

9/8/24 - 2 Tim. 2:23-26 - "Upholding the Longview in Opposition"

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[0 : 00] Open your Bibles with me to 2 Timothy chapter 2. Our verses for today are 23 through 26, but we will be beginning in 20 for context.

Now, in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable.

Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself for what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies.

You know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome, but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness.

[1 : 05] God may perhaps grant them repentance, leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil after being captured by him to do his will.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. I don't know if you're necessarily in tune with the whole television scene, but they've released a new series in recent years.

It's called The Ring of Power. And so I'd like to present, we'll call it a Tolkien-esque tiff.

All right? We'll go on T's. The Lord of the Rings is hands down the greatest fantasy epic ever written, declared Ben in this fake story.

His voice filled with conviction in that statement. Oh, please, scoffed Sue. The rings of power is way more inclusive and diverse.

[2 : 31] The breath of fresh air. Ben scoffed. Inclusive? Diverse? That's just euphemisms for pandering to the woke crowd.

Tolkien's original vision was pure. And these new writers are ruining everything that Tolkien started. How can you say that?

Sue retorted. The rings of power expands on Middle-earth lore and gives us new characters to love. It's a continuation of the story.

It's not a replacement. Ben rolled his eyes. Continuation? It's more like fan fiction. The characters are flat.

The plot is predictable. And the CGI, you can only do so much of that before it's a little bit too much. At least it's not a bunch of white men saving the day, Sue countered.

[3 : 39] The rings of power has a diverse cast of characters, which makes it more relatable to a wider audience. Ben scoffed. Relatable? You mean like that elf who can sing underwater?

That's just ridiculous. Sue's face flushed. How dare you? Galadriel is a powerful and a complex character.

She's more than just a pretty face. Well, Ben sneered. She's more like Mary Poppins. She's perfect at everything. She never makes mistakes.

She's more like Mary Poppins. She never makes mistakes. She never makes mistakes. She never makes mistakes. And that argument continued for hours. With each person becoming more entrenched in their position. Eventually, Ben and Sue, they both realized that they were not going to agree.

and the conversation ended in a heated exchange of insults. Now, if you have no idea what that argument was just about, you're probably blessed, all right?

[4 : 45] You don't know who these elves are singing underwater. You don't know any of that. Great. You have been preserved of that, but I don't think that it's something that we're unaware of.

In this year, we got a new president coming in in November. I mean, you could copy and paste whatever you want in between the object of that argument, and I think that you see the thrust of that argument that they realize that they can't agree.

They were entrenched and led to personal insults. Opposition can bring the worst out of us. As we become entangled in the warfare of two different perspectives, perspectives, right?

This is where Paul meets Timothy today. However, the stakes are higher. The perspectives are heaven or hell. Not just some elf singing underwater.

Not a writer's agenda to bring about a culture that is supremely woke and inclusive and diverse and diverse in every minor facet.

[6 : 00] But Paul, being a man in chains, in a hole in the ground, with a little glimpse of daylight coming out to shine light upon the pages of his writing as he writes his final letter upon this earth to Timothy, a pastor called to pastor the church in Ephesus.

Quite a difficult work. A church full of division, false teaching, and a lot of corruption. And what he reinforces for Timothy, and I think all Christians for that matter, but especially Timothy and pastors, is sort of a practical exhortation in the passage today.

Don't you love practical sermons? You know? The stuff that really just helps us to navigate the difficulties in life. Not saying that any sermon doesn't do that, but some are easier than others, especially when you're coming into texts in the Old Testament, kind of teasing that out in our days today.

This is very, very practical. A practical exhortation today of what Christlikeness looks like, of what Christlikeness looks like in the face of opposition.

So today, God will equip us with how our character impacts our witness. And we might even begin to understand why the qualifications that we saw in his first letter to Timothy are so imperative that it has everything to do primarily with character and less of competency.

[7 : 43] There's one competency in the qualifications of elders. That's the ability to teach. But everything else is in regard to character. And so I believe that we'll begin to understand why as Paul is writing to Timothy to take these practical exhortations back home to remember in the face of opposition.

And so let's dive into the sermon today. Oh boy, I don't even have my clicker out. Slide clicker, help me out. Now, the sermon title, next slide, upholding the long view in opposition.

And so we're going to have two sections today as we unfold and unpack the passage that was read. And what we'll see develop is a main point, but I'm going to hold the cards close to the chest until the end of the sermon.

I want you to see this main point unpack today. So no cheating today. The sermon title, upholding the long view in opposition. And before we begin this unpacking, I'd like to pray.

Please join me in that. Father, we pray for your illuminating Holy Spirit to help us this morning to see the depth of practical instruction in our life.

[9 : 06] To see theological footing in redemptive history of practical instruction. That apart from the moralistic preaching that takes place in many of the churches in our country and that are deviating from the instruction of your word and just new and fresh ideas, as we go to a historic document, ancient words, and we ask for you to unpack that before us as it were in Timothy's life, be it in ours, that we might be faithful in this life when we face inevitable opposition.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. And so I got two exhortations that we're going to kind of break this passage up into. I got my clicker now.

Thank you. And so the first is discernment while facing controversies. And we see this unravel here in verse 23. It actually leads into the first part of 24.

He says, have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies. You know that they breed quarrels and the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome.

Isn't it fascinating to travel back in the context? If you just look a little bit previous in the verses that were read this morning and what's in your Bibles, if you don't have your Bibles open, turn to it.

[10 : 37] Don't take my word for it. Never take a preacher's word for it. Look. Test. It's fascinating as we travel back in the context of this passage, we find Paul so recently charging Timothy to flee youthful passions of things like maybe you don't have kids or maybe if you've forgotten your kinship in your life and what you've taken your parents through.

Impatience. Impulsivity. Defiance. Right? Self-centeredness. The world revolves around you. Right? Flee youthful passions.

Christians. But as we covered last week, the Christian is not simply saying no to this or that, but to say yes to God. To say yes in the passage.

To pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace. All of which define our honorable use as vessels in the church.

In the house of God. And now, I'm unsure if you knew, but youthful passions often manifest in expressions that are verbal.

[11 : 52] The kids, usually their impatience comes out through words. Are we there yet? Are we there yet? We just took our kids to the monster trucks up in Cleveland yesterday.

And I'll tell you what, if they asked me if we were there yet one more time, that was it. No, I'm just kidding. I love my kids. And I, nope. But, man, it comes out in these verbal expressions.

Impatience. Defiance. How dare you? I'm your son. How dare you make me eat these broccoli, these broccoli and vegetables. Or self-centeredness.

Dad, are your rules, the, why are you acting like God, right? With all these rules. Impulsivity, right? It comes out in verbal expressions.

And what better test for Timothy to flee and pursue Christlikeness, what better way to flee and pursue as God would have in his life than while engaging his opponents with the gospel.

[12 : 59] This is the whole point and the context that is carrying us into the passage today. It's these expressions of youthful passions that Timothy is to flee from.

And it will be tested when he heads back to Ephesus with Paul's letter in hand. It will be tested when his opposition faces, stands toe to toe and how he's supposed to carry himself.

A courtroom can turn heated very, very quickly. Very, very quickly. I watched Judge Judy and that's real judging right there. It can turn quick, very heated, quickly.

Once an argument is led away from the point of the subject. Right? As people try to take things in sort of like other directions to distract from and go around certain topics and here Paul is telling Timothy to be able to spot that and to call objection in his heart.

To use his words wisely. He says, have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies. You know that they breed quarrels.

[14 : 17] You're human, Timothy. You're going to get mad. They're going to get mad. Y'all are going to be brawling before you know it. That's not how we do things, Timothy. Paul's concern is for Timothy's best interest and the interest of his opponents.

We'll see that in verse 25 as well. that he be able to discern when enough is enough in a conversation and things are headed down a path of stupidity of this discernment period.

Every Christian should be sensitive to it. A conversation that materializes in speculations and myths of theorizing unknowns, elevating these third level issues if they're even an issue compared to the authority of God's word and elevating these things and going down that pathway, down this path of often stupidity.

The hard evidence of which a Christian is to stand on is the written, solid, rock-hard word of God alone. There's the foundation that we, as wise, discerning Christians must stand upon.

Myths have their place maybe around a bonfire if you want to talk about UFOs and alien life, whatever. But hey, when time counts, let's talk about Jesus. Amen?

[15 : 45] How many of us have exhausted ourselves in what seems to be hopeless efforts of persuasion with maybe people who don't believe what we believe?

I got an amen with the hands. I don't know if that's, we already had confession, but if that's, if that's what you need to do, that's fine. But thank you for your authenticity in that. How many of us have exhausted our resources, ourselves, we're pouring out to others who seem to be, it just seems like it's hopeless.

It's a hopeless effect of persuasion. In those conversations that we seem to be spending more time dissecting what other people believe rather than inviting them to dissect what we believe.

Have you ever felt the temperature rising at times? Maybe behind the keyboard. Oh yeah, I'm going there. I can't be the only one that's probably written out this long paragraph that would just get them.

Just get them. And then deleted it. And then rewrite it again a couple hours later and just, gotta get them. Gotta get them, right? Okay, I'm glad I'm not the only one here.

[17 : 05] As if we're going to solve all the world's problems and we're going to settle this dispute with our dissertation that no one's going to read in the comment section and change the world one keystroke at a time.

No. Or maybe it's just simply a text message that you just get them with. Friends, Paul is calling Timothy to discern the level of his engagement in the trenches of conversation.

And this is important to know in the passage. Sometimes upon reading you don't really see that. Paul isn't telling Timothy to flee from this conversation. So what's he telling him to flee from?

Controversies. Just mythological analysis of truth that people try to bring into conversation and use it as their defense.

He's saying don't it's nonsense. You're to proclaim Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ crucified. Let them chew on that for a little bit.

[18 : 25] Not every angle of an argument our opponent brings is worthy of our time. In fact, no, it's not worthy of God's time.

If time is a gift and time is limited and we spend more time trying to counter other people's beliefs rather than us presenting our beliefs and inviting them to see what they think about that.

Soon, what we find is that often when we go along those rabbit trails in arguments that we find ourselves unknowingly ensnared by the devil.

We're out to get them and the devil says, I got them. I silence the gospel. That Christian was more interested in defeating somebody else's arguments than presenting Jesus Christ.

As Christians, everything we believe has objectiveness. It has consistency. It has credibility.

[19 : 32] Do we believe that when we face opposition? Faithful Christians must be devoted to proclaiming the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Stop debating man's speculations. If you want, there's a time and place. Tonight, we're talking about the mark of the beast. I invite you to come to the Revelation Bible study tonight.

It's going to be a doozy. But man, Paul never told Timothy to stop listening either. That's important as well. We have very passionate evangelists, apologists, in the church body.

Never stop listening. The best apologists are actually skilled listeners. Skilled listeners. From the very moment that words come out of an opponent's mouth, they are looking at them, analyzing them, looking from this angle, that angle, and listening.

Not listening to respond, but listening to understand the underlying conviction, the presuppositions of those arguments. That's important to be skilled listeners, and to be skilled listeners to identify when the devil is playing games in a conversation, and you call objection in your hearts, and you reset the arguments.

[20 : 52] Amen. The other exhortation, the other side of this exhortation, it continues with sort of a contrast in the second part.

It's gentleness while facing opposition. He says, but, love the but here, it just takes this argument, he's saying, don't do this, don't fight, but instead, this is the practical nature of Paul's writing, I love it, he says, but to be kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil.

Verse 25, correcting his opponents with gentleness. That is a servant of God. Paul reinforces Timothy's trajectory of pursuit as it were in verse 22, as he's telling Timothy to flee this and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace.

Well, only here it is a pursuit that keeps the long game of argumentation in view. Paul is not saying to shut the conversation down, send that text, destroy their arguments.

He's not saying to slap the hypocrite when he gets back to Ephesus. Paul's not saying pull that lever, the trap door of the pew, and down to the sharks or the alligators, they go.

[22 : 27] Don't get any ideas, church. church. No. Be kind to everyone.

Able to teach. Look, patiently enduring. Patiently enduring what?

Evil. Evil. Evil. Evil. Evil. Evil. Evil. Evil. Evil. Correcting opponents with gentleness. Wow.

Paul's not calling Timothy either to be gentle in our cultural sense of the definition of the word, of being weak or being passive, but rather to have self-controlled strength, right?

self-controlled strength. That when we look at a biblical view and a biblical snapshot of what gentleness is, as it's known, it's strength under control.

[23 : 42] Have you not heard that? Strength under control. And maybe after all, our gentle disposition might reveal our deeply rooted faith, that God does truly know who are his and who are not according to verse 19 of the context.

Maybe our gentleness and our restraint and our self-control in the face of opposition might actually say that we believe in God, in the power of God to change a heart and to win a soul, not an argument.

Maybe after all, instruction will pass oral ministry in Timothy's life and the Christian life, for that matter, actually does play the long game in view.

We might not actually draw Christians like Billy Graham's Crusades and come forward and make the decision. We don't have the power to do that.

We don't have the timeline, but God does. He's got the time He's got the plan, but do we have the patience to gently endure?

[24 : 57] You see, when we lean into opponents, it's not about winning an argument, it's about revealing Christ in our words, in our actions. Maybe you're not in Christ today.

You've probably heard the gospel maybe. that apart from Jesus Christ, you're destined to hell.

Apart from Jesus Christ, there is no hope. There's no drug that you can take that can dull that reality. You can't escape that reality from this life.

And right now what you have through the revelation of the scriptures is hope before you today. And maybe you walked in apart from Christ and now some things are starting to make sense that those preachers were actually loving you after all, gently, telling you, repent of your sin, turn to the one true God.

God, it's only love that would ever provoke somebody like me to proclaim that to a stranger. Only love. It's the most unloving thing that I could ever do for an unbeliever to not tell them of the gospel and tell them the warning signs.

[26 : 29] If what the Bible says is true, which I'll die upon that truth, that it is true, the end will come. And at the end, if you do not have Jesus Christ as your advocate, by his blood being the payment and the ransom for your sin, there is no hope.

It's a gentle truth. I don't need to be jumping on top of this pulpit and shaking you to get you to figure that truth out. You need the Holy Spirit to grant you repentance as this passage says.

Maybe you're the believer today. You see that jumping from the page, that God may grant you repentance to lead you to the knowledge of truth.

Maybe it's not this Sunday that you'll be fully convinced of that. It might take next Sunday or the Sunday after. You might be tired from working a shift and barely able to stay awake. Well, it's okay.

We'll be here next Sunday, Lord willing, and the same gentle truth will be proclaimed or you can just believe right now, today. Escape the snare of the devil.

[27 : 46] Quit playing games with this life. Time is not unlimited in this life. You may feel invincible, but you are not invincible. And turn to repentance of your sin and to fall into the arms of Jesus Christ where no hand can pluck you from.

Come and believe by having faith in Jesus Christ. You see, church, what I'm saying today is considered hate speech.

You should see that gentleness doesn't censor truth. It's not passive to truth. It's actually very sensitive to awareness of other people needing the truth.

and so we are gentle in our disposition. Gentleness doesn't censor truth, but it is upon the plate of gentleness that truth is served.

Timothy is called to return to Ephesus and to be gentle with opponents. being a Christian jerk is actually an oxymoron then.

[29 : 04] Can you be a Christian jerk and still be a Christian? No. No. I don't think so. It takes discernment and it takes gentleness. What a witness and a representation of Jesus Christ.

This is where the practicality has such depth and meaning. Because not only is gentleness a fruit of the spirit for all Christians, it's not only a qualification for pastors, elders, overseers, according to his first letter to Timothy.

But it is also an antidote for not pushing others further away from God, away from the truth.

And we as Snow Valley Church proclaim this truth without wavering because our opponent isn't a person. It's the devil.

Our opponent isn't the person. The person is ensnared. By the devil. It is important to remember that. We will not succeed in our gentle disposition unless we are aware vibrantly of that fact.

[30 : 18] And theologically, our opponents are captured by the devil. The devil is habitually scheming. He's habitually clever, subtle purveyor of lies.

And Jesus came to crush the devil. Jesus came to crush the devil and institute the church. Not to deal with the devil.

That's not our fight. Regardless of what some Pentecostal preacher told you, it's not your fight. Your fight is to be fishers of men. Gentle.

God deal with that warfare and that fight. We are commissioned to go and make disciples. Don't take that personal with opposition.

What a powerful reminder this morning. How many of us have jobs or careers that are surrounded in people? We got drama. We got opposition.

[31 : 17] We got affirmation, opposition, all sorts. It's just a conglomeration. You might be a teacher at a high school. You might be a university professor at YSU.

You might be a worker at the rescue mission. You might be a doctor in the medical field or civil engineering. Or you might be a lawyer.

Whatever have you, as we navigate this increasingly hostile world that surrounds us, we remember that hostility must be met with gentleness.

Remember Jesus' words, that if the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. The world is not after us.

The world is after Jesus. And if the world is ensnared by the devil, then theologically the devil is out to get Jesus. in his limited time on this earth.

[32 : 22] We are servants upon this earth, servants of God, honorable youth, a gentleness that finds deep theological roots of Christ, rooted as a model servant.

Wonder what that model looks like? You look to the almighty servant, just as Isaiah 42 was prophesied about. Behold, my servant. What's the servant look like?

Whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights. I have put my spirit upon him. He will bring forth justice to the nations.

He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice or make it heard in the street. A bruised reed he will not break and a faintly burning wick he will not quench.

he will faithfully bring forth justice. Church, is that your God of whom we are called to emulate?

[33 : 31] Is that your God? If so, we receive an invitation not only to flee youthful passions, like we saw last week, but we avoid stupid arguments, lest we find ourselves being more useful to the devil than to God.

You want the main point? Christ-like devotion is grounded in gentleness, even in the face of hostile opposition. May we remember this.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.