

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

## Four Duties of A Good Servant

2 Timothy 2:14-19

**Keywords:** False Teaching, Faithful Preaching, Faithful Teachers, Heresy, Faithful Servant, Pastoral Responsibilities

**PowerPoint Presentation included:** NONE

**SermonAudio Blurb:** In the end there are only two groups of teachers in the church, faithful ones and false ones. And then, in those groups we have varying degrees. Here Paul tells Timothy to take on the duty of rejecting false teaching, no matter what degree it is and to strive to be an excellent handler of God's Word. It is a needed word for today.

### I. Introduction.

- A. Having taught much on enduring and suffering with Paul for the sake of the gospel we now move into a new section where Paul instructs Timothy on the nature of being a good servant.
  - 1. Before we see him telling Timothy to bear up and endure.
  - 2. Now we see him calling Timothy into action, especially in the realm of teaching.
- B. Remind "them" meaning those Timothy has charge over. He is to give his parting words to those in leadership back in Ephesus but it also takes on a personal touch as Timothy is clearly in view as well.
- C. Throughout this world there are countless gatherings of people in the name of Christ. We call them "churches."
  - 1. Healthy ones.
  - 2. Unhealthy.
  - 3. Dead
  - 4. And growing.
  - 5. And in very church there are those called by God to lead and oversee the church. Timothy was one and he is to leave behind in Ephesus men who can take over his role.
  - 6. Good men who are good servants.
- D. Over 20 years ago I had the privilege of sitting in the left side of the auditorium of GCC to hear John MacArthur preach through this book.

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1. It was one of those moments that gripped me and propelled me to make decisions about what I would be and embracing what that would cost.
2. Bottom-line, I determined to be ultimately found a good servant of the Lord.
3. That doesn't happen in some vacuum nor does it happen while we let go and let God have his way with us. It takes work, a lot of work.
4. It requires that a person take seriously the process we went over in 2 Peter 1 last week. And it means that there are certain things that a good servant must not do and others he must do no matter what.
5. We have in this passage four duties of a good servant of the Lord.

## **II. A Good Servant does not get trapped in foolish arguments (14).**

- A. Let me first speak to the nature of teaching in the church. There simply cannot be enough of it.
  1. The context is Timothy who is in Ephesus.
  2. Acts 20 says that the Apostle Paul spent 3 ½ years teaching and warning them. And in an impassioned manner, “with tears, night and day.”
  3. Then he writes the letter of Ephesians to correct several issues.
  4. Then he send Timothy to set things right due to false teaching (1 Timothy).
  5. And here again he is instructing Timothy on what to teach the Ephesians. When do they decide to learn? Notice that the people who he is to remind is the leaders and people of Ephesus.
- B. He is to remind them that there is no value in getting trapped in arguments that do not move people toward a love and delight of Jesus.
  1. One situation that Christians can find themselves in more that they like to admit is a discussion that becomes heated and time-intensive over things that really have no value.
  2. This idea here is people who are trying to argue over tiny points of interpretation.
    - a. It is to be avoided if the discussion over small points of interpretation becomes a point of contention.
    - b. It is to be avoided if the discussion causes you to lose the main point of what the passage means.

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- c. It is to be avoided if your goal is to be the one who wins, not for truth but to be seen as wise and knowledgeable.
  3. In Ephesus there was a huge love of rhetoric, which was a formal discipline of training. Through skillful argumentation they seek to win the crowd to their way of thinking and the subject matter is not really the goal.
  4. You can see how this would affect people in the church. A point of doctrine is taught, there is discussion and a person seeks to employ his powers of rhetoric to the situation. Another rises up and pretty soon a debate is off and running. And somewhere along the way the point is lost, all that matters is who wins.
  5. We do not argue to be seen. A Christian contends for the gospel. It matters not one bit if they are seen as wise, they embrace the foolishness of the gospel and refuse to back away from it.
  6. A wise servant stays away from these situations so that he can then help those who are drawn into them to escape.
  7. Phi 1:27 Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;
- C. Why does a good servant avoid this type of foolish arguments? Because it is utterly useless and because it harms the people of God.
1. It is useless.
    - a. The argument might be fun and even challenging.
    - b. But its result is something else. There is no advantage gained. There is nothing learned. There is no value that becomes yours. It is useless.
    - c. Literally, there is no benefit to it. So let none of us argue that there is. It will not profit you and it will not profit those who listen to it.
  2. Worse, it hurts the Church.
    - a. Right there makes it all a good servant needs to know as to why not get caught up in these arguments.
    - b. The only people who are truly served by these arguments are the proud and vain. They seek the approval of man and not God. They

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put their desires above the needs of those for whom Jesus Christ died.

- c. The reason it hurts the church is that it becomes a distraction in both form and substance.
  - (1) In form because it gives the people the wrong example to follow. They follow their leaders and get drawn into foolish arguments. They win and are arrogant or they lose and they become embittered.
  - (2) In substance because they lose sight of sound doctrine that converts the soul and makes one wise before God. No longer are we focused on the broad swaths of truth as presented in God's word, not it is over details and argumentation that have no value.
  - (3) Congratulations, the one drawn into this sort of thing harms himself and harms the Church. And no good servant of the Lord will allow this of himself.

D. Paul now makes a powerful contrast in vs 15, when Scripture is faithfully taught and preached, error suffers by comparison.

### **III. A Good Servant labors hard in what are good words (15).**

- A. Here Paul focuses now upon Timothy himself and notice that it all centers around how he works with God's word.
- B. Notice how he exhorts this young man to do his best. Not just do "enough" but to be eager to do it right, to go the extra mile, to push himself to always being improving.
  - 1. In my old bible I remember marking down, "maximum effort" as I heard my pastor preach.
  - 2. It is a devotion in which you die to yourself for the sake of the Word.
  - 3. It is not for money, it is not for fame, it is not for intellectual intrigue. It is a giving of your entire being to the task of perfecting your understanding and teaching of the Word.
- C. Anything less is unacceptable by the good servant. Because the motivation is to be approved and unashamed.

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1. I think there shall be many on judgment day who will stand ashamed.
  2. Those who buy their sermons from sermon mills. Those who farm out the hard work of exegesis to companies for a fee. Those who are greater experts at illustrating and story-telling than simply explaining the Word.
  3. In the end all a pastor and teacher will have will be their effort in teaching and the people they taught. Along with that it will be their personal conduct in life. And these things shall be for what we are called to give an account.
  4. The good servant forgoes the praise and approval of man and seeks the praise and approval of His God.
- D. A good servant seeks to make the Word “straight.”
1. “. . . accurately handling the word of truth.”
  2. It has the idea of cutting something straight. Nothing destroys furniture than a crooked cut. Nothing scars like a shoddy surgical slice. A farmer’s field suffers when the furrows wander.
  3. It is understanding the task of the Word is to rightly cut it, rightly handle it so that the maximum amount of truth is exposed and taught.
  4. This is why I want to push the young men of the church to be students of the Word. I want you to be men who learn to the best of your abilities how to handle God’s Word.
  5. No pastor should be lazy in the trenches of exegesis. To the best of their training and with a spirit of always growing, they should put forth the maximum effort to rightly deal with a passage. And never, ever preach it until they know what it says.
- E. Why? Because of what you are handling—the Word of Truth.
1. Not Shakspere or the Hobbit. Not a repair manual on lawnmowers or a graphic novel on Batman. It isn’t a musical score nor is it a painting.
  2. It is God’s very word and it is truth.
    - a. It is that word that Jesus says sanctifies/makes holy God’s people.
    - b. It is that word that makes the simple wise.
    - c. It is that word that causes us to no longer be moved around by false teaching.

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- d. It is that word that gives life to a dead soul.
  - e. It is that word that brings hope and forgiveness.
  - f. It is that word that reveals to us the infinite glory of our triune God.
  - g. It is that word that brings us salvation.
3. Therefore a wise, good servant works hard and is utterly unforgiving to himself and his labors to bring God's word rightly handled to God's people and invites them to feast.
- F. One man said, "Second Timothy 2:15 is not so much "the student's verse" as it is "the craftsman's verse." (Black, R and McClung, R)

## **IV. A God Servant rejects godless speech (16-18)**

- A. It is the type of speech that leads people away from Jesus (ungodliness=uncaring about God).
- 1. It is not talking about sports or vacations. It is not teasing and joking.
  - 2. Here it is that type of speech that may sound deep and excellent but it accomplishes nothing in reality other than harm.
  - 3. His example of worldly chatter is to deny the physical resurrection.
- B. If unchecked it slowly creeps into the church, destroying it so there should be no tolerance of it.
- 1. Gangrene is nasty. We have a greater ability to deal with it today but it is still serious.
  - 2. But think of it in the day of Paul.
    - a. Gangrene rots the body, bringing decay to organs and tissues; if it enters the bloodstream, it can prove fatal.
    - b. What a graphic picture of the damage that false teaching can do to the Body of Christ, the church! Paul notes that these men have destroyed the faith of some.
    - c. As with gangrene, radical measures are called for. Hymenaeus had already been amputated; Paul mentions his expulsion from membership in 1 Timothy 1:20.

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- d. Apparently, however, he continued to do damage, even outside the church.
- C. Example of ungodly, worldly speech (17b-18).
- 1. Argues that resurrection has happened.
    - a. This is probably an early form of gnosticism.
    - b. A rejection of the physical and an exalting of the spiritual.
    - c. In other words, the resurrection was never designed to raise our bodies, but rather it is a spiritual resurrection to a higher place or position.
    - d. You hear vestiges of this in many new age and Eastern religions.
  - 2. Result is upsetting the faith of some.
    - a. In Evangelicalism today there is so much tolerance on truth that there is really nothing that is true.
    - b. I can quickly note an example of this. There is a man, Dr. Boyd, in Minneapolis area who pastors a large church and on the staff of Bethel College and Seminary. Holds to Open Theism. Was brought up on charges of not holding to orthodox doctrine and was allowed to continue in the General Baptist Convention.
    - c. His teaching is vile and it is certainly not rightly handling the Scripture. It is filled with subtle twistings of Scripture and rationalisms that destroy faith.
    - d. Yet it continues to spread through our country. So that when disasters like the recent huge tornado is discussed the answer he gives is that God didn't want that to happen. And those who have bought into his errors, like Rachel Held Evans, a popular blogger, condemn a God who would have his hand in that activity, calling him an abusive god.
    - e. This is soul-sucking, short-term good feeling theology that has no anchor that is deeply embedded in the ultimate purposes of God Himself. And so we are forced to become empty talkers who given nothing of power and purpose to God's people.
  - 3. Why, then should they be allowed to have a voice in any congregation?

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## **V. A Good Servant reminds the people of God's sovereignty and their holy calling (19).**

- A. “How strong is God’s foundation? It is strong enough to withstand the assault of error and evil. When Paul earlier wrote to these same Ephesian Christians, he compared false doctrines to waves that toss immature believers to and fro, and winds that blow them here and there (Eph. 4:14). Think of television footage of storm victims struggling to keep their feet against hurricane winds and pounding surf. That’s how vulnerable an unstable Christian is to false teaching. But a massive building with a bedrock foundation and reinforced girders can take the brunt of a storm without effect. Waves may break on the church, but they will not break the church.” (Black, R., & McClung, R.)
- B. Paul then confirms this truth with two seals upon it.
  - 1. The Lord knows who are His—meaning there is no fear that the true Church will be lost. (Cf Numbers 16).
  - 2. And God’s people are those who reject evil.
- C. Not everyone in a church is truly in Jesus Christ. But God knows who is and who is not. And He gives us the ability to see a glimpse of who we should watch by what they say and what they do.

## **VI. Conclusion.**

- A. Words matter, a lot.
  - 1. Our speech either moves people toward Jesus or away from Him.
  - 2. There is no such thing as truly neutral speech.
- B. Good speech is brings the person what they need. Which is not always what they want to hear.
- C. But good speech should not be only hard speech. It is to be redemptive in nature, seeking their well-being and building hope into their lives.
- D. At the end of the day you need to be able to ask whether or not what you said was needful, was it profitable, was it true, was it born out of a love for them or a desire to win or be right.
- E. When those questions can be answered with a clear “yes.” Your conscience should be clean and at peace with you.



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## Small Group Questions

- Thinking back over your time in churches can you recall (without gossiping) where an over abundance of nit-picking over terms and plans resulted in hurt and ruined lives?
- If there is a concern over a direction or teaching that comes up in the church where is the first place you should go? Why? Where is the last place you should go? Why?
- What is to be the focus of your elders, especially your pastors, in their day to day duties. What should drive them? Does your interaction with them support what you just said?
- When you get together with other Christians it is normal to just “talk” but how do you create intentional times of profitable speech designed to grow and support each other in your faith? List ways upon which you can improve on this.