the word to pastors, look at verse 24. He says,

“and the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome.” Right?

How is he to act? He's to be kind to everyone because guys, being quarrelsome is the opposite of being kind. He says the servant of the Lord is to be kind.

“He is to be able to teach,” And that means when he when a topic comes up like that, he should be able to explain to people. This is the situation, right?

“Patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents” with a smack on the head.

Doesn't say that, does it? You guys were wondering “Where did he get that? What version is he reading?” No, it says, *“correcting his opponents with gentleness.”*

The servant of the Lord is to be gentle. You cannot quarrel and be gentle. Right? So this is how the servant of the Lord is to act.

Now, of course, not everybody's going to be convinced. Look at verse 25. We're still in 25. He says,

*"God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth,
26and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will."*

But they may not. They may not. But the Lord's servant either way is not to quarrel about it, because here's the deal: the Lord's servant understands that it's not his responsibility to change somebody's mind. It's his responsibility to speak the truth in love. And the Lord is to take care of the rest. And it's between that person and the Lord as to whether or not, you know, they are going to respond to the truth. You know? What people do with the truth is between them and God.

And ultimately, our responsibility is to be prepared to give them a reason for the hope that we have. Isn't that what Peter tells us to do?

He says, hey, always be ready. If somebody asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have to have an answer for them, but what they do with your answer is between them and God and you can't change their heart or their mind related to that.

And I, again I, it is very common for me to field questions from people who are trying to witness to a loved one or a coworker. I had a guy write me last week and he was saying, Pastor Paul, I've been witnessing to my dad and my dad is really antagonistic to the gospel. So what can I do to convince him that he's wrong? Tell me what I can say that's going to just, you know, turn his hardness.

And I tell people the same thing every time I tell him, you are responsible for sharing about your hope in Christ, why you believe what you believe. That is your responsibility and to do it in love. But the person you're talking to is responsible for their own reaction to the truth. And as much as you may want that person to believe, you can't make them believe.

And I know that sounds disappointing to some people. But have you ever noticed that just being on the right side of an argument isn't any guarantee that person is going to respond properly?

Sometimes they even look at you and you can see it in their eyes. They know you're right and they're wrong, but they still dig their heels in. And, you know, there's a lot of other things going on there like pride and this and that and the other thing.

But, you know, Jesus told us a parable to help us understand that the Word of God doesn't penetrate every type of soil and it doesn't do well in every type of soil. And what he was telling us or teaching us with that parable is that the soil of people's hearts has to be prepared to receive the Word of God.

You know, speaking of not rightly dividing the truth, I hear people quote that verse all the time from Isaiah. I think it's chapter 55 where it says, you know, God's Word will never return void. You ever heard that one? You ever heard people quote that one? And they'll say, I was talking to my brother, you know, last week and I was sharing the Lord with him. You know, he didn't respond or do anything, but you know, God's Word never returns void.

That is a misinterpretation of that verse. That is not rightly dividing that passage. Because if you go to Isaiah chapter 55 and you read that passage, what it says is that God's Word will not return void for the purpose for which He sent it. That means when God sends His Word, it always does what he intends it to do. It's not a promise for you. Because we get sloppy sometimes, just like the man in the parable of the sower.

And sometimes we sow seed on hard hearts. And Jesus told us that's like putting seed on concrete. It's rock hard. And it's not going to sink into the soil. What happens to that seed? What did Jesus tell us? He says the enemy comes and snatches it away.

Yeah, but God's Word is never going to return void for him, not for you. You and I need to be understanding that preparation is often needed in someone's heart before they can even receive the Word of God so we're out sowing seed on concrete and wondering why we're not having a harvest.

And so I tell people when they write to me about those sorts of things, I say, well, you know, you need to pray for your dad or pray for your family members, ask God to soften the soil of their heart so that they can hear. They need ears to hear. And if they don't have ears to hear, they're not going to hear.

Paul said, he says the man without the Spirit hears the things of the Spirit and they are foolishness to him because he doesn't have ears to hear. The work of the Spirit needs to take place in his heart or her heart first. So before you go

sowing your seed, pray. Ask God to work up the soil. Ask God to make the soil ready to hear the Word of God, ready to receive the seed of the Word and then wait patiently for signs that God has broken up that soil.

And you can see it sometimes in their attitude or things that they say. Maybe they bring up a conversation about God or the Bible or something related to that and you can see that, oh, that door is cracked open just a little bit, and then you need to proceed cautiously, prayerfully and patiently. You still can't bust through the door.

We often, guys, let's just admit it, we sometimes do more harm than good in our sharing of the gospel because we haven't been Spirit-led. We've been fleshly-led. I want my brother or my sister or my dad to come to Christ and so I'm going to, I'm going to drag him there kicking and screaming. Well, I'm sorry it doesn't work that way. God has to prepare their hearts to hear the Word of God.

And so quarreling isn't going to help, getting into a quarrel with your loved ones. That's not going to do any good. So Paul says, remind him not to do that. Quarreling is dumb. So that's where we're going to stop. Let's stand together.

We'll get into 2 Timothy chapter 3 next time. If you need prayer this morning, we're going to have some folks right down front here to pray with you.

So when you see our prayer team coming up here, you can just come up and have get them to pray with you. And just a reminder our new to Calvary, lunch is going to be right when we're going to be kind of praying with people and then heading over there. So if you're here and you'd like to join us for lunch just make your way over to the other building. It's upstairs in the small sanctuary, and we would really love to have you join us.

So let's pray.

Father, thank you so much for the Word that you give us. Thank you, Lord, for this letter to Timothy. The second letter is so powerful and so important that we see it. There's so many things we need to understand.

And Father God, I pray that you would help us to rightly divide the Word to take the whole counsel of God's Word into view, Genesis to Revelation, and understand it and to study and open our hearts to the wisdom that you have given. And, Lord, help us to know that when the truth is impacting our hearts there will be peace and joy and stability. And that when we hear something that

is off base, those things are going to go away. So, Lord, help us to be mindful of that and help us, Lord, to press in to know you better day by day.

We love you. We thank you for saving us from our sin. We thank, You Lord, for the free gift of salvation that is ours in Christ who bore our penalty on the cross that we might be made whole. We thank you and praise you, and we ask you to continue to fill us, Lord, with Your Spirit. In the name of Jesus, we pray, amen.