

A Kind Gentle Spirit Draws Others to Repentance And Salvation

2 Timothy 2:23-26

When you hear the words "kind" and "gentle," what comes to mind? Do you first think of rescuing an animal, or giving a child a piece of candy? Or perhaps you think of giving food to someone who is hungry. But do those words seem to you as the best way to deal with someone who is arguing with you? Paul has some more guidelines for Pastor Timothy.

2 Timothy 2:23-26:

²³ *But **refuse foolish and ignorant speculations** (DISPUTES)¹, knowing that **they produce quarrels.***

²⁴ *The Lord's bond-servant must **not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged,***

²⁵ *with **gentleness correcting** those who are **in opposition**, if perhaps God may grant them **repentance** leading to the knowledge of the truth,*

²⁶ *and they may come to their senses **and escape from the snare of the devil**, having been held captive by him to do his will.*

In an old monastery near Bebenhausen, Germany, one may see two pairs of deer horns interlocked. They were found in that position many years ago. The deer had been fighting; their horns got jammed together and could not be separated; so they died. Dr. Kerr, who first told the story, added, "I would like to carry those horns into every house and school." We might add, "And into every church."²

If Timothy is to "pursue peace," as he was told in verse 22, he must "have nothing to do with" foolish and stupid arguments. This reminds us of other similar cautions Paul wrote to young pastors.

1 Timothy 4:7:

⁷ *But **have nothing to do with** worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, **discipline yourself** for the purpose of godliness;*

Titus 3:9:

⁹ *But **avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.***

¹ Parentheses mine..

² Tan, Paul Lee: *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers.* Garland TX : Bible Communications, 1996, c1979.

These warnings certainly apply to all Christians as well. But Paul counsels Timothy to stay away from those uneducated men who pretend to be experts and who teach this way, primarily because bickering and foolish debates give birth to quarrels.

Verse twenty of Second Timothy three introduced us to vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor. Vessels of honor are gold and silver and vessels of dishonor are wood and earthenware or clay. Each vessel may be used by the owner but they are not all of equal value to the owner. Paul showed us in 2 Timothy 2:21 that persons who are vessels of honor are separated, sanctified, and serviceable vessels. Then in verse 22 we discovered that vessels of honor are free from youthful lusts and they pursue “*righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.*”

As we move on to verses 23-26 we find some other God-honoring qualities in these servant vessels of honor.

Verse 23: A DISCERNING SPIRIT

“*But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels.*” The quality seen in this verse is a **discerning spirit**. Here in verse twenty-three Paul was still giving Timothy instructions that did not include any options or choices. For Timothy to be obedient to Paul’s command in verse twenty-three would require him to have a **discerning spirit**. The command was for Timothy to “*refuse foolish and ignorant speculations...*” If he was to refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, he needed to be able to discern³ what was in reality foolish and ignorant.⁴

“Knowledge can be memorized. Wisdom must think things through.

“Wisdom is the something that enables us to use knowledge rightly.

“Wisdom resists group pressures, thinks for itself, and is reconciled to the use of its own judgment.

“There are two kinds of cleverness, and both are priceless. One consists of thinking of a bright remark in time to say it. The other consists of thinking of it in time not to say it.”⁵

³ Discernment is an act of wisdom or detection marked by an insight into a person’s character or by an event that comes through insight that goes beyond the facts given. In Scripture people can discern matters in an explicitly spiritual manner (1 Cor 2:14) or through their own cultivated powers (Job 34:4). Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, Tremper Longman, ed., “Discernment,” in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 208.

⁴ George T. Brooks, – *Expositions from the Book of Second Timothy*, (Austin, TX: WORDsearch Corp., 2007), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Some Qualities of Vessels of Honor (2)".

⁵ Tan, Paul Lee: *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers*. Garland TX : Bible Communications, 1996, c1979

Knowledge without wisdom or understanding is of little value. Wisdom and understanding, along with knowledge, can give discernment. Solomon passed that concept down to God's people in his proverbs.

Proverbs 2:1-7:

¹ *My son, if you will receive my words And treasure my commandments within you,*
² *Make your ear attentive to wisdom, Incline your heart to understanding;*
³ *For if you cry for discernment, Lift your voice for understanding;*
⁴ *If you seek her as silver And search for her as for hidden treasures;*
⁵ *Then you will discern the fear of the LORD And discover the knowledge of God.*
⁶ *For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.*
⁷ *He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity.*

So when Timothy walks in integrity with discernment he will refuse the foolish ideas that others come up with. The word “*refuse*” (*paraiteomai*) in verse 23 means to beg to be excused, to decline, to shun, or to avoid. It suggests rejecting, paying no attention, or not associating. Paul was commanding Timothy **not to associate himself with false teachers** who teach out of their foolishness and ignorance. Paul did not want Timothy's mind filled with that foolishness and ignorance.⁶

The word “**foolish**” (*moros*) has provided us with that highly intellectual word, **moron**. The word “*foolish*” addresses those that focus their lives on sheer nonsense and stupidity, a person who might also be described as a **Bonehead or blockhead**. Indeed, again we see an intellectual approach in seeking the most appropriate term available to describe these false teachers. So Timothy was being commanded to be discerning enough to recognize teachers who were empty-headed and did not have a clue as to the truth of the word of God.⁷

The word “*ignorant*” (*apaidetos*) refers to false teachers as well. Those who are uneducated and undisciplined. Timothy was commanded to have nothing to do with these kinds of men.⁸

There have been some famous definitions of “*ignorance*” over the years. Such as:

“Ignorance, when voluntary, is criminal.”

—Samuel Johnson

“There is no more terrible sight than ignorance in action.”

—Goethe

In addition, Mark Twain said, “Ignorance has something to be

⁶ Op. cit., Brooks.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

said for it. It gives rise to about nine-tenths of the world's conversational output."⁹

In the word “*speculations*” or “*disputes*” (*zetesis*), Paul had reference to an exchange of words. He was speaking of debates or arguments. Paul did not want Timothy to get bogged down in a lot of meaningless arguments. Paul emphasized to Timothy that his time should be spent preaching and teaching the word of God. He should not involve himself in worthless disputes.¹⁰

He is also being encouraged by Paul to recall King Solomon's comments about a fool.

Proverbs 18:6; 20:3:

*A fool's lips bring strife, And his mouth calls for blows.
Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, But any fool will quarrel.*

The reason Paul gave for Timothy rejecting foolish and ignorant speculations (disputes) was because they produce divisions in the church. The word “*produce*” (*gennaō*) means to bring into being or to give rise to. This word refers to a birth. So **Paul was saying that a lack of sound doctrine would give birth to divisions in the church.**¹¹

Verse 24: A KIND SPIRIT

*The Lord's bond-servant must **not** be **quarrelsome**, but be **kind** to all, ABLE TO TEACH, patient when wronged,*

“Jim Bishop writes this interesting story: “You don't hear much about Robert De Vincenzo, the tough Argentine golfer, and he may not be the world's greatest, but he is all man all the way. Not long ago, he surprised everybody by winning a tournament, and they gave him his check on the eighteenth green. He flashed a smile for the flash bulbs and walked alone to the clubhouse. In back, where his car was parked, a sad-eyed young lady walked up to him. ‘It's a good day for you,’ she said, ‘but I have a baby with an incurable disease. It's of the blood, and the doctors say she will die.’ De Vincenzo paused. In slow English, he said, ‘May I help your little girl?’ The woman's face froze. He took out a pen, endorsed his winning check, and pressed it into her hand. ‘**Make some good days for the baby,**’ he said. He accepted all the congratulatory handshakes soberly and said nothing.

“A week later, he was having lunch in a country club when a PGA

⁹ Tan, Paul Lee: *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers*. Garland TX : Bible Communications, 1996, c1979.

¹⁰ Op. cit., Brooks.

¹¹ Ibid.

official approached. ‘Some of the boys in the parking lot told me you met a young woman after you won the tournament,’ he said. De Vincenzo nodded. ‘Well,’ said the official, ‘I have news for you. She’s a phony. She has no sick baby. She’s not even married. She fleeced you, my friend.’ The golfer looked up. ‘You mean that there is no baby who is dying without hope?’ he said. The PGA official said, ‘Right.’ De Vincenzo grinned. ‘That’s the best news I’ve heard all week,’ he said.”¹²

Not exactly the comment the official probably expected, but certainly a comment that reflects the spirit of kindness.

“The word “*kind*” (*epios*) means to be mild, meek, or gentle. It speaks of being peaceful. A vessel of honor is not a person who cannot get along well with other people. The word “*quarrelsome*” (*machomai*) has reference to fights or arguments. Christians and church leaders need to be tough but also gentle.

“So leaders in the church are not to pick fights. They are to actively love people. Leaders actively love people when they are kind to them, when they teach them, and when they are patient with people who do them wrong.

“The word “*patient*” (*anexikakos*) means to bear evil or sorrow. It means to be tolerant. A kind servant of the Lord actively loves those who even do them wrong. Patience is something that makes us like God in our character and conduct.

“When Paul spoke of servants of the Lord being able to teach (*didaktikos*), he was speaking of them being skilled in teaching. He had reference to a person having knowledge and being able to effectively communicate that knowledge to others.”¹³

A GENTLE SPIRIT (2 Timothy 2:25-26):

²⁵ with **gentleness correcting** those who are in **opposition**, if perhaps God may grant them **repentance** leading to the knowledge of the truth,
²⁶ and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

“The following beautiful tradition about Moses is handed down to posterity: He led the flock of his father-in-law (cf. Exodus 3:1).

¹² Quoted from *The Gospel Herald* in Tan, Paul Lee: *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers*. Garland TX: Bible Communications, 1996, c1979.

¹³ Op. cit., Brooks.

“One day while he was contemplating his flock in the desert, he saw a lamb leave the herd, and run further and further away. The tender shepherd not only followed it with his eyes, but went after it. The lamb quickened his step, hopped over hill, sprang over ditches, hastening through valley and plain; the shepherd unweariedly followed its track. At last the lamb stopped by a spring at which it eagerly quenched its thirst. Moses hastened to the spot, looked sadly at the drinking lamb, and said:

"It was thirst, then, my poor beast, which tormented thee, and drove thee from me, and I didn't understand; now thou are faint and weary from the long, hard way, thy powers are exhausted; how then couldst thou return to thy comrades?"

“After the lamb had quenched his thirst and seemed undecided what course to take Moses lifted it to his shoulder, and, bending under the heavy burden, strode back to the flock. Then he heard the voice of God calling to him, saying:

"Thou hast a tender heart for my creatures, thou are a kind, gentle shepherd to the flocks of man—**thou art now called to feed the flocks of God.**"¹⁴

“*Gentleness*” (*praotes*) is the next word we will consider. **A gentle person ALLOWS HIMSELF OR HERSELF** to be under the control of the Holy Spirit. **A gentle person** is submissive to the word and will of God. **Gentle people** know that the world will never see them as God sees them, and they are concerned only with God’s opinion. They live for an audience of One.

Christians who are gentle are powerful because they allow the Holy Spirit to direct their actions. **Gentle people** are gentle because they **choose to be gentle**. They choose to obey Jesus Christ and follow His example. Their priority list does not have their name at the very top. God and other people occupy the number one and two spots.

A Christian leader will have to deal with people who have allowed Satan to mess up their lives. When Paul used the word “**correcting**” (*paideuo*) in reference to the work of the servant of the Lord, he had reference to training, teaching, and instructing. Correcting suggests discipline for the purpose of leading people to maturity.¹⁵

In verse 26, the phrase “*come to their senses*” could also be translated as “*when they recover.*” Warren Wiersbe has this to say about the phrase: “The word ‘recover’ . . . describes a man coming out of a drunken stupor. Satan makes people drunk with his lies,

¹⁴ Quoted from *Jewish Messenger* by Paul Lee Tan, “713. Why Moses Called By God,” in *Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations: Signs of the Times*, (Dallas, TX: Bible Communications, 1998), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 172-173.

¹⁵ Op. cit., Brooks.

and the servant's task is to sober them up and rescue them. The last phrase in verse 26 can be interpreted . . . They are delivered out of the snare of the devil, who took them captive, to do God's will."¹⁶

Paul was concerned about how Timothy and the Christians in Ephesus would treat people who opposed what they preached and taught. He hoped that the way they treated the opposition might lead those people to repentance. Paul knew that it was possible for God to grant even his enemies repentance. Was not Paul himself a perfect example of that? The Lord brought Paul to repentance and faith on the Damascus road.¹⁷

Repentance involves a genuine change of mind and heart, and a change of direction. Paul's repentance allowed him to understand the truth. As a result of this knowledge, Paul came to faith and salvation. He lived His life for an audience of One, and in so doing affected the lives of many other people.

The following poem is from George T. Brooks:

I Do Don't You

"I know a great Savior, I do; don't you?
 I live by His favor, I do; don't you?
 For grace I implore Him, I worship before Him,
 I love and adore Him, I do; don't you?
 I need Him to lead me, I do; don't you?
 Heav'n's manna to feed me, I do; don't you?
 Whatever betide me, I need Him beside me,
 In mercy to hide me, I do; don't you?
 I love to be near Him, I do; don't you?
 He speaks and I hear Him, I do; don't you?
 For me He is caring, The cross I am bearing,
 I love Him for sharing, I do; don't you?
 I want Him to use me, I do; don't you?
 For service to choose me, I do don't you?
 I want Him to bless me, To own and confess me,
 Completely possess me, I do; don't you?"

Yes, if we would be vessels of gold or silver we all need Christ to possess and bless each of us. But we daresay many of you look back to earlier times in your life and Christian walk--to times when you blew it. These may be periods of rebellion or times of just not living as Christ would have you live. You may have regrets about things you did or did not do. You may regret ways you bungled things. We will now conclude with a story about a man who shared those concerns.

"An old man once dreamed unhappily about his past. He saw

¹⁶ Wiersbe, Warren. *Be Faithful*. Wheaton IL: Victor Books, ©1981 by SP Publications. Page 149.

¹⁷ Op. cit., Brooks.

before him a long list of things in his life which were wrong, and for which he was sorry and ashamed. In his dream he was about to seize a sponge and rub these things out of his biography, when, to his amazement, he discovered that wherever there were deeds of gold shining through the story of his life they had been wrought there by regret and sorrow over past transgression, and that if he wiped out those wrong acts he would at the same time destroy whatever of nobleness or beauty there was in his character.

“Thus it is that even our sins and follies, repented of, can be made stones in the walls of a godly life.”¹⁸

“*God can redeem the years the locusts have eaten*” (Joel 2:25). He can bring good out of your awful mistakes, if you turn your life over to Him and let Him make you into a kind and gentle, Spirit-filled Christian. So, if you have not already made that decision, why not do it today and start building nobleness and beauty into your Christian character?

¹⁸ Quoted from C. E. Macartney in Paul Lee Tan, “10407. “All Things Work Together For Good”,” in *Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations: Signs of the Times*, (Dallas, TX: Bible Communications, 1998), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 2338-2339.