

II TIMOTHY 2:14-26
CHRISTIAN IDENTITY!
PART 3

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to II Timothy chapter 2 as we continue our in-depth study of Paul's second and last letter to Timothy.

Keep in mind that Paul is in the Mamertine prison in Rome awaiting to be put to death for his faith in Christ. That tells me this letter to Timothy is important. Paul is not going to waste words but what he is telling Timothy is important as he is going to carry on the work of the ministry.

Also, Timothy is in Ephesus, there because Paul asked him to stay and correct some of the problems that had arisen there in the church.

This morning, we are in part 3 of a series I have called – ***CHRISTIAN IDENTITY!***

In other words, as Christians, how are we to be seen. How are we to live out our lives.

We have seen in our previous two studies on our ***CHRISTIAN IDENTITY!*** that as Christians, we are to be like . . .

The soldier who is to be ***FOCUSED!***

The athlete who is to be ***OBEDIENT!***

The farmer who must be ***PATIENT!***

The message is about ***JESUS!***

The results of living for Christ is ***PERSECUTION!***

The way we stay focused is ***OUR HOPE OF GLORY!***

Why is this so important, this – *CHRISTIAN IDENTITY?*

Let me show you why this is so important.

Before we begin our study this morning, let me give you the basic definition of the word *“identity.”*

Webster’s dictionary defines this word as the distinguishing character or personality of an individual.

And, according to Psychology Today, they say that identity encompasses the memories, experiences, relationships, and values that create one’s sense of self.

In I Corinthians 1:30-31 Paul wrote, **“But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God - and righteousness and sanctification and redemption - that, as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.’”**

In other words, if we are *IN CHRIST*, or really, *HE IS IN US*, than His nature should flow from our lives. People should see Christ in us.

Make no mistake about it, our identity in Christ changes our lives, at least it should!

How does it change our lives?

I will just share a few things with you on this.

Our identity in Christ is seen in that we no longer chase after the desires of our flesh; we want to bring glory to God in all that we do. We are not perfect, but that is the desire of our hearts!

That is what John wrote in I John 2:15-17, **“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”**

Another way people will see our identity in Christ is that we no longer fear the future.

That is a big one today, isn't it. People are fearful of all kinds of things and when I say people, I am speaking of Christians.

Yes, the world has no reason for hope, but we do. They should be fearful of what is happening in this world, but not Christians!

And yet, we fear the elections. We fear this war. We fear what the government is doing. We fear this and we fear that and yet, what does Paul tell us in Romans 8:14-16, **“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”**

The peace of God should fill our hearts and lives and because of that, no matter what we are going through, people should see our peace! We have peace in Jesus!

One more point here. Because of our Christian identity, we should not be surprised when sufferings come, difficult times come.

Remember what we read in Romans chapter 8. Paul said, “**The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.**”

Are we becoming more Christ-like or world-like? And it is easy to get drawn away and become like the world, but Paul is admonishing Timothy and us to stay focused and to let Christ in you be seen!

And this morning, as we continue in our study on – ***CHRISTIAN IDENTITY***, we are going to focus on three other areas that should be seen in our lives.

I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning into the following main points. They are,

The Diligent Worker - II Timothy 2:14-19.

The Sanctified Vessel - II Timothy 2:20-23.

The Gentle Servant - II Timothy 2:24-26.

So with that as our introduction, let’s begin reading in II Timothy chapter 2, beginning in verse 14 and let’s see what the Lord has for us this morning as we look at our – ***CHRISTIAN IDENTITY!***

II TIMOTHY 2

VERSES 14-19

As we have seen in our study of I Timothy, the church, the place where God's people gather, is to be the pillar and the foundation of the truth and that truth is from the Word of God, not experience or feelings!

Thus, we must resist those temptations to be more like the world, to water the message down, to change the message. In other words, the church should constantly remember these things!

What is interesting here is that when Paul says that Timothy was to "**Remind them . . .**" the Greek is, "*Continually put them in remembrance of these things.*"

What things?

Paul wanted Timothy to remind them that it is all about Jesus, the Gospel message, that is what he is to be speaking forth, that is what he was to keep on sharing, the Lord with people, building people up in the faith!

Not only that but warning them of the dangers that are out there, the false teachers with their false doctrines!

In the Greek the point that Paul is bringing forth is that of "*waging a war of words with false teachers.*"

Who are these false teachers that Paul is speaking about?

As we get to II Timothy 3:7 we will see that they are those who are "**always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.**"

And Paul is saying that there is absolutely no profit in debating with people who are blatantly antagonistic to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to the truth of God's Word.

Why avoid these things?

Because if you do get caught up with all this garbage it will be **“to the ruin of the hearers.”** That is an important warning that Paul wanted Timothy to speak forth continually!

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

In his fictional but spiritually insightful *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis has an older demon give a junior demon named Wormwood the following advice about tempting a certain human being who has been assigned to him: ***“Your man has been accustomed, ever since he was a boy, to have a dozen incompatible philosophies dancing about together inside his head. He doesn't think of doctrines as primarily ‘true’ or ‘false,’ but as ‘academic’ or ‘practical.’ . . . Jargon, not argument, is your best ally in keeping him from the Church”*** ([New York: Macmillan, 1961], 8).

Satan does indeed know that most people, including many who are intelligent and well-educated, are more apt to be persuaded by popular jargon than by biblical argument or actual proof - despite what they may claim to the contrary.

In the last several centuries, the most unbiblical, humanistic, and destructive philosophies have come through channels of higher education, including many colleges, universities, and seminaries that claim to be Christian, and once were.

Human intelligence has never been a match for the wiles of Satan. The sinful pride of man is nowhere more clearly seen than in exalting his own intellect over Scripture and in considering such utter foolishness to be scholarship.

Many undiscerning students line up to learn from these pseudo scholars and have the strength of any remaining convictions turned into weakness.

The barrage of ungodly ideas and verbiage that today is assaulting society in general, and even the evangelical church, is frightening.

More frightening than the false ideas themselves, however, is the indifference to them, and often acceptance of them, by those who name the name of Christ and claim to be born again.

Abortion, theistic evolution, homosexuality, no-fault divorce, feminism, and many other unbiblical concepts and attitudes have invaded the church at an alarming rate and to an alarming degree. One of the most popular and seductive false teachings is the promotion of high self-esteem as a Christian virtue, when, in reality, it is the very foundation of sin.

Such destructive notions are inevitable when Christians listen to the world above the Word, and are more persuaded by men's wisdom than by God's.

Far too few leaders in the church today can say honestly with Paul that their "exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit" (1 Thess 2:3).

As Christians become less and less familiar with Scripture and sound doctrine on a firsthand, regular basis, they become easy prey for jargon that sounds Christian but strongly mitigates against God's truth.

- John MacArthur, 2 Timothy 4

How true that is and how important it is to be reminded of these things.

Some in the church today don't want to hear any of those things, they don't want to be warned and yet, Paul let Timothy know the importance of reminding them!

Remember the focus of II Timothy 2:14-19, ***THE DILIGENT WORKER!*** That is what we are looking at and thus, a diligent worker is to remind them of these things and not get into disputes with these false teachers who are really not interested in the truth!

Paul now tells us that a diligent worker should “**Be diligent to present yourself approved to God . . .**”

And the idea with this word “**diligent**” is that it speaks of a “*zealous persistence to accomplish a certain objective.*”

This is someone who is zealous and persistent in teaching the Word of God!

And isn't this interesting? As you teach God's Word correctly, you are presenting yourself as approved of God. And the idea here is that you are standing before the Lord, and you are presenting yourself for inspection. Kind of like a soldier would do before a commanding officer.

And as you do, you are “**approved**”, or you are accepted after testing. The Lord has inspected what you have presented to Him, and you are worthy to continue serving the Lord in ministry!

Now here's the thing. Being a pastor is not a popularity contest. I look at the prophet Jeremiah, a spokesperson for God and yet no one listened to what he had to say, no one repented and got right with God.

In fact, they did not want to hear the message of warning, of coming judgment, or repenting and getting right with God! They were not interested in the truth and yet, Jeremiah was faithful to present the truth to them so that they were without excuse!

Many today would look at a ministry like that and see it as a failure. But God was pleased with Jeremiah because he was faithful in service, he was a God pleaser rather than a man pleaser. Thus, the people hated him because they didn't like what he was saying to them, but God was well pleased!

So we see here that Paul is telling Timothy to work hard, to be diligent in the work he is doing. To be a God pleaser and not a man pleaser.

The interesting thing is, if they receive the truths of God found in the Word of God, they may not like it, but in the end, it will be a blessing to them, it will be beneficial to them!

But when you listen to false teachers, they should be ashamed of the work they are doing because it was done poorly.

They twist the Scriptures to make say them what they want them to say!

But that should not be the case in our service to the Lord, and as a pastor, Timothy was to **“rightly divide”** God's Word or **“*to cut straight.*”**

The Geek word, ***ORTHOTOMEIO***, (or-thot-om-eh'-o) was used of a craftsman cutting a straight line, or a farmer plowing a straight furrow, or a mason setting a straight line for bricks.

Can you imagine building a brick wall for a house and your bricks are not in a line, they go all over the place. That wall is not going to be sturdy; it is not going to stand.

And that is how some deal with the Word of God, they are all over the place and it makes no sense, and they take people to where they want to go instead of what God has shared with us in His Word.

Thus, there is a right way to teach God's Word, to share what it means, and a wrong way!

The right way is teaching verse by verse through the Bible, the whole counsel of God.

If you are not rightly dividing the Word of Truth, the Bible, then you are not approved of God. If you are making the Bible say what you want it to say instead of what God has said, then you are not approved of God!

I like these words from Spurgeon who puts this in perspective for us. He wrote, “*Swords are meant to cut and hack, and wound, and kill with, and the word of truth is for pricking men in the heart and killing their sins. The word of God is not committed to God’s ministers to amuse men with its glitter, nor to charm them with the jewels in its hilt, but to conquer their souls for Jesus.*”

May we “**Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**”

And then Paul goes on and speaks of these false teachers and their false doctrines, even naming some of them. Some Christians would be offended by that, but it is important who you are to avoid!

Paul warned Timothy to shun them, avoid them, we are not to listen to their message!

Why?

Because it is “**profane,**” not meaning dirty words but anything that is taking away from God’s Word is not holy, it is filthy!

Why is that?

Because it is nothing more than “**idle babblings**” or “**vain babblings**” there is no substance to them, there is nothing substantial to them. Their words are empty even though it may be a feel-good message, in the end you leave with nothing that will help you spiritually speaking!

Paul, in Colossians 2:8-10 warned us by saying, **“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”**

The world’s philosophies, the world’s ideas, the traditions that people hold on to are basic and they will not help you grow in the Lord. In fact, they will hurt you! Be careful, be warned!

May we be wise and understand that what God has for us will make us complete!

So Paul is basically telling Timothy, and us, ***“Timothy, when people come up with these doctrines, don’t get caught up in them, keep plowing a straight furrow through the Word of God.”***

That is what I am trying to do as we go through the Word of God!

Let me say this. This kind of teaching we are seeing today many times is not rightly dividing the Word of God, it doesn’t make a person more holy, but it moves them more and more down the path of un-holiness. You see, you are not being drawn into the presence of God with these teachings, but into the person who is teaching them. They are following a man and not God!

Interestingly enough, Paul likens the teachings of these false doctrines, these unscriptural lessons to that of cancer, spreading quickly.

It is amazing how some cancer spreads so quickly, it happened to my dad and in a short time the cancer destroyed his body!

I am amazed at how quickly false doctrine can spread, to the ruin of its hearer.

I have seen relationships destroyed because of this, and it truly saddens me.

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

Religious deceptions are so infectious, malicious, and insidious that they are to be handled only with protective masks and gloves, as it were.

Using another figure, Jude says that those who are in grave spiritual danger should be snatched “out of the fire” (Jude 23) like a hot ember.

It was in a similar figurative way that the high priest Joshua, who had become corrupted like the rest of the priesthood, was divinely retrieved and spared, like “a brand plucked from the fire” (Zech 3:2).

“The whole world lies in the power of the evil one,” John says in his first letter (1 John 5:19).

Earlier in that epistle he says we are not to “love the world, nor the things in the world,” because “if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world” (2:15-16).

James likewise warns, “Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4). The world is the partner with demons in developing and spreading the epidemic of deadly spiritual gangrene.

It is because false teachers are of the world and serve the prince of this world that they are so dangerous. And rapidly growing technology has helped worldliness and every other form of ungodliness to also grow more rapidly, exposing more people to more evil teaching than those who lived even a few generations ago could have imagined.

Consequently, Christians today have more reason than ever to “test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). “They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them” (v. 5). Christians therefore have no excuse even for listening to them, much less buying into their ungodly beliefs and ways.

- John MacArthur, II Timothy 2

And here we see that Paul names two men, probably leaders in the church at Ephesus at one time, who were not rightly dividing the Word of God but teaching heresy!

Now some are offended by that fact that Paul named names, but how in the world are you going to know who the false teachers are if you are not warned, like I have said!

In I Timothy 1:20 Paul tells us, **“of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.”**

Hymenaeus rejected the faith and now, here in II Timothy he still didn’t learn his lesson, he didn’t repent and now he is with Philetus spreading these profane and vain babblings.

They must have been popular, had a strong following, but they were in error and leading others down that same path.

Now they started out correctly, but then they strayed from the truth. One of the things they taught was that the resurrection was over, that it is past.

Are they speaking of our physical resurrection? It seems like it. Maybe they only saw a spiritual resurrection and denied any physical resurrection, a kind of early Gnosticism you might say.

But, by denying our physical resurrection they were denying the resurrection of Jesus in bodily form.

Paul makes that point in I Corinthians 15:12-19, **“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up - if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.”**

If Paul ended there, that there is no resurrection for us, if Christ did not rise from the dead, then we are still dead in our sins, we are lost, and how hopeless our faith would be.

But he didn't end there. He goes on to say, **“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.”** I Corinthians 15:20-24.

Because He was raised from the dead, since He conquered death, then one day we too will be raised in glory, our bodies will be resurrected like His!

Do you see how Scripture refutes false teaching!

I wish more Christians would read and study the Bible so they can spot false teaching, false doctrine, but they don't. And they end up getting caught up with experiences, feelings instead of what God's Word has to say and that is tragic!

Also, please understand that this doctrine was not all the heresy they taught, no doubt. If they were wrong with this fundamental doctrine, chances are they were also wrong in other areas, had many other "*goofy beliefs*" as they were moving away from Jesus.

Thus, they have destroyed the faith of some as they listen to this garbage. These lies chocked out any leanings towards Christ and kept them in spiritual darkness, spiritual death.

Thus, Paul's warning is to shun them, avoid their heresy, to not associate yourself with them!

Important words for us to heed in the days we are living in and yet, so many refuse to listen!

And notice how Paul ends this section on being - ***A DILIGENT WORKMAN!***

He does so by speaking of the Word of God being the foundation that stands!

In Isaiah 40:8 we are told, "**The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.**"

God's Word will stand because it is a solid foundation.

On the other hand, cancer eats away, destroys life like false doctrine.

But the Word of God brings forth life, abundant life!

In spite of these false teachers, in the end God will win, these men and their doctrines will be cast in the Lake of Fire!

Our responsibility is to teach people the truths of God from the Word of God so as these false doctrines come blowing in, God's Word, like a cancer fighting drug, will destroy it!

May we stay focused on the Lord and His Word, and we won't have to worry about our faith being overthrown!

As we have seen, may we be – ***A DILIGENT WORKMAN!***

As we move into II Timothy 2:20-23 Paul is going to deal with ***THE SANCTIFIED VESSEL!***

Let me say this as we move into these verses. We just read about the false teachers like Hymenaeus and Philetus and how they were going to find their way into the local church and overthrow the faith of some with their false doctrines.

It is in the light of that, Paul now says . . .

VERSES 20-23

As I say so often, when you are reading the Scriptures, remember the – ***CONTEXT, CONTEXT*** and ***CONTEXT*** of what you are reading. If you don't, you will come up with all kinds of wild ideas about what the text is saying.

Here in II Timothy 2:20 Paul is speaking of gold and silver, wood and clay. And the big question is, "***What in the world is he talking about?***"

Some say that gold and silver are believers who are strong, and the wood and clay speak of carnal believers.

In other words, he could be saying that those carnal Christians seem to be receptacles for gossip, false teaching and other kinds of worldly trash and defilements – wood and clay.

Which is true, that is what tends to happen.

But remember what we have been looking at. The false teachers or unbelievers and the believers who have been sealed by God, those who are standing firm upon the Word of God!

So I think that the believers are the gold and silver and the unbelievers or these false teachers that Paul is speaking of are the wood and clay!

And Paul starts out by saying that there is a large house of great importance, we might think of it as a palace.

And within this house are many vessels, or there are many different kinds of people.

And within this house you have believers and false teachers or unbelievers co-existing, side by side many times.

We do see that in the church, believers and unbelievers.

This is why pastors who are rightly dividing the Word of God are so valuable today, just like back then. They can build people up in the faith.

While false teachers with their false doctrine will destroy a person's faith.

Warren Wiersbe put it like this,

A faithful pastor is like a gold or silver vessel that brings honor to Jesus Christ. The head of a house displays his costliest and most beautiful utensils and gets honor from them.

I remember the first time I viewed the crown jewels of England in the Tower of London, along with the priceless table vessels and utensils. I was overwhelmed with their glory and beauty.

That is the kind of beauty God gives to his servants who faithfully handle the Word of God.

False teachers are not valuable; they are like wood and clay. They are utensils to dishonor, no matter how popular they may be today.

Wood and clay will not survive the test of fire. It is worth noting that the name Timothy comes from two Greek words which together mean “*God honoring.*”

Paul was encouraging Timothy to live up to his name!

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, p. 778

I think that is what Paul is speaking of here.

Now, in II Timothy 2:21 Paul says, “**Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter . . .**” what is his point?

He is telling Timothy and us that the only way he was going to be a vessel of honor, the only way we will be vessels of honor for God is to *cleanse ourselves from the latter*, but again, latter what?

Look at the context here.

The latter is a reference to the vessels of dishonor and that word “**cleanses**” is a Greek word from which we get our English word “*catharsis*” from.

Paul is saying that the only way to remain vessels of honor is to remove, cleanse the defilement that comes from hanging out with vessels of dishonor in the church.

In other words, false teachers with their false doctrine, those who are living in sin with no remorse, cleanse yourself from them!

Now let’s think this through.

How does a Christian “*prepare*” for every good work in the service of God?

I guess another way to put it is like this, “*How do you stay clean?*”

The way you stay clean is you don’t play with dirt.

I grew up with three other brothers and my mom would tell us not to get dirty. Think about that one. We were boys and guess what, we loved to get dirty.

But here we are as Christians today and if you are involved in the things of this dirty world, we will get dirty!

But let me also say this. We live in this dirty world and thus, we need a washing of the Word of God in our lives!

That is what David said in Psalm 119:9-11, **“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.”**

And Paul said in Ephesians 5:26, **“that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.”**

That is just daily life. The point that Paul is making here in II Timothy is that we are not to put ourselves into situations that will defile us. He is telling us here that we are to flee these things, flee the dirt, those things that will hurt us!

From the Greek word **“Flee”** we get our English word ***“fugitive”*** from.

What’s my point?

My point is this.

When we flee Paul is saying that you are on the run so that you can escape capture, you are continually on the run!

Capture from what or who?

The Devil is trying to take you captive, and you are to flee, not get caught up in those things that will defile you as I have said.

And doesn't that speak of the Christian life?

You bet it does!

Make no mistake about it, we are continually on the run from sinful passions. And if we don't take this seriously, we will be taken captive!

So we prepare ourselves for being useful to God by running from certain things, but it does not stop there.

You see, we run away, flee sinful passions by running toward other things.

What other things?

You see, we are to run after righteousness, faith, love, peace with a pure heart and fellowship with others who are doing the same.

Why is that?

Because you will help keep each other accountable in your walk and spur each other on in service.

We have over ten billion cells in our brain, some have a little less, and the majority of those cells are used for memory. At least I think they are. Just kidding.

You see, everything that goes into our brain we retain, although at times it may be hard to extract.

Thus, what you put in your mind is there.

If you put garbage in, you may not remember it for years and then all of a sudden, there is that garbage coming up again because it has always been there.

And isn't it amazing the garbage we can remember and the things of God, we have to dig and think about, and try to remember!

But here is what we need to remember about all of this. Don't play with fire because you will get burned!

I like what Paul tells us to do in Philippians 4:8-9, **“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”**

Fill your mind with the things of God, don't put anything in there that will hurt you!

And then, in II Timothy 2:23 Paul tells us not to get caught up in foolish arguments, avoid them, walk away from them, don't add fuel to the fire!

They don't cause any good, they only cause trouble, so don't get involved in them. That is just being wise!

I have tried to talk with people that are into false teaching, and you can show them Scripture after Scripture and it won't matter because their mind is made up and they will not listen. That is very sad but there is nothing you can do about it, and sometimes you just have to walk away.

So, if you want to be used by God, flee the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

Don't get caught up in foolish disputes.

Draw close to God and manifest the fruit of the Spirit in your life from a pure heart!

Why?

Because we are to be – *A SANCTIFIED VESSEL!*

As we conclude this chapter and look at II Timothy 2:24-26, Paul shows us ***THE GENTLE SERVANT!***

VERSES 24-26

Remember what Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones sang, ***“You can’t always get what you want, but if you try sometimes, you might find, you get what you need.”***

But what Jesus tells us is just the opposite of what the world teaches.

They teach that you have to fight for what you want, claw your way to the top, step on whoever you have to so you can achieve your goal. Just do whatever it takes!

Let me share the title of a book and you will see what I mean. It is called, ***“Claw Your Way to the Top: How to Become the Head of a Major Corporation in Roughly a Week.”***

The title says it all but listen to what Amazon wrote regarding this book. They wrote, ***“Working up the corporate ladder is all well and good for most people, but you are not ‘most people.’ You are a highly motivated individual who wants to be on the fast track, and you cannot afford to fritter away valuable time working diligently and competently on the job. You need Dave Barry’s surefire tips in Claw Your Way to the Top!”***

I think most people would not admit that they think that way, but they do. We live in a society or a time period where men are lovers of themselves, and they will do whatever they need to do to get what they want! We will see that next time as Paul will be dealing with the coming apostasy in II Timothy chapter 3.

But what does the Bible have to say about how we, as Christians, are to live out our lives?

Jesus tells us that you need to be a servant of all if you want to be great in God's Kingdom!

In Matthew 20:20-28 we see Jesus show His men and us this principle.

We are told, **“Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, ‘What do you wish?’ She said to Him, ‘Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.’ But Jesus answered and said, ‘You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?’ They said to Him, ‘We are able.’ So He said to them, ‘You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father.’ And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to Himself and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’”**

We need to be servant leaders, to follow our Lord's example!

For a pastor, like Timothy, *his power must be under control like a wild horse that is broken.*

He must be able to teach, rightly dividing the Word of God.

He must be patient with people, allowing them to grow in the Lord.

He must be able to correct those who are in error with a humble spirit, not a haughty one!

It is as Calvin said, *“Paul’s meaning is that gentleness should be shown even to those who least deserve it, and even if at first there is no apparent hope of progress, still the challenge must be accepted.”*

Think about this for a minute. As much as we are to speak boldly for the Lord without compromise, we are to do so with the attitude of meekness, gentleness, and humility.

We are never to be harsh, abusive, overbearing, unkind, thoughtless, or confrontational.

Paul wrote in I Thessalonians 2:7, **“But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.”**

Now if someone is bound by this demonic deception, they need to be set free. But that again needs to be done in the love of Christ.

But why is this so important?

Listen to what Paul said here. **“... so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”** II Timothy 2:25-26.

The word **“come”** describes someone who is coming out of a drunken stupor.

Think of it like this.

Satan has come and made people drunk with his lies.

Thus, the servant of God is to come and sober them up in a sense, rescue them from the clutches of Satan with the truths of God found in the Word of God.

In other words, as Jesus said, **“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”** John 8:32.

The truth of God's Word will set you free from all the lies, all the deception that is out there.

And let me say this. We are living in a time period where deception is growing and growing, and I am speaking of deception in the church.

I know it is hard to believe that, but it is exactly what the Bible warns us about, deception in the last days!

Paul warned Timothy and us in I Timothy 4:1-3, **“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.”**

I believe we are in that period of time right now. And thus, share the truth in love, don't argue with them, but pray that their eyes would be open to the truth and that they would come to their senses.

In other words, may we be available for His use, cleansed from immorality. May we grow strong in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, rightly dividing the Word of truth and with the love of Christ share it with others!

Over the past three studies we have been looking at our – ***CHRISTIAN IDENTITY!***

And we have seen how important it is.

How are people going to know we are Christians if they don't see that we are Christians?

They won't be able to!

And, as we have seen what we are to be like, remember . . .

The soldier who is to be ***FOCUSED!***

The athlete who is to be ***OBEDIENT!***

The farmer who must be ***PATIENT!***

The message is about ***JESUS!***

The results of living for Christ is ***PERSECUTION!***

The way we stay focused is ***OUR HOPE OF GLORY!***

The Diligent Worker who ***RIGHTLY DIVIDES THE WORD OF TRUTH!***

The Sanctified Vessel who is ***SANCTIFIED FOR OUR MASTERS USE!***

The Gentle Servant who is ***HUMBLE, GENTLE IN HIS CORRECTION!***

Let me close with this to show you how our behavior will show who we are, it will show our identity.

We are told,

The renowned artist Paul Gustave Dore (1821-1883) lost his passport while traveling in Europe.

When he came to a border crossing, he explained his predicament to one of the guards.

Giving his name to the official, Dore hoped he would be recognized and allowed to pass.

The guard, however, said that many people attempted to cross the border by claiming to be people they were not.

Dore insisted that he was the man he claimed to be. ***“All right,”*** said the official, ***“we’ll give you a test, and if you pass it, we’ll allow you to go through.”***

Handing him a pencil and a sheet of paper, he told the artist to sketch several peasants standing nearby.

Dore did it so quickly and skillfully that the guard was convinced he was indeed who he claimed to be.

His work confirmed his word!

- Our Daily Bread, January 6, 1993

May our work, the things that we do and say confirm our faith in Christ as we shine for Him!

As Paul said here in II Timothy 2:1, "**You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.**"