

Are You Part of the Problem or Solution?

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[0:00] 2 Timothy 2 and beginning in verse 14. Paul tells Timothy, Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words.

It is of no value and only ruins those who listen. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth.

They say that the resurrection has already taken place and they destroy the faith of some. 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. In a large house, there are articles, not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay.

[1:19] Some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the master, and prepared to do any good work.

Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel.

Instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him, he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance, leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil who has taken them captive to do his will.

Wherever you go in this world, you'll find that some people are part of the problem, and other people are part of the solution.

[2:42] It doesn't matter if you're talking about drug abuse, or uncontrolled national or personal debt, skyrocketing dropout rates, plummeting stock values, or discord and fighting in the church.

Some people, by their deeds and their actions, cause the problems, make the problems worse, and other people, by the things that they do and say, work at fixing the problem, or don't contribute to the problem in the first place.

And so imagine with me for a moment, that we have a nation full of people that are committed in agreement that we are going to stop the problem with drug abuse. Users agree to quit using. Dealers agree to quit dealing. Traffickers agree to quit trafficking. And they do it. Drug abuse would dry up. And everyone that was part, if everyone that was part of the problem became part of the solution.

We say that's impossible. That's not going to happen. There's too many people addicted to drugs, and so they're going to keep using, and too many addicted to the profits that come from it, and so they're going to keep dealing and trafficking.

[3:56] And you're right. In this world, that plan would never work. To tell people, well, stop being part of the problem and start being part of the solution. But what about in the church? Let's say that the problem is one of quarreling over words, arguments, factions, strife, false doctrine, empty, godless chatter.

It was a problem for James readers. We saw it this morning. They were quarreling. Pastor John took us through and showed us how in most of the letters that Paul writes, he has to exhort the

people in the churches because there's a problem with arguing, with fighting, with division in the church.

Well, it was no different for the Ephesians. And so Paul has to write to Timothy, giving them directions. But what if a group in the church of Spirit-empowered people agreed to stop being part of the problem and to start being part of the solution?

Instead of being troublemakers, to be peacemakers. They didn't seek to do it in their own strength, but by the power of the Spirit dwelling in them. What would that look like? Well, I hope the results would be measurably better than if the world took up such an initiative in its own strength.

No, it wouldn't be perfect. Not every problem would dry up because even Spirit-empowered people have remaining sin. In the church community, there are unbelievers who wouldn't make the commitment to do that.

[5:17] But I believe that the church, by God's grace, would have far greater success at tackling problems in their midst if they committed to being part of the solution.

To being peacemakers instead of being troublemakers. And here in the second half of 2 Timothy 2, Paul gives us a description of what some of these troublemakers look like.

What they're doing. The problems that they're causing. The results that come. But he also tells us what the peacemakers should look like in the church. Some people in Ephesus are clearly part of the problem.

They're quarreling. They're bickering. They're full of empty chatter. They talk and talk without anything good coming out of their mouths. There's division. There's even false teaching.

Others in Ephesus, like Timothy, need to be part of the solution. And Paul tells Timothy exactly how to do that. So tonight we want to look at the troublemakers and the peacemakers.

[6:11] And Lord, knowing next time we'll come and see that even if there's troublemakers in the church, there's a great comfort for us. That the Lord knows who we are. We're going to get to that next week. And we'll talk, Lord willing, next week about how you can be a peacemaker.

Or if you've been a troublemaker, how you can go from being a troublemaker to being a peacemaker. There's just too much in these verses to cover tonight. And so for tonight, focus on this question with me. Am I a part of the problem?

Am I a troublemaker? Or am I a part of the solution? Am I a peacemaker in the church? And we just want to see the picture of what these two groups look like in the church tonight. And as we look at those pictures, you say, which one fits me?

Which one do I look like? The peacemakers or the troublemakers? And so we'll start with the troublemakers tonight. We want to talk about what they look like and the results that come from their troublemaking.

And we'll do the same for peacemakers. But first, notice just how significant it is. This problem of divisions. Paul begins with a warning.

[7:15] Telling Timothy in verse 14, keep reminding them of these things, of the truth. I've just told you. Remind them of that. And warn them before God against quarreling about words.

It is of no value. It only ruins those who listen. That word warn is a word of urgency. A word of intensity. Come to them with that challenge.

That warning to adjure them, we could say. Shake them and wake them up. And who is Timothy to warn? Well, the people in the church at Ephesus also probably, I think he's referring to the people in verse 2 of chapter 2.

You remember that Paul said, and the things you've heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Timothy was to be training other men who could follow him in the ministry there in Ephesus.

And Paul says, remind them, remind those young men studying for the ministry that want to be ministers, remind them about quarreling, about words. And let me tell you, as one who has studied for the ministry in the not-too-distant past, that I wish my education at Westminster and IRBS had started with an exposition of this passage.

[8:30] I should have known enough to just pick it up and read it myself. But I wish that it had started there. Warn those ministerial students. Warn everybody in the church, but especially warn them against quarreling about words.

Seminary students think that quarrels about words are good things. We get excited about it. It gets our blood boiling. We have a good discussion, a good debate over the lunch table.

And sometimes those things can be profitable, but more often they are damaging and dangerous. Paul says, it's worthless. It's useless. It's good for nothing.

So avoid it. And so there's a warning. He wants us to know the significance of the problem that's going on there. All of this fighting, all of this quarreling is not just a little thing that can be ignored. It needs a warning to everyone in the church, perhaps particularly for those studying for the ministry. So, given that, what do these troublemakers look like?

[9:32] These who are stirring up these arguing and these problems. Look and see if any of these things mark you. And if they do, repent and be done with them. And the first thing is, obviously, they quarrel about words.

It's right there in verse 14. The problems that Timothy was dealing with back when he wrote 1 Timothy are still going on in the church. Maybe you remember some of the things that we saw back there. There were people doing too much talking.

They thought they knew something. They thought that they were wise. And so they tried to teach everybody all of their wisdom, but really it was empty. They didn't know what they were talking about and they were speculating and they were talking about things that weren't profitable.

And that problem apparently has not been resolved. It's still going on. In 1 Timothy, we find that such people are conceited. They understand nothing. They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words.

These aren't people that have legitimate questions. They say, I want to know what the Bible teaches about this. And so they ask the question and they search the Scriptures and they discuss these things. It's good to ask questions. It's good to discuss and to understand what the Scriptures teach us and what they mean.

[10:39] That's something different than what's going on here. These people are looking for a fight. They're subverting the truth with false teaching. In their debates, they may look and sound pious.

They use big words and they try to lead people astray. They plant little questions and seeds of doubt in people's minds. What did you think about what the pastor said today when he said this? And they begin to sow a seed of doubt Is he really teaching the truth? And they're starting to stir up trouble. They're subverting the truth with their false teaching. And they're easily leading astray the unsuspecting.

They raise pointless questions about things that are unknown and unknowable. We find that they're full of godless chatter. Verse 16. Avoid godless chatter.

And look down at verse 23 for a moment. Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments because you know they produce quarrels. These people, these troublemakers in the church are full of profane or godless talk.

[11:42] Sometimes it's not debate about the Scriptures at all. It's just empty. It's meaningless. It's worldly. It is common. It's profane. Other times, it's foolish and stupid controversies.

They speculate about things that haven't been revealed. They get everybody worked out about them. In 1 Timothy, it was genealogies and old wives' tales. And they're stirring people's minds up to think about things that they don't need to think about.

And they pretend to be so wise and intelligent. You know the type. They walk around and they love it when you ask them a question because you're the source to go to for a question about the Scriptures.

Let's go to so-and-so. And they're puffed up with their so-called knowledge. But in reality, Paul says, they are stupid. They are uneducated, uninformed, ignorant about the things that they claim to know so much about.

And as they spread their godless talk, there's sometimes an element of truth things that they say and sometimes the outright lie.

[12:47] They're doing damage in the church. And Paul says their teaching will spread like gangrene in verse 17. It's so bad that their teaching is compared to a flesh-eating disease.

It spreads out rapidly. It devours everything in its path. You don't know how much you know about gangrene. I didn't know very much. So I looked it up. And if you want to be grossed out, you go home and you Google gangrene.

And you look at some of the pictures of gangrene. And it's gross. It's a flesh-eating disease. When blood can't get to the tissue, it begins to decay and it begins to rot.

And it dies. And that's what this false teaching is like. And it will spread into the good tissue. And it will spread further. And it will continue to rot and corrupt everything around it.

So you know how you treat gangrene? Scott says, that's the final thing. If the other things don't work, you cut it off.

[13:52] You amputate the part of the body that has it. And it may come to that with people like this in the church. If they can't be rebuked, if they can't be stopped, they may have to be cut off. It's that serious of a problem.

Other treatments are you dig it out. You dig out all around it and try to get all of it. Sometimes that doesn't work. There's an even grosser way to deal with it. I'll tell you about it later if you want. But it's a disease that destroys the flesh that it's eating.

And Paul says that's what their teaching is like. They are destroying the faith of some. You don't want gangrene eating away at your flesh.

You go look at those pictures and you'll see it. Neither do you want quarrelers or troublemakers stirring up these problems in the church. These troublemakers we're told in verse 18 are marked by leaving the truth.

They have wandered away from the truth. Verse 18. And so it should be clear to us who they are.

Notice verse 15 with me for a moment. We're going to come back to this.

[15:01] But Paul tells Timothy, do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Other translations are rightly divides the word of truth.

And the image that it gives is cutting a straight path of truth. It's used in Proverbs. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.

That's the word. Rightly handle the word of truth. Cut a straight path of truth. Dale Krimm comes in here before Sunday and he cuts a straight path down this aisle.

You get the string out still? We use the string? And you see this night straight aisle after a day of people coming and going it's not as straight as it was this morning and that's why he's got to come back and do it again. But he cuts a straight path.

And here it is. The minister of God is to cut a straight path of truth. And we'll pretend like this is our path of truth tonight. The problem with these teachers, verse 18, and this imagery becomes so clear when you see it in the Greek.

[16:05] The man of God cuts the straight path of truth. But verse 18, some have wandered away from the truth. They're not in that straight path of truth anymore. They haven't listened to the teaching.

Or if they have, they've disregarded it. They've disagreed. And so you'll know if people are in this aisle, then they're in the truth. But if you see them out in the chairs out here, and I'm not saying all of you are not in the truth tonight, okay?

It's the illustration. Here's the truth. How do you know if this is somebody that's giving you false teaching, that's leading you astray? Well, if they're not in this straight path of truth, then there's a problem.

If they're out wandering through the chairs, and they're trying to get you to come with them, then there's a problem. They've turned away from the truth. If you don't know what you hear is good or bad, hold it up to the truth of Scripture and see if it's a departure.

But troublemakers will turn aside from it. You say, but we don't have that here. We don't have people running around spreading false teaching and instigating fighting, so we don't need the exhortation.

[17:10] Well, it's in the Bible. We need the exhortation. And we can thank God that we haven't had many problems with people spreading false teaching here, instigating fights and quarrels, but we very easily could.

It's something we must be on the lookout for, not just in other people, but right in our own hearts. Be careful. If you're going to be a peacemaker in the church, know what the troublemakers look.

Be careful what you say and how you say it over lunch in each other's homes on Sundays. Discuss the message. Ask questions. Have good, stimulating discussion, but don't let it devolve into useless speculation, into sowing seeds of doubt, into stirring up things that are not true.

We've got a great college and career group going these days. And they gather every other week and have a book study and they have discussion and stimulating discussion with each other and they help each other.

And I'm encouraged by, I was with them for one of their meetings, encouraged by what I heard, by them discussing, but do you know that a setting like that could very easily digress and spiral down into speculation and into asking questions that nobody has the answer for and into stirring up trouble and to spreading false truth.

[18 : 36] I didn't see that when I was with them. But don't let it become that. Guard yourself against things that might begin fights and sowing seeds of doubt and false teaching. Beware of things that sound good but are not.

There's a movement afoot and it's become very popular among some Reformed Baptists and it's centered on the family. We think, good, the family is important.

It's neglected. It's being mistreated in society. Nobody sees the importance of it anymore. So you might see this. You might go, wow, this stuff is really good. They emphasize the family and some of what they say is good.

But when you start to dig further into it, you see that they've confused the role of family and church. And the results are quite dangerous. You can talk to Jason if you want to know more about it.

He wrote a whole thesis on it. Very helpful. But just because something sounds good on the surface doesn't mean that it is good. Look and see, is it in this right path of truth that's been cut for us?

[19 : 39] And if it's not, then stay away from it. Don't partake in passing it along. I simply want you to be aware of the danger tonight. If you know yourself to be someone who loves debate and theological discussion, make sure that you keep it in bounds.

Don't become part of the problem. Making trouble in the church. If you like empty and profane chatter, you're not talking about anything. You're talking about worldly things. Be done with that.

It's just banter and it seems like no big deal, but if it's empty, if it's profane, it's godless. And it doesn't need to come off of our tongues. Those things will create problems in the church.

If it's beneficial, then speak the word, but if it's not, or if it's even going to be destructive, hold it back. You can think of applications other places in the church.

Paul is of course focused on the church, but imagine what our homes would be like if we laid aside empty godless chatter and we laid aside arguments about words and stirring up controversy in our homes.

[20 : 44] No catty fighting. Parents and children, how much better would your relationships be if you didn't fight about useless information that won't do anybody any good anyway? If you kept your homes free from quarrels about words and godless chatter and foolish and stupid arguments.

You ever had a foolish or stupid argument in your house? Man, we have. If you kept yourselves away from all of those things, would you have anything to talk about at your house?

I hope so. But these are the kinds of things that can tear churches apart. They can tear families apart. Guard your tongues. Don't be part of the problem.

Paul gives us an example. Hymenaeus and Philetus. Verses 17 and 18, their teaching will spread like gangrene.

Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place and they destroy the faith of some. Paul singles out a couple of men.

[21 : 50] So there's no doubt about the kind of people he's talking about. Man, the name of the wicked rots, doesn't it? How are you going to be remembered?

Hymenaeus and Philetus are remembered for destroying the faith of some. Did you ever think that by your careless words, your foolish talk, your empty chatter, your arguments, that you could be remembered for having destroyed someone's faith?

Well, that's what they're remembered for. They're teaching that the resurrection had already taken place, likely emphasizing the spiritual resurrection that we've died to sin and been raised to walk in newness of life with Christ.

And that's right. There is a spiritual aspect to resurrection. It's pictured in our baptism. We're raised to walk in newness of life. We're raised and we leave that way of life behind, but they've so emphasized it here that they say the resurrection has already taken place.

In other words, there isn't going to be a bodily resurrection. They like the spiritual, but not the physical. And so it has an air of truth and you can hear the people. Yeah, well, Paul talks about that. [22:54] He talks about being dead to sin and raised in newness. Spiritual resurrection. So why do we need a physical resurrection? And they start with an element of truth and they've led the people astray.

And in doing it, they've destroyed the faith of some because if there's no physical bodily resurrection, then Jesus is still in the grave. And you go and read 1 Corinthians 15. And if Jesus hasn't been raised from the dead, then our preaching is useless.

Your faith is in vain. We're here for nothing tonight. And so they've destroyed the faith of some with a seemingly innocent teaching about the resurrection. It undermines the grounds of their faith. And so you hear strange teaching on the resurrection or the nature of God or salvation or justification or the family, other topics. Listen closely. Don't be led astray and don't lead others astray with your so-called knowledge.

It's actually foolish and stupid speculation. Be careful. Don't be remembered like Hymenaeus and Philetus were. And the ultimate truth about such people is in verse 26 that they have been ensnared or trapped by the devil who's taken them captive to do his will.

[24:07] They're under the control of Satan. There's a battle going on behind the scenes that we don't see. Spiritual warfare. And Satan is seeking to destroy the souls of everyone he can.

And he'll even come and try to get some who are in the church professing believers and he'll try to feed them with false teaching so that they'll then begin to open up and you'll know them by what comes out of their mouth.

You'll know what's behind the scenes by what's going on out in front. He's dragging them away to do his will seeking to destroy the church. Beware of such.

Don't be such yourselves. That's what they look like. Just a brief picture of what these troublemakers look like in Ephesus. What they could look like here. But what comes of these troublemakers?

What are the results? The outcome of these quarrelsome ways should serve as a deterrent to us to keep us away from such foolish, sinful, destructive, behavior.

[25:10] What happens when there's people like that in the church? It's devastating. I want us to see these results tonight so that we think, if that's where this leads, then I've got to keep a tighter rein on my tongue. I'm not going to listen to those who don't.

If you know the outcome before it starts, if we've got a cup here, a pulpit, and it's full of poison, and we know that, you know what happens if you drink poison. You're going to get sick, you're probably going to die.

I know that. So I'm not going to drink it. Well, if you know what quarreling and useless speculation and godless chatter is going to do, then it should motivate you to avoid it.

So here's what it does. It ruins and destroys the faith of those who hear it. You see it in verse 14. Warn them before God against quarreling about words. It's of no value.

It only ruins those who listen. It is a catastrophe. It's catastrophic for them. You can imagine a young believer. He has faith like a child.

[26:05] A firm confidence in Christ, His risen Savior. But then he begins to hear all this talk about difficult things that begin to spoil his simple faith and somebody's sown seeds of doubt to their questions and their chatter and their speculation.

And he begins to lose his grip on his faith. And it could be catastrophic. Their undoing, if they never really had faith, or a true faith, could lead to their overthrow of their faith.

Verse 18. That's what Hymenaeus and Philetus did. They destroyed the faith of some. They overthrew their faith. They turned it upside down. A little doctrinal deviation with regard to the resurrection.

No big deal, right? No, it is a big deal. It undermined their faith. Don't be part of the problem. It would be better for you to have a millstone hung around your neck and to be thrown into the sea than for you to lead one of these little ones astray with your false teaching, with your quarreling about words, your foolish speculation and your godless chatter.

You see the end that comes. Ruin. Destruction. It's not just bad for the people around, the actual people who participate in it. They make progress. That sounds good, but it's in ungodliness.

[27:19] Verse 16. Avoid godless chatter because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. The word there is they make progress and we usually associate that with something good.

They're making progress. Well, these people are making progress in ungodliness. They're becoming more and more wicked. The more you talk, the more you chatter about nothing. And we challenge with this young people especially tonight.

The halls of your schools are filled with godless chatter. Empty talk. If that's what you're filling your ears with and that's what's pouring out of your mouths, it won't give you growth in grace.

It will give you progress and ungodliness. It will make you less like Christ. Don't indulge in it. You'll dig your own hole deeper and deeper. We've already seen it leads to departure from the truth.

They wander away from the truth. They get out of that straight path that's been cut. In other words, it's a life and death matter. And so no wonder it calls for a stern warning.

[28:23] Reminders of the truth. If we were on a ship going across the ocean and we found that there were people going around, a handful of people going around, they're drilling holes in the ship, in the hull, down below the water line.

They're just drilling some little holes. No big deal. Just a little hole here, a little hole here. And occasionally, they're finding some of the weaker people on the ship. Maybe a child that can't resist them, an elderly person that's too weak to fight.

They're throwing them overboard. Chucking them over, off the ship, out into the ocean. We wouldn't tolerate that, would we? We'd round them up.

We'd find who was responsible. We'd lock them up. We'd throw them off the ship perhaps. If it came to that, they weren't willing to stop. We'd catch those evildoers and put an end to it.

That's what troublemakers in the church are like. They're going around. They're seeking to sink the ship. They want to destroy us. And so, you may think that you're a little bit of godless chatter.

[29:35] You're a little bit of sowing seeds of doubt. A little quarreling about words is no big deal. But just like a hole in a ship can sink it, you too can do great damage in the church by your work.

And so in the church, we must not be a party to it. We must not participate in it. And we must not tolerate it from others. Stop doing it yourselves. Don't listen to those that do.

Exhort them to stop. Show them their fault. Don't let it go on. Be part of the solution. What do you talk about? When you mill about after the service, I love that our people stay after.

Fellowship with one another. Be careful, though, as you fellowship the words that you use, the things that you say. Remember that the tongue is a fire and it's set ablaze by hell itself.

We've seen that in James, haven't we? Pipeline straight from hell to your tongue. And you know that the devil loves to take people captive as we've seen right here in verse 26 to do his will.

[30:37] And he'd like nothing better than to get a hold of your tongue and to use it for his purposes. He wants to get in your mouth and he wants to use it to destroy the faith of some, to divide the church, to create all sorts of problems.

Be aware of his schemes. One of his favorite methods for causing problems in the church is through words. So don't be part of the problem by speaking those kinds of words.

So we've got troublemakers in the church at times. Don't be among them and don't listen to them and don't tolerate them. So there's the troublemakers. Is that what you look like tonight?

I hope not. If it is, repent, be done with it. Because it's dangerous. The outcome could be destructive and one of death. But secondly, tonight, peacemakers.

What do they look like? And this is much more encouraging, much more positive picture. We like to see these things. And I have to say that primarily in view here is Timothy. Paul is talking to Timothy.

[31:38] And Timothy is a minister of the gospel. He's preaching the word there in Ephesus. He's leading the church. He's guiding them. He's helping them in their struggles. And many of these things apply in particular ways to ministers of the gospel.

To pastors. And so I need to pay close attention myself and have fought through some of these things in this week and seen shortcomings.

Special application there. But the things that characterize a minister of the gospel, many of them, most of them should characterize the people in the pews as well. The people in the church with perhaps the exception of able to teach.

You all don't necessarily need to be able to teach. But these other things that we'll look at should characterize you. And so peacemakers, it's not as though Paul's not saying everybody out here in

the church is a problem maker, troublemaker.

And the pastors are given as peacemakers and problem solvers to the church. No, imagine how much better the church would run if everybody in the church was a peacemaker, a problem solver. So there's special direction here for ministers.

[32:46] But take these things to heart because each follower of Christ should be marked by them as well. What do they look like? What's a peacemaker look like?

Well, they're willing to follow the directions Paul gives here in verse 14. They're willing to remind people of the truth. It might not always be new or exciting.

Boy, that troublemaker, sometimes he's exciting. He's got something new. He's got another question. He's got another debate. And this peacemaker, he's got the standard truth of God's Word. Hasn't changed.

He beats the same drum, not in an annoying, water dripping sort of way, but a humble reminder. A humble reminder. Bring the conversation back to the foundational truths. Remind them of these things. And so he reminds others of the truth.

He warns even that word in verse 14, that intense, urgent word, warn them before God against quarreling about words. Something that a pastor will have to do, but it's got its place between friends, brothers and sisters in Christ.

[33:43] Hey, you name the name of Christ. Why are you indulging in this destructive talk? Why are you quarreling about words? These aren't things that should characterize you, brother.

I see them in your life and I've struggled with them before and I know that I'm not perfect, but you need to lay that aside by God's grace. It's going to be your ruin and the ruin of others around you. Please leave off this empty, godless chatter. You can warn one another. It's part of iron sharpening iron. Being a friend that's willing to give faithful wounds to a friend.

a peacemaker will remind of the truth, though warn. And look at verse 15 again. Do your best. Make every effort.

Work hard is the word to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Again, especially directed towards the minister.

[34:43] But listen, the rest of us as well, work at it. make every effort. And keeping peace in the church will require nothing less than that.

Maybe you'll remember that when Paul first wrote to the Ephesians, Ephesians chapter 4, in verse 3, he says the same word. Do your best. It's translated, make every effort.

Make every effort to do what? To keep the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. Now the Ephesians had failed apparently to listen. They weren't making every effort.

They heard that. Maybe they thought, like maybe some of us do, hey, we're doing good. We are unifying the church. We don't have a problem with those things, so we don't really need to make every effort. But here, not many years later, Timothy's in the church and there's problems.

They haven't made every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. It requires work. It's one thing to say, oh, I want to be part of the solution. It's something entirely different to throw your weight behind that and to work at it.

[35:45] The Ephesians had failed to do that. And so now Timothy's got to work twice as hard to bring a solution. The ministry, it goes to show, is work. It's not easy. Do your best.

Work hard to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman unashamed. And that is the goal of every minister. It ought to be the goal of every child of God to be approved before him.

To stand before him and have him say, well done, good and faithful servant. To be unashamed of the way that you have lived the Christian life. Here for the minister, unashamed of the way that you've handled the word of truth.

That you've cut a straight path with that truth. But for all of us to be unashamed when we come before God, we've got to make every effort at that. And if you're making an effort at that, to honor God, to hold rightly to the word of truth, we're going to try to preach and we're going to cut that path of truth for you as best we can by God's grace.

And you're making effort to stay in that path of truth. And if that's going on, then it will go miles towards bringing unity in the church. We're making every effort to handle that word of truth right.

[36:44] Cut this path right. And you're making every effort to stay in that path. And you too, when you read the Bible and you instruct your children in it and you instruct your own heart, you're

making every effort to cut it rightly, to rightly divide it, to handle it well.

And we're all aiming to stay in this path of truth. Instead of, I don't really care, I'm going to wander off over here and I'm going to follow you over here out into these chairs instead of down this aisle of truth here.

A peacemaker will be careful with the word of truth. teaching it, applying it rightly so that we might receive that commendation before God. If you've been out spreading error, stirring up dissension, you're not going to receive the approval.

You're going to be ashamed when you stand before God. But if by His grace and His power through the work of the Spirit in us, Christ dwelling in us by His Spirit, we can come to the end of our life and say, I'm a workman unashamed, approved of God.

Imagine, if everybody in the church commits to being part of the solution, to making that our goal, that's going to go miles towards preserving the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

[37:55] So they're marked by hard work, focus on the truth. They'll also be marked by gentleness, kindness, humility. It's down in verses 24 and 25.

The Lord's servant must not quarrel. Instead, he must be kind or gentle to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him, he must gently or humbly instruct.

In all of this, the peacemaker, he's cutting truth, he's rebuking, he's warning, he's reminding, but he's doing it with humility. He's getting a log out of his own eye first. He's being gentle.

He can't take the same argumentative approach that the troublemakers do. If he comes with a holier-than-thou, a proud, a hostile attitude, he won't win anyone over. Remember Galatians 6.1, Brothers, if any of you is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should go and restore him gently. Gently. We must be like our Master who says in Matthew 11.29, I am gentle and humble in heart. And so must we be if we would be peacemakers in the church instead of troublemakers.

[39:06] It doesn't preclude strong warnings. Warn them before God. It's a strong word. But it's done in gentleness. It's done in love. Must be patient when wronged or not resentful.

Verse 24. Kind to everyone. Able to teach. Not resentful. You're going to be wronged.

If you're raining on someone's parade of selfish, foolish talk, they're not going to like it. They're going to offend you. Don't take offense. Gently show them the truth.

Don't be resentful. Able to teach. The servant of God must also be able to teach. One of the qualifications for elders that we saw back in 1 Timothy chapter 3.

We cut that straight path of truth by God's grace and lead people down it. Showing them the way. Teaching. Instructing them in the way of righteousness that leads to life. Able to teach.

[40:02] Can you imagine a church with pastors who exemplify these things and the chairs full of people who exemplify these things? These attitudes.

These actions. That would be a peacemaking church. And I pray that God will increasingly make each of us to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

Make that aim. Your aim in the days and weeks to come. Go get out your notes from the Sunday School Peacemaker series. Pick up the book and read it. Make that of your aim. Make it your goal. Get out your notes from the message this morning. And see the source behind some of these quarrels. Our own desire. Our desire to be noticed. And to be the one that people come to for advice and with questions.

And our desire to have a debate because we love that. Sir, what's your own desire? Get out your notes from those things and go back and see how you can be a peacemaker. And next week we're going to talk more specifically about how we can do that.

[40:59] And Paul's got a great illustration that we don't have time for tonight about going from being an instrument for common ignoble purposes to something for a noble purpose.

We're going to talk about how you can make that switch. You look at your life and you say, I've been a troublemaker. We're going to talk next week about how you can shift from being a troublemaker to a peacemaker. The things that you'll have to do.

The instructions that he gives there. But tonight we see the pictures, don't we? Here's what a troublemaker looks like. Here's what a peacemaker looks like. Which are you? Have dealings with God this week.

God, forgive me for my troublemaking tendencies. Give me grace to pursue these peacemaking things. And look with me at the outcome of peacemaking. There's a goal here.

I know that if I drink the cup of poison, it's going to kill me. If I eat healthy and do well, I'm going to, barring disease or something else, I'm going to have health.

[41:53] And so there's benefits to that. So I know that in advance. So I'm going to do it. Well, here's the benefits that can come from peacemaking. And these that Paul mentions are directed especially towards the troublemakers.

What good could come for them if you are a peacemaker? Well, hopefully, verse 25, repentance. Those who oppose him, he must gently instruct in the hope that God will grant them repentance, leading them to a knowledge of the truth.

That's what we want. We want these people that are troublemakers. These people that have professed faith in Christ but are actually doing harm in the church. We want them to come to repentance.

We want those that have never professed faith in Christ and are causing trouble by their empty chatter. There can be unbelievers going around causing the same problems in the church. Our desire for all of them is that they would come to repentance.

That's the goal. And by God's grace, it will be the outcome. Only God can do the work. You see that God will grant them repentance. Repentance, too, is a gift of God. And I'm glad it is.

[42:52] Because all of my hard work, all of my preaching, all of my exhorting someone, coming alongside a brother and saying, brother, you're sinning here. You've got to be... All of that, all of our work, can't produce repentance.

God has to. And so if you're going to be a brother that sharpens a brother, you're going to exhort him, you can't just do that and then leave it. You've got to pray. Lord, use that word. Pray before you do it. Pray when you're done.

Lord, use it. You bring the repentance. But he does use human instruments, doesn't he? To accomplish his purpose. And so, we engage in these things.

We gently instruct in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth. Instead of all of this falsehood that they've been spreading, we want them to know the truth. And that gives us hope.

Because it's God's work. And not ours. And so John Calvin says, Thus, whoever shall consider that repentance is the gift and work of God will cherish more earnest hope and encouraged by this confidence will bestow more toil and exertion for the instruction of rebels.

[43:56] You see, our hope is stronger because it's God's work. And our effort is stronger because we see that God can use it to lead to repentance. That's what we want. We want them to repent.

We want them, verse 26, to come to their senses. We want them to be awakened from that stupor that the devil has them and that haze and fog of deceit that he has used to blind their eyes.

We want them to awaken and have the haze, the blindfold removed so that they can see the error of their ways and come back to the truth. That's our goal. God able to use the guided words of His servant to bring that to pass.

And we want them to escape the trap of the devil. We don't want them in the clutches of Satan any longer. Him using them to do His will. No, we want them serving God, doing His will.

That's the goal of our peacemaking, our problem solving in the church. If you're a troublemaker tonight, it's what we want for you. We want you to come to repentance. To be done with that. But if it comes to it, some troublemakers will be unrepentant.

[45:00] And they'll have to be disciplined. Put out of the church. Back in 1 Timothy 1, in verse 20, we find that Paul had to hand Hymenaeus over to Satan.

He had to put him out of the church. Excommunicate him. Same Hymenaeus that we have here. Hymenaeus didn't repent so far as we know. He had to be put out of the church. It's not the outcome we want, but it could come.

Remember the final step for treating gangrene. If nothing else works, does he cut it off? But ultimately, our goal will be peace in the church.

If the church is full of people who are peacemakers, problem solvers, then we'll have a prosperous, peaceful church that's highly effective in its ministry to the saints and its outreach to the world.

So may God make us that kind of place, that kind of people. We'll come back next time and see more of this. How we can be peacemakers. Practical things that we can do.

[46:06] Flee the evil desires of youth. Pursue righteousness. Faith, love. Purify yourself. Turn away from unrighteousness. All of these things you'll do if you want to be a peacemaker instead of

a troublemaker. And we'll see that there's hope for us.

Notice it with me in verse 19. I don't want to leave us without hope tonight. Even if there's troublemakers in the church. Even if there's problems. Nevertheless, verse 19, 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. We'll dig into that next time. But for tonight, we've had a look at what each side looks like.

There's troublemakers. There's peacemakers. And now we need to have a look at ourselves to see whether we're part of the problem or part of the solution. May God make us, by His grace, to be part of the solution.

Remember, at the beginning, if everyone involved in the drug business agreed to work towards ending the problem, what a remarkable thing that would be. Of course, they're not going to do that. [47:11] But let's do it at Grace Fellowship Church with respect to foolish, speculative, useless quarrels about words and empty talk. Let's each one of us lay aside those things.

Let's be part of the solution by the power of Christ dwelling in us by His Spirit. You know, this is the church of Christ. We're to speak words in it that would be honoring to Christ.

He's bought us with His blood. We are to become more and more like Him, not more and more like the world around us. And so let's make it our goal to make this church a place that is honoring to Christ in the words that we speak.

Everybody here committed to being part of the solution. Making peace. Not part of the problem. It's Christ's church, but with His blood. Shouldn't we then be consumed with the honor of Christ who's saved us from our sins, who's delivered us from that way of life?

Shouldn't we desire and seek with all our hearts then for good in His church? May God make it so. Let's pray together. Our Father, we thank You that in Your Word you don't gloss over things.

[48:17] That You didn't inspire your writers of Scripture to ignore the problems so that everything would look good to the outside world. We thank You that You've painted the picture as it was.

There were problems in the church. And dangerous problems. Devastating problems. And we thank You that in showing us those things that we can see the same things in our own lives, in our own hearts, in our own church, and see them and know now to avoid them.

God, give us grace to not be troublemakers. And we thank You that in showing the problem, You show us the solution. Make us to be peacemakers. Those that love Your Word and Your truth. That are willing to give a warning.

To remind others of the truth. That do it gently. Make us to be a people that stay in that straight path of truth that is cut before us. We pray that You would make us lovers of Your Word.

Lovers of Your truth. And people that have Your truth on our tongues. Not foolish, empty talk. Vain speculation. But rather, the Word of God. Make us to be part of the solution.

[49:20] Make us to be peacemakers and not troublemakers. Do it for Your honor. Do it for Your glory. Do it that Christ might receive praise. We bear the name of Christ. May we not bring shame to Him.

Who is not ashamed to suffer for us. Give us grace then, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.