

[1]¹⁴ Keep reminding God's people of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about wordsⁱ; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. ¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. ¹⁶ Avoid godless chatterⁱⁱ, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. ¹⁷ Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeusⁱⁱⁱ and Philetus, ¹⁸ who have departed from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place^{iv}, and they destroy the faith of some. ¹⁹ Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his,"^v and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."^{vi} ²⁰ In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for special purposes and some for common use. ²¹ Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work. ²² **Flee** the [evil] desires of youth and pursue^{vii} righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. ²³ Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels.^{viii} ²⁴ And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome^{ix} but must be kind^x to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. ²⁵ Opponents^{xi} must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ 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.

[2] Background

- **Historical:** Teachers of error (usually about the resurrection or return of Jesus) plagued the early church.
- **Paul's Mindset:** He is writing a last letter, not explaining doctrine. So he writes in a verbal processing sort of way.
- **Respect:** We need to listen carefully to Paul. He is at the end of this life and as mature as he will get.

[3] Today's Theme: Don't waste time arguing with people. There's a big difference between helping someone understand, and arguing with them so as to win an argument. Let's break it down a little.

1. **Verse 14: Don't "fight with words" (λογομαχεῖν)** – it "ruins" (καταστροφή) the listener.
 - a. When we engage someone, 'fighting' is not a permitted part of our arsenal.
 - b. The point of fighting is to inflict harm. Is our desire to hurt our opponents or help them?
2. **Verse 16: Avoid** ungodly blathering - it creates even more ungodliness.
 - a. We are to avoid 'trolls' – people who say dumb stuff for attention. Proverbs 26:4-5!
3. **Verse 23: Reject** foolish and stupid controversies – they produce fights (same word again).
 - a. Cp Titus 3:9-11. We are to 'push away' from stupid disagreements (and divisive people).
4. **Verse 17:** Example: Hymenaeus and Philetus – no resurrection (cp Thess.) – destroys faith of some.

[4] What is the motivation for arguing? There can be several, but I think the main one is that we want to win. As one dude put it, "In the end fighting about words seeks not the victory of truth but the victory of the speaker." In my life it goes something like this:

→ Some opponent attacks my position with a foolish or ignorant argument → I feel 'stung' → I defend my position but really I'm defending my worth → because my opponent is ignorant, ungodly, etc., he/she seizes the opportunity to escalate the fight → if I'm not careful, I will find myself deeply and emotionally engaged in verbal combat that ruins people, creates more and more fights, and results in ungodliness.

[5] This doesn't mean we aren't to engage in debate or present our understanding of God's Word. Next week we'll look at how Paul told Timothy to do just that a la verse 15.

ⁱ λογομαχεῖω – to fight about words. 1 Tim 6:4 – (false teachers) have an unhealthy desire to fight about words. Cp Titus 3:9-10.

ⁱⁱ Compare 1 Tim 6:20

ⁱⁱⁱ 1 Timothy 1:20. Paul's excommunication of Hymenaeus did not stick, revealing the weakness of the church at Ephesus

^{iv} The resurrection and return of Christ was under attack very early in the church – 2 Thess 2:1-2, 1 Cor 15, etc.

^v This statement is a reference to Num 16:5, which was spoken on the occasion of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. No matter how many fall away, God knows who are his.

^{vi} See Ps 34:14 and Prov 3:7. Those who belong to God purify themselves.

^{vii} 1 Timothy 6:11 – more fleeing and pursuing

^{viii} "Quarrels" is from the same word as "fight" (about words)

^{ix} The prohibition against being quarrelsome applied to elders – 1 Tim 3:3.

^x "Kind" or "gentle"; the word can also mean "humble" (James 1:21, 3:13)

^{xi} "Opponents" doesn't mean polite discourse, but active hostility (Acts 18:6)

Encouragement and Exhortation

15 Correctly handle the word of truth (cut it straight)

19 The Lord knows those who are His

20-21 Cleanse yourselves from false teachers (common wood and clay utensils). God will not purify His church until Jesus returns (cp. (Matt 13:24–30))

22 Flee desires of youth and pursue good things (righteousness, faith, love, peace) along with others of pure heart. Note that this is not just about personal purity, but all ways in which young men can show themselves to be intemperate. “Young men can be characterized by partiality, intolerance, halfheartedness, and unwarranted self-assertion.”

24 The Lord’s servant is kind, not quarrelsome, not resentful, gently instruct opponents so God might lead them to repentance, to truth, to their senses, to escape from the devil’s trap.