



Sermon Study Guide

Questions from the Brink: Are You Being Childish
2 Timothy 2:14-16 – Sunday, October 6, 2013

**Study questions are in italics*

Introduction

- We can't simply assume that local churches will remain committed to the gospel. In 2005, sociologist Christian Smith concluded most American teenagers are what he called, "moralistic, therapeutic, deists." In other words, their so-called religion is works-based, centered on their own self-esteem, and rooted in a generic view of God. Last year, author Ross Douthat argued in *Bad Religion* that local churches in America have, largely, abandoned their confessional, doctrinal heritage.
- So what can we do? We can admit that Satan is hard at work, fighting against the gospel, the church, and ultimately against God. And we can study 2 Timothy 2 very carefully. Here we find Paul instructing Timothy to engage in an epic, spiritual battle against false teaching.
- Paul is exhorting each of us, from 2 Timothy 2:14-26, to fight against a cross-less, grace-less, false gospel. How?

Respect the False Gospel (2 Tim. 2:14-19)

- We are to respect the false gospel the way we respect a venomous snake or a powerful tornado. We neither ignore it nor make light of it. The false gospel is a serious enemy to God's people.
- What is this false gospel? Paul tells us:
 - **The false gospel is irreverent**
 - Paul refers to it as babble (v. 16). This teaching is obviously not from God, and if it's not from God, it cannot save.
 - Hymenaeus and Philetus are examples of irreverent teachers. They taught that the bodily resurrection (see Acts 10, 1 Cor. 15) had already taken place. Thus, they denied the teaching of the apostles.
 - **The false gospel is destructive**
 - It "ruins the hearers" (v. 14). It leads "people into more and more ungodliness" (v. 16). It upsets "the faith of some" (v. 18).
 - There must have been enough truth in this teaching to gain a hearing from Christians, but not enough to be healthy.

- **The false gospel is popular**
 - Paul says it “will spread like gangrene” (v. 17). Ever since the gospel has been preached there have been teachers who pervert it, and people willing to buy their irreverent, destructive theological wares.
 - There are a lot of ways to get an address wrong. You can have the wrong address entirely. You could have everything right except the zip code. You could be off just a couple letters (e.g., using NE instead of NW).
 - Today, there are lots of popular false gospels, they are all dangerous, but they contain differing degrees of truth. Mormonism, for example, has the completely wrong address. The prosperity gospel has the wrong zip code. Much teaching in what we would call evangelical churches contains so much truth, but it emphasizes grace at the expense of holiness or vice versa, or it assumes instead of preaches the gospel—devastating problems caused by seemingly tiny omissions.
 - *What false gospels do you see today? Why are they so popular? Have you ever bought into a false gospel, and why?*

Resist the false gospel

- False teachers surrounded Timothy. But Paul offers hope that if false teachers give up their false teaching, they will be saved. *What hope does Paul hold out to false teachers in verses 20-21?*
- Whether or not the false teachers repent, their teaching must be resisted. But how? Paul offers Timothy several pieces of instruction that are relevant for our lives, today.
 - **First, hang on to old truths.**
 - Paul tells Timothy to “flee youthful passions” (v. 22). The young are more likely to think a new day requires a new message. Timothy must flee such youthful passions and hang on to the apostles’ message.
 - *What tempts our generation to run away for the old truths? What parts of the gospel are people today most likely to change? How are we susceptible to abandoning old, gospel truths?*
 - **Second, pursue holiness.**
 - The gospel may be the most important thing about us, but if we truly believe it, our lives will change. This is why Paul exhorts Timothy to “pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace” (v. 22).
 - *Why is it important to be deliberate about pursuing holiness? What do you do (very practically) so that you live a holy life?*

- **Third, make community.**
 - Paul does not tell Timothy to pursue holiness alone, but “along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart” (v. 22). Paul wants Timothy to lock arms with the church in living out the gospel.
 - *How is being part of a faithful church like holding a microphone up to the gospel? In other words, of what good is active, robust engagement in a local church? How can you grow as an active member of your church?*
- **Fourth, correct false teaching.**
 - We should love false teachers (and those who follow false teaching) enough to correct them. But the tone of our correction should not be the tone we find in so many comments sections of popular blogs. When we correct, it must not be out of ill will toward others.
 - Paul tells Timothy to correct false teachers “with gentleness” (v. 24). Our hope and prayer should be that they give up their false gospel (vv. 25-26).
 - *What opportunities do you have to correct false teaching?*
- **Fifth, remind others of the whole gospel.**
 - Go back to verse 14. Paul tells Timothy to “remind them of these things.” By “these things,” Paul is referring to all he’s written, thus far, in 2 Timothy. Reread that portion of the letter—it is saturated with gospel truth about Jesus Christ and his work for sinners.
 - So Paul is encouraging Timothy to remind the church of the gospel. Somehow our daily conversations are to be salted with reminders for one another of the gospel.
 - *Why is it hard many Christians to naturally discuss the gospel? Do you think Christians have a good sense of how the gospel fits into conversations about work, parenting, leisure time, etc? What can we do as a church to raise the level of conversation in the church? What can you do as an individual Christian to remind others of the gospel?*

Conclusion

- Let’s not think so much about false teachers that we neglect our own, personal need for the gospel.
- May the Lord make us today, more thankful than ever, for a cross-full, grace-full, whole gospel of Jesus Christ.