

MONDAY, 5/8

Read 2 Timothy 2:14.

Before you dive into my musings on verse 14, I want you to practice observing the verse. I imagine you have already read it once. Read it again. Notice what words or phrases get your attention. What questions come out of your reading? When building our proficiency with reading and understanding the Bible, it's helpful for us to observe and familiarize ourselves with it before we move onto anything someone else writes about it. Once you have read the passage again and made your notes, feel free to move on to the next paragraph.

Our verse today begins with Paul encouraging Timothy to hold certain truths before God's people. What are "these things" Timothy is charged to share? Look back at verses 11-13. There Paul reveals the beauty of the life we live in Christ. As those in Christ, we share in His death, life, and reign. In dying to ourselves, we are raised to a new and glorious life that endures. This life prevails even when our faith falters, for our Lord is faithful to those who belong to Him.

The next sentence is a warning to not quarrel with words. It was common in Paul's day for philosophers and religious leaders to engage in public teaching and debate. Paul's concern was that often these exchanges turned into ego-fests rather than a pursuit of truth. Orators often argued about the meaning and logic of words. This brought more confusion than it did resolution. Paul said such things are of "no value" and can ruin those who listen.

Now, we don't have to stretch very far to see this play out in our world today. News and social media are rife with words that produce quarrels. Most of the content is unhelpful and even destructive as it pits us against one another. As we will see, Paul will examine the power of words four times in the 13 verses we're looking at this week. Paul is imploring us to honestly consider our speech and the speech we consume as it has a tremendous influence on our lives.

One of Paul's points in this section is that our speech has a dramatic influence on our lives. How we speak--the words we use and what we talk about--can send our lives in a particular direction. If we consume and participate in Godly words, then we can expect to be built up. If we take in and produce harmful words, then we can expect to be dragged down.

But let us consider quarreling words. I wonder how often we consume and participate in quarreling words. If you're unsure, consider if you have "vented" in the past couple of days about a person or group or engaged in an argument

that you later regretted. I wonder how we can turn that which can ruin into something that builds up. Also, let us consider our life with Jesus.

Praying Together:

“Lord, speak into my life. Show me how I can move away from participating in and consuming words that produce fighting. I want to be a faithful servant who lives and speaks Your truth. Amen.

TUESDAY, 5/9

Read 2 Timothy 2:15.

In Verse 15, we are told to present ourselves as an “approved worker”. The word Paul uses here means “slave or bond-servant”. It refers to one who was captured and forced to serve the will of another. This is an interesting choice of words for Paul, but the meaning is profound.

As those in Christ, we have been captured by His love. We enter into a new life with Him by no longer living for our will but for His will. While slaves often are coerced into service, we choose this life because it is the “with-Christ” life. With an ever-present awareness of what He has done for us, we long to do for Him. We want to bless Him as He has blessed us.

Be mindful of the motivation of the bond-servant. Look at Jesus. He did not serve His Father because He felt the need to earn His Father’s favor. God expressed His favor at Jesus’ baptism before He did anything. Jesus served His Father because He loved God and longed to honor Him. That too should be our motivation. If we serve Jesus because it is the right thing to do or we ought to, then that motivation will not carry us far.

Paul continues saying that when we are living in and for Christ, there is no need to be ashamed. This is a life of intimacy with Jesus, where our sins are not hidden but continually turned over to Him in confession. Remember 2 Timothy 2:11? Even when we are faithless, “He is faithful.” We are an open book before Jesus. We have no need to be anything less.

Paul also tells Timothy that such a servant must “correctly handle the word of truth”. Paul’s concern here is that as a minister, Timothy would remain faithful to the true gospel. Paul faced false teachers in nearly every church he planted. People would come behind him and alter the gospel message. Here, Paul reminds Timothy and us that we are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the gospel that has been entrusted to us. A faithful servant does not alter the

message but preserves its integrity. They hold the line even when it incurs hardship upon them.

In closing, I want us to consider our life with Jesus. I wonder if we consider ourselves bond-servants with Jesus. Are you moved to bless Jesus as He has blessed us?

Praying Together:

“Jesus, I want to be a faithful servant who lives and speaks Your truth. You invite me to a life with You where I do not have to be ashamed because I live with an openness before You. Continue to teach me how to live for You. You are My Teacher and my Lord. Amen.”

WEDNESDAY, 5/10

Read 2 Timothy 2:16-19.

From its beginning, the church has been susceptible to false teachings. As I stated yesterday, the majority of Paul's letters are him offering to correct a false teaching that had popped up in the church's life.

Looking again at the importance of our words, Paul warns us not to participate in “Godless chatter”. The idea here is speaking about worthless matters or empty discussion. Now, this must not be confused with what we might call “shooting the breeze”. It's not bad to talk about the weather or relationships. The litmus test for Godless chatter is if it moves us closer to ungodliness. Gossiping, complaining, cursing, arguing, slander and crude topics steer us in the wrong direction. They are not life-giving. They build up frustration, further fracture relationships, and agitate us at a soul level. They harm us and our hearers. Paul likens such talking to gangrene that spreads and infects others.

As an example of ungodly conversations and teachings, Paul uses two examples in Hymenaeus and Philetus. They taught that the resurrection “had already taken place”. The significance here is that the Greek culture was less interested in a future resurrection of the body. They wanted it now. It seems they adapted Christ's message of the future resurrection to be more palatable for the current culture. Paul saw this as turning from the truth, which was destructive.

The resurrection tells us that Jesus is among the firstborn of a newly created order. When we turn to Him in faith, we too will be raised to a new life with Him. This is our hope. Many describe this reality as “now and not yet”. In one sense,

we have been raised to new life with Jesus, but we are still awaiting the final fulfillment of that promise. These guys taught that it already happened. This would leave believers without much hope because they still faced the terrible tragedies of this life. The fulfillment of our resurrection with Jesus frees us from the tragedies of this life.

Paul reminds Timothy that the foundation of God's truth remains solid, but we must stand upon it. He uses the image of a stone being removed from a building but the building remains strong because the cornerstone was in place. The cornerstone has been sealed with the immovable promises that "the Lord knows those who are His" and "everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness." These promises were etched by the owner the Lord, and are thus secure.

The first promise calls to mind these words of Jesus in John 10:14: "I am the Good Shepherd; I know My sheep and My sheep know Me." Jesus knows those who come to Him in faith and trust. How can we know if we have put our hope in Jesus? If we have truly confessed His name, then we will "turn away from wickedness". This means that we no longer pursue the things that are not of God. We have traded that for a life with God and being involved in the things of God. Sure, we will stumble even in our pursuit of Christ, but we have chosen to go after Him. We long for a life with Him, not apart from Him.

Praying Together:

"Savior, our hope is captured in Your resurrection. We have been raised to a new life with You and in Your Kingdom. We stand on the hope of that promise. We turn from the things that are not of You and turn instead to You. Continue to work in us and lead us to life everlasting. Amen."

THURSDAY, 5/11

Read 2 Timothy 2:20-21.

Paul uses an interesting image here to drive home a point. Let's explore the image first.

In many houses, people have two sets of dinnerware. In our house, we have plates that we use every day and fine china that gets pulled out for special occasions only. This was common for Jewish households in the first century as well. Some vessels were valuable and thus special, while others were more common. You didn't shed a tear when they broke. But the image goes deeper than special or common vessels. The word "vessel" also means honorable and

dishonorable. That one is used for greater purposes and the other for lesser things.

What Paul is saying is that those who have been redeemed by Jesus have been raised to participate in a greater purpose. We have been lifted up to now serve Jesus' purposes. Our new life in Jesus is an opportunity to join His mission of reaching people and making disciples. This is a special and glorious calling for us to live out.

This is contrasted with those who have yet to step into that calling. It is much more common today to see people trying to build a life for themselves. If you go with the flow of the world, then you will spend yourself trying to build up your little kingdom. You will get an education, work, and save all to build up a nest egg for yourself and a few others. You will spend money to bolster your reputation and add pleasure to your life.

The problem is that this life centers on yourself. You are investing your time, energy, and resources into building your life. If you've bought into that and pursued it, chances are you've experienced how shallow such a life can be. We weren't created to make our own kingdoms. We were created to be stewards of God's Kingdom. In Genesis 1, we see that we were made with the purpose of helping lives outside our own flourish. The call of Christ is back to this life.

Stepping into the call of Christ requires that we be changed. Being raised to a new life in Christ means that we have been set apart for His purposes. That is what holiness means. We have been distinguished to live for Him. When Jesus was on this earth, He encouraged people. He cared for the sick and the hurting. He met people's needs. He shared the good news of God's Kingdom. Now that we are in Him, we too have been set apart for this kind of life. Our lives are to be about the same work. So long as we are walking with Jesus and growing in His character, we will be "useful to Him and prepared for every good work".

Praying Together:

"God, I want to be a vessel for You. You have such high hopes for the world. You want to see this world redeemed. Help me to be an instrument of Your will. Cleanse me. Make me holy and useful. Prepare me for any and every good work. Amen."

FRIDAY, 5/12

Read 2 Timothy 2:22.

I remember growing up in the youth group and hearing this verse often. It's often aimed at the young because Timothy was young. It isn't just wisdom for the young. You can be older and still long for the "desires of youth". What are the desires of youth? The word literally means lust. It is typically used for sexual and other inherently selfish desires, like coveting a neighbor's possessions.

So why does Paul warn Timothy about being deceived by these desires? These desires focus on the self. In fact, when these desires drive your life, you can end up doing great harm to others in order to gratify them.

Remember Jesus' teaching on lust in Matthew 5? He said that a man shouldn't look lustfully at a woman, and that to do so is committing adultery in his heart. Lust causes us to dehumanize people. We train ourselves to see a person as an object. Objects are meant to be used. The more we see people as objects, the more likely we are to do inhumane things to them.

Jesus' point is that such a perspective is not what his Kingdom looks like. In Jesus' Kingdom, our humanity is restored. We see people as image-bearers, beloved by God. It is only when we have the eyes to see like this that we can minister to people. For some of us reading this, we need the Lord to purify our hearts and our eyes so we can be "ready for every good work."

Paul's point here is that everyone is chasing after something, and as believers, the two choices are our desires or Christ's righteousness. It is most common to see people be driven by their desires. Since desires shift over time, they are constantly bouncing around from one desire to the next. Then there is righteousness. This is a life with Jesus, who was righteous for us and who make it possible for us to grow in His righteousness. It is in this that we are freed to become what we were created to be in the beginning. It is a life of faith and love that produces in us a deep sense of peace.

I wonder which one you are seeking--your desires or Christ's righteousness.

Praying Together:

"Father, I run to You. I love You with all that I am. I fix my eyes upon You that I may seek You in all things. Keep me from falling prey to the lesser desires within me. I know in my heart that Jesus is better than anything this world has to offer. I see You and the life that is in you. Amen."

SATURDAY, 5/13

Read 2 Timothy 2:23-24.

Verse 23 brings us back to the notion of watching the words we use and consume. Paul says we are to avoid foolish arguments that end up producing fights. The idea is that we should keep from engaging in arguments that are unhelpful and only rile us up.

I think it's important that we are honest with ourselves here. I wonder how much of our own conversations fit into what Paul is saying here. I wonder how much of what we watch on tv adds fuel to the fire.

Let's face it: the rhetoric in our culture is out of control. We seem to have forgotten how to have helpful dialogue. Everything is framed in "us versus them". We can't disagree without you being my enemy. Many people, including Christians, walk around angry while looking for a place to dump it. When we do, it just stirs up more frustration, fighting, and division. This is not Jesus' vision for our lives.

In verse 24, Paul shares Jesus' vision for His servants. They "must not be quarrelsome". Their lives should foster peace rather than division. Their words should tear down rather than build walls. Jesus' servants seek to "be kind to everyone". We treat other people with respect. Kindness is a fruit of the Spirit and a byproduct of Jesus' love in us. The Lord's servant must also be able to teach. While Paul doesn't specify, this likely means both having knowledge to teach and being in a relational position to teach. We will not be able to teach someone we have just insulted. Kindness paves the way for connection which can open opportunities to share.

I want to hone in on this last one. Paul says, "And the Lord's servant must not be...resentful." This speaks to the anger that often sits under the surface of our hearts. We often harbor anger until it festers and becomes bitterness toward people or groups with whom we disagree or consider enemies. We feel justified in our anger because everyone feels justified in their anger. We always feel like we're right when we're mad. Paul says that we aren't right when we hold onto resentment toward others. If you do, it will limit your usefulness as God's servant. You're no good to anyone you're angry at. You can't be an agent of the good news or healing when you're bitter. No, we have to deal with any resentment we're holding onto if we want to be a useful vessel for the Lord.

I wonder what practices in your life fuel your frustrations. I wonder what you can do instead. I wonder what resentment you need to turn over to the Lord for healing so you can be freed to show kindness and serve.

Praying Together:

"Holy Spirit, I long to be a faithful servant of the Lord. I want to be a part of Your restorative work in the world. I need Your help to do so. I need my heart to be changed in certain areas. I turn them over to You. Show me what practices or beliefs need to be surrendered and replaced by better things. You are able to both forgive me and free me for service. Thank You. Amen."

SUNDAY, 5/14

Read 2 Timothy 2:25-26.

This is an interesting couple of verses. Paul had a number of opponents when he shared the good news of Jesus with the world. He was beaten, jailed, and nearly killed on multiple occasions. Paul was bold, sometimes dusting himself off after a good whooping and going back to preaching again. Courage and determination were not an issue for this apostle, and yet he says, "Opponents must be gently instructed." Paul advocates for the Christian servant to be patient and thoughtful as they share the good news. This includes when the opponent is offensive in return.

Why should we be careful and patient when we instruct our opponents? We do so because we have the hope that they too will come to know Jesus. As the Lord's servant, we have experienced the power of Jesus' love to redeem us. We are a new person in Christ. With this new identity comes the hope that others will experience the same. So, we live and serve to see that others experience Jesus' transforming love. This is the overarching purpose for our lives. We want others to be changed by Jesus as we have been changed by Him. This is the hope we hold out for them.

Even when we treat people with respect and patiently instruct them, there is no guarantee they will receive what we have to offer. Sometimes they will kindly reject it, and other times, they may spit it back in your face. But the Lord's servant remains undeterred. We continue to instruct with gentleness and kindness. Why do we continue to treat others this way? Clearly, some don't deserve it. It's not about who deserves what. Our life in Christ is built on the reality that Jesus did something for us that we did not deserve. It's built on grace, and as recipients of grace, we are to give grace. We give grace in the hope that others will encounter Jesus and be changed. Sometimes we have to hold this hope for them even when they cannot see it for themselves.



I realize that this is often a tough thing for many of us to swallow. We like to hold onto our rights, but we forget that we died to ourselves in order to be with Christ. Our lives aren't about us anymore. It is about Jesus and His will. It is about seeing that others are transformed by His amazing love, and if that means welcoming hardship into our lives, then so be it. We have something bigger to live for.

Praying Together:

“Jesus, fill me with Your love. As I consider how to share my hope in You with others, help me to be gentle. I want to hold out hope that they may see You through me. Please take the seeds I plant and bring fruit from them. I want to be a faithful servant. Amen.”