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Sermon Notes

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**Boldness & Faithfulness in the Gospel, pt. 5:**  
**An Approved Craftsman, A Clean Vessel, The Lord's Servant**  
**2 Timothy 2:14-26**

I. Introduction: Two Crucial Issues

***1 Timothy 4:16 "Watch your life and your doctrine closely."***

- A. Proper doctrine
- B. Proper lifestyle
- C. BOTH absolutely essential to a godly Christian ministry

Three Images:

An Approved Craftsman: Properly Handling Scripture (vs. 14-18)

A Clean Vessel: Properly Handling Temptation (vs. 19-23)

The Lord's Servant: Properly Handling Opposition (vs. 23-26)

II. An Approved Craftsman: Properly Handling Scripture (vs. 14-18)

A. Central charge: verse 15

***vs. 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."***

1. Everything else comes from this starting place
2. Poor handling of Scripture leads to false doctrine
3. False doctrine inevitably leads to sinful living

B. Image: approved craftsman

Illus. Medieval guilds... apprentice, journeyman, master craftsman; to make progress in the guild, one had to submit to a process of testing of the work by the experts of the guild; the MASTERPIECE was to test piece

1. God is the tester of this craftsman... God tests the heart and the doctrine
2. Growth in this requires full dedication: “DO YOUR BEST...” = “MAKE EVERY EFFORT”
  - a. long hours studying the Word
  - b. careful inquiry into doctrine, testing one concept by another
  - c. no shortcuts!!
3. Essence is proper handling of the Word of God
  - a. Paul uses the word “cutting straight”
  - b. perhaps a reference to his own trade, tentmaking
  - c. word also used in describing a straight path cut through the wilderness

***Proverbs 3:5-6 “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”***

Illus. Daniel Boone & Cumberland trail

C. Strong reminder: standing in God’s very presence

1. After the testing comes the presentation: “Here I am, Lord, use me.” Then you can stand in God’s presence and not be ashamed!!
2. Paul uses this reminder powerfully:

***vs. 14 “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.”***

***4:1 “In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his kingdom and his appearing I give you this charge.”***

3. The approved craftsman does his work before God, and therefore is UNASHAMED
4. The false teacher who cuts the word crookedly has every reason to be ashamed

Illus. Inscription above our heads at Southern Seminary

D. Negatively: word-battles, godless-chatter, false doctrine

**vs. 14 “quarreling about words”**

1. word-battles: arguing endlessly over minutia of words while missing the truth God has clearly put in Scripture... Paul says it misses the whole point of words—the building up of the saints in godliness

Illus. Pharisees “strain out a gnat but swallow a camel” (Matthew 23:24)  
Middle Ages, scholastic theologians battled over how many angels could dance on the head of a pin

2. godless chatter: empty babbling, profane jokes or theological inquiries

**vs. 16 “Avoid godless chatter because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.”**

Scholastic theologians even debated whether God could have become incarnate as a donkey or a pumpkin rather than as a man

- a. irreverent, godless questions are no part of true theology
- b. careful teaching from scripture is essential... godless debates are evil
- c. CLEAR... strong connection between doctrine & life... the more you indulge in false teaching, the more ungodly you become
- d. WHAT MAKES US GODLY? The word of God rightly taught

**1 Peter 2:2 “Like newborn babies crave the pure milk of the Word so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.”**

3. false doctrine: heretical teaching which directly contradict Scripture

**vs. 17 “Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place and they destroy the faith of some.”**

- a. Paul openly identifies false teachers by name & says they have “wandered away from” that straight path that a good teacher should be cutting
- b. he calls their doctrine “gangrene”... a deadly poison spreading through the body; AND IT DOES SPREAD... IT DOES GROW!!
- c. he names the specific heresy: the resurrection has already taken place

Explain: Gnostic teachers in Ephesus who denigrated the human body & spiritualized everything... taught a form of perfectionism that emphasized inner spiritual experience rather than the resurrection of the body; Paul called it GANGRENE

- d. RESULT: faith of some destroyed... uprooted and turned upsidedown
- E. BUT this upheaval should not destroy Timothy’s faith... none of Christ’s true sheep will ever be lost!

***vs. 19 “Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: ‘The Lord know those who are his,’ and ‘Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.’”***

- 1. Despite the outward damage done by false teachers, God never forgets His true children
- 2. The Lord KNOWS them... has been knowing them before time began
- 3. The false ones Christ will openly declare on judgment day

***“I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers.” (Matthew 7:23)***

- 4. The foundation of our salvation is God’s knowledge of us in Christ... and that knowledge is ETERNAL and unshakable
- 5. YET it is a twin inscription... not just that God knows us forever, but that we MUST be holy and pure, just like Christ

***Romans 8:29 “Those whom God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”***

- 6. All of God’s true children deeply hate sin and turn away from it... if you don’t hate sin, the Holy Spirit doesn’t live inside you

THE APPROVED CRAFTSMAN PROPERLY HANDLES THESE TRUTHS, AND DOESN'T GET INVOLVED IN WORD-BATTLES, GODLESS SPECULATIONS, OR FALSE TEACHING...

BUT now we've moved neatly to the second image... not just watch your doctrine closely, but watch your life as well... here is the image of the CLEAN VESSEL

III. A Clean Vessel: Properly Handling Temptation (vs. 19-23)

**vs. 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."*

A. Overriding principle: God uses holy people to do His work

1. The LARGE HOUSE is the temple of the Lord
2. The Lord of this house is holy and pure

**Habakkuk 1:13** *"Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong."*

3. Sin threatens to disqualify us from his service... it is to be hated and feared

Illus. Germ theory... no surgeon today would use an infected scalpel... neither will God use a sinful vessel to carry on his work

Illus. John Wesley said "Give me one hundred men who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and I could shake the world."

B. An Increase in Value... through purification

Illus. Limoges china the most valuable but not the most useful... Tupperware far less valuable but more useful; BUT in God's house, the more valuable you are the more useful... gold, silver vessels are HOLY vessels... wood & clay are impure, used only for ignoble purposes

**vs. 21** *"If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the master, prepared to do any good work."*

1. purification from sin prerequisite for true usefulness to God
2. KEY: preparation ahead of time to do the Master's will

3. The more you prepare through knowledge of Scripture and purification of life, the more fruit you'll bear for Jesus Christ

4. Two-fold preparation:

***Ephesians 2:10 "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."***

a. God prepares us for the work

b. God prepares the work for us

C. HOW to purify yourself: FLEE AND PURSUE

1. FLEE...

***vs. 22 "Flee the evil desires of youth..."***

Illus. The man who said "I'm sick and tired of all the immorality, violence, and evil on my VCR!!"

a. temptation must be avoided at all costs

***Jesus taught us to pray "Lead us not into temptation..."***

b. biggest sins are culmination of long process... a process that begins very small

Illus. Sow a thought reap an action; sow an action reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny

Sometimes office flirting seems so innocent, but what is its outcome?

Sometimes a slightly covetous thought about your neighbor's home leads to a total restructuring of your life to earn more money, thus wasting many hours that should have been spent in service to Christ

Sometimes a hidden anger at a brother in Christ can flare into an open conflict that destroys the work of the church

c. God's answer... flee... run away to safety!!

***Matthew 2:13 The angel told Joseph to flee into Egypt with Mary and baby Jesus to escape Herod... a sense of running for your life!!***

***Another Joseph ran away from Potiphar's wife to avoid sinning against God***

2. PURSUE... (not just negative)

***vs. 22 "...pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."***

- a. simply trying to avoid evil is not enough
- b. we are to pursue Christ-likeness... imitation of Christ
- c. Christ's positive righteousness, His complete trust in His Father, His love for the children of God, His perfect peace
- d. INCREASING QUALITIES!!... not stagnant

IV. The Lord's Servant: Properly Handling Opposition (vs. 23-26)

A. Final metaphor of this chapter... the Servant of the Lord

B. Context: opposition from sinful people

- 1. godly servants are a tremendous threat to Satan
- 2. he attacks them at every turn in the road
- 3. oppose his doctrine, oppose his plans for ministry, oppose everything he does

C. Again, it begins with arguments over words

***vs. 23 "Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's Servant must not quarrel."***

- 1. "foolish & stupid arguments" has to do with vain speculations by people who are not fully instructed in the Bible
- 2. such people begin to argue with the Lord's Servant, to quarrel with him
- 3. Paul says to Timothy: REFUSE to take part... simply say "No thank you...!"

D. The Lord's Servant... a beautiful picture of Christ from Isaiah

- 1. Isaiah 42:1-3... gentle, a bruised reed or snuff out a smoldering wick

2. Isaiah 50:6... humble, he doesn't hide his face from mocking and spitting, his back from beating, or his beard from being plucked out
3. Isaiah 53:7... meek he follows like a lamb to the slaughter without even opening his mouth

E. Timothy to imitate Christ when opposed

**vs. 24 “*Instead he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.*”**

1. Kind = gentle, not harsh or overbearing
2. Able to teach = not giving up of those who oppose him, as we shall see... able to marshal the appropriate texts of Scripture to change their heart
3. Not resentful = not keeping a record of wrongs, or being embittered

**Illus. Two major reasons for pastors leaving the ministry: sexual immorality and bitterness arising from interpersonal conflicts... Paul addresses both here**

F. Strategy for those who oppose him

1. spiritual insight: understand Satan's work behind the scenes
  - a. drugs his victims so they lose their senses
  - b. sets traps
2. gentle instruction: use the Word of God as a scalpel to cut away false notions
3. prayer for repentance: GOD GIVES IT... pray to Him for it!!

**BUT... the Lord's servant must never give in to bitterness and a hard heart toward those who oppose!**

V. Summary of 2 Timothy 2

A. Composite picture of the ideal Christian worker

1. good soldiers, law-abiding athletes, hardworking farmers = total dedication for a goal
2. unashamed craftsmen = properly handling the word of God... clear, accurate teaching of the Bible

3. clean vessels = properly defeating temptation... total dedication to holiness, to being like Christ
4. Lord's Servant = properly handling opposition, with humility and gentle instruction from the Bible

Once upon a time, a long time ago, a young man was walking through the district of town where all the merchants had their workshops. He recognized the symbols hanging over the doors of each shop—one for the craftsman who made fine pottery, one for the expert worker in leather, another was renowned for his woodworking skills. He desperately wanted to become the apprentice of a skilled master, and become known as a master craftsman himself... but to whom should he apply. He finally stopped in front of a shop whose trade symbol he didn't recognize. He looked in the window and saw an old man busy over his workbench, twisting and forming glowing pieces of metal into strange unrecognizable shapes. Curious, he entered the shop. It was hot inside with the smell of a blast furnace filling the room... the old man didn't look up but kept to his work. Hanging on the wall were all kinds of marvelous devices, all made of metal and formed into configurations whose purpose was hidden from him. The old man quenched the piece he was working on in a bucket of water with a loud hiss... he looked at the young man and said, "Good morning! What can I do for you today?"

The young man said, "I am looking to be trained in a craft as an apprentice... what do you make?" The man smiled and said, "I make everything necessary for all the other craftsmen to do their jobs. I make tools—I am a toolmaker. The potter uses my tools to make his potter's wheel turn, and to shape the clay. The leatherworker uses my tools to cut, to treat, and to join his leather. The carpenter uses my tools to cut, shape, and join his wood, and to carve magnificent shapes in it for decoration."

The young man said, "Will you train me how to do this? To be a tool maker?" The old man stopped smiling and looked seriously at him. "It will cost you everything you have. For the techniques of toolmaking are ancient and require absolute and total dedication. Without that dedication..."