

2 Timothy 2:8-19 Bible Study Lesson 3 and Commentary

Outline

- I. Endure (7-13)
- II. Focus on what is important (14-19)

I. Endure (7-13)

Discussion Questions

- How does God give us understanding? How can we increase our understanding?
- What was the reason Paul was willing to suffer so much?
- How can remembering Christ help encourage us to face suffering without giving up?
- What fact encouraged Paul even in the midst of his imprisonment?
- In verse 10, Paul says, “for this reason.” For what reason?
- What is Paul’s goal in all of this? Are you willing to face death in order to see the gospel spread?
- What does it mean to die with him?
- When can we reign with Him?
- What does it mean, “if we deny Him, He will deny us?”

Cross-References

On Meditation:

Joshua 1:8 – Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Psalms 1:2 – But whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.

Proverbs 4:20-22 – My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words.

Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to one’s whole body.

Psalms 119: 97 – I have suffered much; preserve my life, Lord, according to your word.

Verse by Verse Commentary

1. Jesus is your inspiration (8-9) – Remembering Jesus’ example, could encourage Timothy to face suffering without fear or giving up. Jesus’ suffering and His sacrifice for us should also motivate us to face persecution boldly without thought of compromise. Jesus gave His life for us even though we had done nothing for Him and had done everything against Him. We should be willing to give our lives for Him who has done everything for us.

2. The Word of God is not imprisoned – No matter what happens to you, God’s enemies cannot stop the spread of His Word. Many times God even uses the death of His saints to begin revivals. There was once many soldiers in a Roman legion who become believers. The commander was ordered to take them out on a frozen lake, strip them, and wait for them to die of cold. Out on the lake, they prayed and sang hymns of praise to God, who they knew were with them in the face of persecution. Their example of devotion and joy in the midst of suffering was so great that the commander himself became a believer, joined them, and died with them out on the ice.

In a more recent example there was a guard in a Muslim country who was instructed to torture his Christian prisoner. The love and forgiveness he saw in that prisoner melted his heart and he too became a believer.

Application: Knowing that the enemies of the cross can never stop the gospel from spreading should give you boldness to stand firm in the faith.

3. The lost motivate us – Jesus is our inspiration. Yet He is not the only reason Paul (and we) must endure. Another thing driving Paul was the necessity to keep sharing the gospel so that all of God’s elect would hear and believe. We should have the same drive to share the gospel with the lost. Like Paul did, do you also say “woe is me” if I don’t share the gospel?

5. Verses 11-13 – We die with him figuratively when we die to our sins and are “baptized” into His death. We must die to live. If we die to ourselves, we can live for Christ. But we won’t only live with Him. We will also reign with Him. (1 Corinthians 6:3. Mark 8:38.)

God’s character doesn’t change. God will not break His promises even when we do. God will not abandon us even when we sin. In Deuteronomy 31:6 we learn that God will never leave us or forsake us. But yet verse 12 also has a warning. If we publicly deny our belief in Christ, then He too will be ashamed of us. God is willing to forgive as we see in the example of Peter. At the same time we should remember that true believers will repent as Peter also did.

II. Focus on what is important (14-19)

Discussion Questions

- Who is the “them” in verse 14?
- What does it mean to “wrangle about words?” Can you give any examples?
- What is the result of arguing about words?
- What does verse 15 tell us we should focus on instead?
- In what way are we to be a “workman?”
- Why does this workman not need to be ashamed?
- What is the word of truth? How are we to handle it? What will it look like in our lives if we are a workman accurately handling the word of truth?
- What kind of talk is worldly and empty?
- What will the result of it be?
- What should you do if the people around you want to talk about these things?
- What can you do to steer conversations toward more meaningful topics?
- What is the relationship between verse 19 and the rest of the chapter?
- How does the knowledge that the “Lord knows those who are His” effect your everyday life?

Cross-References

Matthew 12:36-37 – But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

Proverbs 12:28 – In the way of righteousness there is life; along that path is immortality.

James 1:26 – Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.

Ephesians 5:6 – Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

Proverbs 10:19 – Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongues.

Verse by Verse Commentary

1. Overview – In the past chapter and a half we have learned that Timothy should not give in to fear. He should stand strong and uncompromising on the truth of God’s Word. He should not turn away from Paul or the Lord. He should be strong in God’s grace and not give up because of persecution. He should renew his zeal for serving the Lord. He should give his life for the Lord. He should endure to the very end. He should remain faithful no matter what.

Starting in verse 14 we see Paul encourages Timothy not to get sidetracked, but instead to focus on the important things. He is also to remind those he taught of the same principle. It makes sense that Paul would want to remind Timothy of this. Paul was facing an imminent death. That brings perspective. He could look back at his life and ministry and know what was important and what wasn’t. He knew what was worth arguing about and taking a stand on and what was not.

A lot of people do not understand this. By nature, we are prideful and want to be right. And when all we care about is being right, we lose sight of what is really important. In these verses Paul reminds Timothy of what is important and what is not.

Application: Seek to understand, not debate. There are issues that are worth “fighting” about. The purity of the gospel is one. Jesus’ deity is another. However, most arguments are not worth fighting at all. Before you engage in a debate, ask yourself if it is even worth winning.

2. Do not wrangle about words – Do not get stuck on minute details. Arguing is not something which we should take any kind of pleasure in. We should not pridefully seek to defend our own opinion on obscure and unimportant matters. This is so important that Paul tells Timothy to charge the people in the presence of God not to be like this.

We have probably all been around people who enjoy arguing, wanting to show how smart they are by correcting others on meaningless points. These people often interrupt others to correct them: “It wasn’t 12:30 when we went. It was 12:20.” “That happened Tuesday, not Wednesday!”

Do you enjoy being around these kinds of people? While they may just desire to show how smart they are, in reality it just annoys people and doesn’t accomplish anything productive. Believers may do the same thing toward the Bible.

I knew a guy who attended a church. He wrote emails to at least three different speakers criticizing very small points in their messages. They wrote back gracious and considerate replies in essence saying, “It is not so important. We will have to agree to disagree.” But he could not take that as an answer. He continued sending email after email trying to force them to agree with his viewpoints. He became angry and bitter, often resorting to arguing face to face with people who disagreed with him. His emails often referenced his seminary education as a reason why they should listen to him. This man was sidetracked by details. He missed out on the most important things of following Christ like love and unity and mercy and kindness and instead allowed his pride to take over. According to Paul this is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers.

When he kept arguing over triviality I suggested to those people who kept being approached by him to follow the instruction in Titus 3:10, “Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them.”

Application: What can we learn from this? How can we avoid these things? We should ask ourselves “is this important enough to argue about?” before we start arguing. There are some things that are worth arguing about. Examples include the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the inerrancy of Scripture, etc. But many things are not. If it is not worth arguing about, then don’t argue about it.

4. Verse 15 – When I was growing up I attended AWANA (Approved Workmen Are Not Ashamed) clubs. The key verse for AWANA is here in verse 15. Verses 14 and 16 tell us things that are not important enough to waste our time on. Verse 15 shows us what is important enough to dedicate our time to. We are to be diligent to understand the word of truth (the Bible.)

We are to be like a workman. A workman understands his tools. A carpenter knows where his tools are and exactly what they do. He has a specific tool for every task. Each one has a specific purpose. When he uses the tools, he does so effortlessly because he has practiced and has become very familiar with them.

This is how we are to be toward the Bible. Your Bible is your most important tool. It should be familiar in your hands. You should be able to find different passages, verses, and books quickly. You should memorize the books of the Bible so you can turn to different places smoothly. You should memorize verses in the Bible so that you can pull them out when you need them. You should study the Bible diligently so that you understand it and can explain it to others. You should understand how to interpret the Bible so that you can understand it correctly and teach it to others.

Last lesson we learned from 2 Timothy 2:2 that we should pass on what we have learned. If you do not study the Bible diligently, you will not be able to discern if what you have learned is true or not. You must not rely on other people to spoon feed you God’s Word. Instead you must study it yourself so that you can discern the truth and only pass on the truth to others. Do not try to insert your own ideas or opinions into the Bible. Instead your goal should be to understand what God’s intended meaning is. To do that you must be diligent.

Activity: Go around the group and ask each person share one specific way they can be more diligent in their Bible study.

5. Avoid worldly and empty chatter – See also 1 Timothy 6:20-21. Worldly and empty chatter is talk which does not build people up. It either accomplishes nothing, distracts people from God, or even has a negative impact on their relationship with Christ. Many topics which unbelievers spend a lot of time on are worldly and empty.

For example? (Dirty jokes, having silly conversations about girl/guy relationships, talking about details of the lives of actors/singers/models/celebrities, always talking about making money, comparing ourselves with others, envious talk, etc.) I have a simple test for you to ask yourself to make sure you don’t engage in any worldly or empty chatter. It is called “WWJS” (What Would Jesus Say)? If Jesus would not say it, then you would probably be better off to not say it either.

We should not get into conversations with the unbelievers around us which are unedifying.

Reflection: What can you do when they talk about these things around you? How can you guide your conversations toward something more meaningful? How about when you are together with other believers?

6. Their talk will spread – Sin spreads quickly. These kinds of conversations lead people away from the Lord and to foolishness. It is not just “harmless fun.” It is dangerous. If you don’t believe me, see what happens in verse 18.

7. Verse 18 – Here we see the story of Hymenaeus and Philetus, learning that they went astray from the truth and said that the resurrection (which occurs at the end of the age) had already happened. By doing so they misled many people. From verses 16-18 we see the steady progression of foolish talk.

What starts of as a bad habit leads people farther and farther from Christ and into serious sin and delusion. After that it spreads even further and misleads others. The safest place to be is in a close relationship with Christ. If you leave the shelter of His will and venture into the world, it is a dangerous business and you may end up much further from Him than you ever expected.

8. Verse 19 – The firm foundation of God stands. Paul returns again to what is important. His Word is important. That is the solid rock we stand on. That is what will protect us from the storms and temptations of life. We belong to the Lord. He holds us in His hands. We should stay close to Him and far from the world. When we are close to Him we will want to be holy like He is holy so we will abstain from wickedness.

If we let Christ remain the center of our hearts we will spend our time and energy doing what we see in verse 15 (studying God’s word diligently and teaching it to others) and not the things we see in verses 14 and 16 (arguing about nonsense and talking about nothing).

Application: How can you become a better workman? What will you do to better master our most important tool, the Bible?