

# REMINDE THE CHURCH ABOUT THE DANGER OF WORDS AND THE FOUNDATION OF GOD

## 2 TIMOTHY 02:14–21

### *Introduction*

More trouble is stirred and brewed by words than by any other act. This fact alone stresses the importance of this passage: remember the danger of words and the foundation of God.

- I. Reminder 1: do not argue and strive over words that do not profit the hearers — speculations, theories and petty matters (v. 14).
- II. Reminder 2: study — seek to be a true teacher of God’s Word (v. 15).
- III. Reminder 3: shun godless chatter and discussions (vv. 16-18).
- IV. Reminder 4: the foundation of God’s house is firm (vv. 19-21).

### **I. 2 Timothy 02:14 Arguments and Quarrel over Words**

Reminder one — do not argue over words that do not profit the hearers. That is, do not argue and quarrel about petty matters nor over religious theories, speculations and ideas. Time is short, and we are not able to fellowship nor to be together that much. Therefore, when we are together, we must be communicating and sharing words that profit us all. However, this is often not the case. Too often, our words are useless and unprofitable, and sometimes they are even upsetting and destructive. Picture both the unprofitable and the upsetting words that go on in the church and among believers, the arguments and quarrels that have no value to those who listen. There are...

- the words over petty matters. (Just think of some of the petty matters that go on in the church.)
- the words over buildings, traditions, and rituals.
- the words about people, the rumours, gossip and criticism.
- the words about trivial day-to-day matters.
- the words that waste and pass the time.
- the words that focus on debating theological positions, speculation and ideas.
- the words over pet ideas and theories.

There are essentially three kinds of unprofitable talk that go on among believers.

=> First, there is the trivial talk that passes the time away, talk that fails to build up the believer.

=> Second, there is the talk that engages in criticism and gossip, talk that tears a person down.

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=> Third, there is the talk that enjoys discussing the theories and speculations of theology. William Barclay has such an excellent discussion of this fact that it merits being read by every believer, especially by the students and teachers of the gospel:

*“Discussion can be stimulating and invigorating for those whose approach to the Christian faith is intellectual, for those who have a background of knowledge and of culture, for those who are characteristically students, for those who have a real knowledge of, or interest in, theology. But it sometimes happens that a simple-minded person finds himself in a group which is tossing heresies about, and propounding unanswerable questions, and it may well be that the faith of that simple person, so far from being helped, is upset....And it may well happen that clever, subtle, speculative, destructive, intellectually reckless discussion may have the effect of demolishing, and not building up, the faith of some simple person who happens to become involved in it. As in all things, there is a time to discuss, and a time to be silent ” (The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon, p. 197).*

**1 Tim 1:4** *Nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God’s work — which is by faith.*

**1 Tim 6:4** *He is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions*

**2 Tim 2:23** *Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels.*

**Titus 3:9-11** *But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless.*

The point is this: the preacher and teacher must remind believers — do not argue and quarrel: “it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.” Do not upset or tear down people with your words.

## II. 2 Timothy 02:15 *Study the Word of God*

Reminder two — study to be a true teacher of God’s Word. Note the words “do your best” to set your heart upon — be diligent, hurry, rush and seek the approval of God. Note that it is the approval of God that is to be the believer’s concern. A believer is a fool if he does not seek the *approval of God*. To be disapproved is to be displeasing and unacceptable to God. How then can we secure the approval of God?

=> By being a workman — the idea is a diligent worker who toils and labours to the point of exhaustion.

But note: our work is pinpointed and identified. We are to study the Word of God and rightly divide it. The words “correctly handles” (orthotomounta) mean to cut straight.

Believers are to cut straight to the truth; they are not to take crooked paths and side tracks to the truth. We are to study the truth and correctly handles it. Once we have studied and learned the Word of God, we are to *accurately teach* the Word of God. We are not to teach...

- our own ideas
- the theories of other people
- what we think
- what other men think

We are not to mishandle the Word of God: twist it to fit what we think or want it to say; over-emphasize or under-emphasize its teachings; add to or take away from it. Any person who mishandles God's Word is not approved of God. This is the point of this verse: if we want God's approval — if we want to be acceptable to God — we must study, rush and seek to be a true teacher of God's Word. We must be workmen who study God's Word, workmen who study diligently: *who correctly analyse and accurately divide — rightly handle and skilfully teach — the Word of Truth* (Amplified New Testament). This is the believer who will not be ashamed when he faces the Lord Jesus Christ in the great day of judgment.

*Acts 17:11-12* Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

*Acts 20:28* Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

*Acts 20:32* "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

*2 Tim 3:16* All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

*1 Pet 2:2-3* Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

*1 Pet 5:2* Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers — not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve.

*Deu 8:3* He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

*Job 23:12* I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.

*Psa 119:103* How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

*Jer 3:15* Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding.

*Jer 15:16* When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty.

### III. 2 Timothy 02:16–18 *Shun Godless Chatter and Discussion*

Reminder three — shun, avoid, keep away from godless chatter and discussion. This is descriptive language picturing so much talk that goes on among people.

=> So much talk is “godless” (bebelos): common, irreverent and foul.

=> So much talk is chatter: empty and meaningless. It is nothing more than empty voices chattering away in empty and godless discussions.

The charge is direct and forceful: avoid, shun, keep away from godless and empty talk. What are some examples of talk that is godless and empty? There is such talk as...

- false teaching
- worldly philosophy
- theological theories
- cursing
- immoral suggestions
- off-coloured conversations
- criticism
- indecent insinuations
- suggestive enticements

Note that such talk is not only ungodly and empty, it leads to more and more ungodliness. Such talk actually increases ungodliness in the heart and life of a person. In fact, the picture could be no more descriptive: ungodly talk eats away at a person just like gangrene or a cancerous growth.

This is often ignored and neglected by most people, for most people want to go about doing their own thing. And if we took this charge seriously, just think how it would affect the control of...

- television
- differences
- discussions
- films
- music
- positions (theological, social, political)
- decisions
- opinions
- arguments

This charge affects every form of communication and relationship imaginable. Imagine — no communication and no talk is ever to take place that is ungodly and empty. Why? Because ungodly and empty talk eats like a cancer. It leads a person into more and more ungodliness and emptiness.

*“Here then is the test. If at the end of our talk and discussion, we are closer to one another and closer to God, then all is well. But if at the end of our discussion, we have erected barriers between each other and we have left God more distant and our view of Him befogged, then all is wrong. The aim of all Christian discussion and of all Christian action is to bring a man nearer to God” (William Barclay. *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p. 199).*

Note that an example of two men who were engaged in godless talk or teaching is given: Hymenaeus and Philetus. Apparently, these two men were church members who

spiritualised the coming resurrection of believers. They were probably saying one of three things: that the resurrection was a spiritual experience that took place...

- at conversion when a believer is counted by God to be raised with Christ.
- at baptism when a person is lifted up out of the water.
- at the birth of the believer's children; that is, his life was being resurrected and living on in the lives of his children.

The point is this: all such godless talk, whether false teaching or just meaningless and empty chatter, is to be shunned, avoided and turned away from. The believer is to do what verse fifteen says: study, rush and seek the approval of God. He is to live and move and have his being in the Word of God, concentrating and focusing upon God. God and His Word are to be the obsession of the believer — the very life and breath of the believer.

*Job 15:3* “Would he argue with useless words, with speeches that have no value?”

*Prov 10:19* When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.

*Mat 24:12* Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold,

*Luke 8:13* Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.

*Luke 9:62* Jesus replied, “No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

*Luke 11:24-26* “When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first.”

*Gal 4:9* But now that you know God — or rather are known by God — how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?

*Heb 10:38* But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.”

*Rev 2:4* “Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.”

#### **IV. 2 Timothy 02:19–21 The Spiritual Foundation of God's House**

Reminder three — the foundation of God's house is firm. Some may turn away from Christ; the faith of some may be overthrown and undermine godless teaching and talk. “Nevertheless, God's solid foundation of God stands firm.” What is meant by the foundation of God? It means the household of God or the household of faith. It means

the great house of believers that God is building. It is the family and church of God — the *true family and true church of God*. Note two facts about the great house of believers.

1. The great house of God has two inscriptions written upon it that seal and guarantee its security.
  - a. The first inscription is this: “The Lord knows those who are his.” There are no false professions and no hypocrites in God’s household — not in His real household. No one fools God. Within the earthly church, there are both wheat and tares, both believers and unbelievers. But when God looks upon us, He knows those who are truly His. He knows those who have really entered into His household and those who are only saying that they have entered.

The point is this: if a person is living within the household of God — remaining steadfast and loyal — he is a true believer, a true member of God’s household. And he is secure within God’s house. But if a person has forsaken the family of God, he is not of God’s household. God is not taken by surprise by any of us. *God knows those who are His*, and those who are His will remain faithful and loyal.

**John 10:3** “*The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.*”

**John 10:14** “*I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.*”

**1 Cor 8:3** *But the man who loves God is known by God.*

**2 Tim 2:19** *Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.”*

- b. The second inscription is this: “Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.” The sign that a person is of the household of God is a pure and righteous life. A person who follows Christ does not live in sin. If a person lives in sin, he is not following Christ. Therefore, if we name the name of Christ, we must depart from iniquity. If we continue in sin, then we are only making a false profession. We are not of God’s household — not really. Our sinful behaviour proves the fact.

The point is this: the foundation of God is sure; His household is established forever and it is built upon the principle of righteousness:

⇒ Everyone that names the name of Christ repents and turns away from wickedness (unrighteousness).

This is a fact; it is an eternal principle established by God. His household is built upon righteousness. Righteousness is the inscription that is written across the face of His household. Therefore, if a person is a member of His household, they have forsaken and turned away from wickedness. They do not live in sin.

**Thought 1.** Common sense tells us that if a person has departed from God, he is not living with God. To be apart from God is not to be with God; it is to be separated from God, out of the presence and house of God.

Common sense tells us that if a person has turned away from wickedness and lives in the righteousness of God, then he belongs to the household of God. To be living like God — righteously — is to be with God, in the presence and house of God.

**Eph 4:22** *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires.*

**Heb 12:1** *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*

**1 Pet 2:11** *Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.*

**Job 11:14** *“If you put away the sin that is in your hand and allow no evil to dwell in your tent,”*

**Isa 55:7** *Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*

2. God’s earthly house (the church) has a variety of articles, both noble and base. The church has some articles or people who are like gold and silver; that is, they honour Christ. But the church also has some articles or people who are like wood and clay; that is, they dishonour Christ. The church has a mixture of people...

- some are good and some are bad.
- some are true and some are false.
- some are genuine and some are counterfeit.
- some are clean and some are dirty.
- some are pure and some are tarnished.
- some are clear and some are stained.
- some illuminate light and some illuminate darkness.

Note what it takes to become a noble instrument: it takes a cleansing. A person has to cleanse himself from...

- behaviour that is dishonourable and unrighteous.
- words that are corruptible and dirty.
- talk that is unclean and contaminating.
- teaching that is false and cancerous.

A person who cleanses himself from these will become an instrument for noble purposes...

- made holy, that is, set apart unto Christ and His service.
- useful to the Master; that is, Christ will be able to use him.
- prepared to do any good work; that is, Christ will be able to use him for any work.

**Rom 12:1-2** *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

**2 Cor 6:17-18** *“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters,” says the Lord Almighty.*

**Eph 5:11** *Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.*

**2 Th 3:6** *In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us.*

**1 John 2:16** *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world. ■*