

<b>Series</b>	Gamma 17 – Study 13 (Suffering for the Gospel)
<b>Reference</b>	2 Tim 2:1-13
<b>Date</b>	14 July 2021
<b>Speaker</b>	Dr Peter Ng

Good evening, brothers and sisters. Welcome back to Gamma 17 program, our exposition on the pastoral epistles. We are down to Study 13, looking at second letter of Paul to Timothy chapter 2, the second half.

Now today's study is looking at the gospel character in the face of the challenge of false teachers. And here is Paul advising, mentoring his young disciple on the characteristics of a faithful steward of the guard. Positively, he is trained to be a skilful steward of the gospel teaching, by correcting error generously or graciously, be dedicated to righteousness, faith, love, and peace and on the negative side to avoid quarrelling and controversies and youthful lust. Let's read.

14 Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. 15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. 16 But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, 17 and their talk will spread like gangrene.

Here the challenge of Paul to Timothy is to avoid unhealthy theological arguments, quibbling about words, not to quarrel about words, avoid irreverent babble and nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies. These words describe the things that come from the false teachers that are supposed to be Christians or even elders within the church by causing so much trouble. The consequences of listening to all this and getting involved in all this, it does no good. Verse 14b, it ruins the hearers, it leads people to more and more ungodliness and the talk will spread like gangrene disease, among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus and you know, they breed quarrel.

So all this causes division in the church and pain in the church and one of the consequences is also the false teaching.

18 who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some.

I'll give you a modern example. This is a Channel 4 interview on British TV program called Credo some years ago and they interviewed the late Bishop of Durham called David Jenkins, he is supposed to be one of the leaders of the Church of England. And they asked him about resurrection whether Jesus did actually rise from the dead and look at the way there basically words babble, controversy, he doesn't answer the question directly. He says,

*“well, I hold a view that he rose from the dead, but. The question is what does that means, isn't it?”*

*What seems to me to have happened is that there were a series of experiences which gradually convinced a growing number of people who became apostles that Jesus had certainly been dead, certainly buried and he wasn't finished.*

What does one finished mean?

*And what is more that he wasn't just not finished, but he was raised up. That is to say, the very life and power and purpose and personality which was in him was actually continuing and was continuing both in the sphere of God and in the sphere of history so that he was risen and living presence and possibility."*

Now you look at the things that he said, do you really understand what he is saying? He's playing with words? They really nailed him down and asked him about the virgin birth, conception of Jesus and his empty tomb. The interviewer asked him, isn't there inclusion in the New Testament evidence of certainty. And he said these words,

*"Certainly not? There is absolutely no certainty in the New Testament about anything of importance."*

Here is a Bishop who is telling you there is nothing about the New Testament that is of any historical importance that is actually certain, which is sad. This is the example of false teachers basically babbling around and playing with words. This is Paul. He says,

**1 Corinthians 15:3-5 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in the accordance with the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then history to the twelve.**

Very straightforward, buried, raised and appeared. How much more simple it can it get? And here you have the Bishop of Durham playing with words,

**Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, cutting a straight path with the word of truth"**

The word here it describes an agricultural worker, basically working very hard, sweating, labouring and the dividing the word is ortho-tomeo , in which ortho means right and tomeo means cutting rightly, which means here is a picture of a farm worker on a plough and he is cutting straight furrows along the field. So what does it mean to cut a straight path, to divide the truth accurately, which means to read God's word, interpret it accurately and communicate it faithfully. Being a Workman. So therefore it's hard work being a workman, it is hard work being a farmer, it is hard work ploughing difficult ground and what is the hard work involve? Well, first of all, understanding the original intent of the author, which Paul writes the letter to Timothy, we need to get into Paul's mind by looking at the words he used to see what did he really mean? The opposite of that would be to read it and interpret what he says according to what we feel and that is basically the wrong way of reading scripture. And that takes time and patience and hard work to get into the original intent, what did he mean? You have to get into the context. Listen to the literary conventions, the metaphors being used for language at a time, making plain sense of the texts.

A lot of more simplistic people say, look, you just have to read the book and take it literally. What does it mean to take it literally, take it as basic. Then if that's the case then greet one another with a holy kiss, do we stand in front of church and kiss each other every single time we come to church, obviously we don't do that. What about washing each other's feet? John 13:14. Why aren't we all getting down and washing each other's feet? Is there another meaning to this? John chapter 3 Jesus tells Nicodemus, you must be born again and so therefore that's an important thing to enter the kingdom of heaven. And then he tells the rich young man, you must sell everything to follow me. Does that mean that we have to follow Jesus by selling everything. Right. How do you interpret that? When you repent, you might have sackcloth and ashes for repentance? Do we actually when we repent for our sin actually wear the sackcloth and ashes, are we obeying or disobeying scripture, what about the way we treat our parents? In Luke chapter 14.

If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Is that taken literally? Why don't we actually follow that? If you compare this with Matthew Chapter 10,

whoever loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever loves the son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

So what Jesus actually meant is the issue of priority. That's why he uses the word hate. It is a Jewish idiom in terms of priority of love? So therefore in order to understand the Bible, there is hard work involved. We have to look into the Bible dictionary, research the books that come and support what the Bible says and giving a background to the social history, look at a background, the culture, social circumstance, who is the author, who is the recipient, what are the problems, because it is like listening to one half of a phone call, you hearing what Paul says, you don't really get an opportunity to understand what happens on the other end. So it's a bit hard, but it can be worked out and the problems being faced. So we need to do research. We know to take into account the kind of literature in the Bible. You don't read the narrative the same way as you read a poem, you don't read the prophecy the same way as use wisdom literature. You don't read the gospel the same way as you read a letter or epistle. So we need to understand those things and follow the rules.

We need to look behind the words and look at the biblical rationale for what Jesus says. Sackcloth means repentance, so the issue is not actually wearing a sackcloth but the attitude that comes with the wearing of the sackcloth. Holy kiss is basically a cultural expression at that time of brotherly love and fellowship. We don't have to kiss each other, in fact in the wrong context kissing each other give you the wrong idea. Foot washing is basically service, head coverings for the ladies at the time was respect and submission to their husband. So we need to learn and train how to look at the biblical rationale behind the words. And the aim is to prove yourself approve to God. Now it's very important. A lot of us measure our effectiveness by how our teaching effects the congregation or the audience. We don't want to be embarrassed. You ask someone to share from Bible, they will turn red and they are worried. I think we should be worried about what God thinks about how we share the gospel and how we read the word of God and how we actually interpret and how we actually share or preach. The whole aim is to be approved of God, not perform for the benefit of mankind.

J. Oswald Sanders is a famous Christian leader who wrote the instrumental book called Spiritual Leadership and he writes,

*The greatest competitor of devotion to Jesus is service for him...The one aim of the call of God is a satisfaction of God, not a call to do something for Him.*

So we often as Christian leaders or pastors or Bible study leader so caught up on the call to do something for God rather than focus on the aim to satisfy the one who actually called us. OS Guinness, a philosopher who wrote that seminal book called The Call, writes,

*We are not called to do something or to go somewhere. We are called to someone. We are not called first to some special work but to someone.*

So always remember when you study the word, we're doing it to be approved before God. Now the problem was that there are those who have swerved from truth saying that the resurrection has already occurred.

Some time ago, they actually discovered an artifact in Israel. It's called the Gabriel Stone and the artifact about three feet long and in it was some writing and the writings actually talked about what are the Messiahs at a time or basically rebel leaders. In that article there was a line that says, by three days-live, I Gabriel command you, prince of princes, the dung of rocky crevices.

Now this is actually dated years and years before Jesus comes and people immediately pounced on this and say, wow this is evidence that actually people have actually have understood the concept resurrection way before Jesus. So therefore Jesus was copying other Messiahs. But actually, if you look very carefully, the writing in that area was unclear and you can equally the same guy Israel Knohl who was the one who interpreted it translate this in the sort of live, it says,

*By three days, the sign (will be given) I Gabriel command you, prince of princes, the dung of rocky crevices.*

So it doesn't mean that there was a resurrection in terms of a concept even before the time of Jesus and later on this artifact was proven to be probably fake. So resurrection is a really big thing where false teaching come arise. In fact, it's so alien to the people at a time in Athens when Paul went Athens in Acts chapter 17, when they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some mocked and other said, we will hear you again about this, because it is an alien concept. Because if you remember before in Greek mind, you have got the idea of the realm of ideas and the realm of substance. Realm of ideas is a concept of an apple, which exists perfectly in your mind and the realm of substance is the real apple, which can be big or small or even it can even be rotting, right? So therefore the body is divided into the soul and the spirit on one hand and the body on the other side. The soul and the spirit, like the concept of the apple is good and holy and body is basically bad and sinful. That's the bad part of us. And so therefore the false teachers at the time of Timothy in the church of Ephesus focuses on ascetism to suppress the sinful desires of the body. And so therefore resurrection was taught more of the soul and spirit being released from the body. So they have this concept. Spiritual resurrection.

You don't really have to rise from the dead and your body. You actually have to your spirit rise and then you go to heaven. That was the false teaching was coming at a time, which is why a lot of these people don't actually believe that Jesus came in the flesh or the body. He actually look like a human being, but he was not a human, didn't have a human body he was actually divine. And this came up to question the issue of bodily resurrection, both in Thessalonica and Corinth, where two churches were affected by this false teaching, both in Corinth and Thessalonica. Look in Corinth, Paul reacts to this in chapter 15.

**Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead.**

In Thessalonica,

**Brothers not to be so quickly shaken in mind and alarmed.**

Why were they shaken? Because people were telling them the resurrection has already occurred, it is a spiritual resurrection, it is not a physical resurrection. And some of them are focused on what Paul said. Even today.

**I tell your brothers and sisters, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable**

Which means human body cannot inherit immortality, so therefore it must be spiritual resurrection, not physical, but Paul is very, very clear look at what he writes,

1-Cor 15:51-53, Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable,

Which means the dead, their actual bodies will be raised and it won't be destroyed and it won't be a fragile frail body that will decay.

We shall be changed. 53 For a perishable body must put on the imperishable, and the mortal body was put on immortality.

So it is actually the bodily resurrection, but is resurrected in the sense that it is indestructible.

1-Cor 15:49 Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

Man of dust is Adam, the man of image of the man of heaven is Jesus. So we will be like, Jesus. It is very clear. All right. And what happens to us in between. NT Wright says,

All Christians departed are in substantially the same state, that of restful happiness...firmly held within the conscious love of God and the conscious presence of Christ," awaiting resurrection.

Now then Paul then goes into assurance,

2-Timothy 2:19 But God's firm foundations stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the David Lord depart from iniquity."

Look at this passage basically. Paul is talking about seal and when ancient buildings, especially temples have a seal, and the seal is put on foundation in order to indicate the ownership and sometimes a function of the particular building. You go to any medical centre or hotel, you can actually see a plank there, near the bottom and it always tells you what this building is about and who actually owns it and then you've got the big shot come in and they will cut the ribbon and unveil this plot. Same thing happened in those days.

Revelations chapter 21:14, And the wall of the city had 12 foundations and on them with the names of the 12 apostles.

It is ownership. I was shopping many years ago in Singapore Orchard Road, great CK Tang Plaza and I think that guy is a Christian. He actually has a plot right near the bottom of the bottom floor and it says, Tang Plaza dedicated to the glory to God be the glory. Here is a Christian man building a big mall and dedicating it to God as it was. So this whole idea, there are interplay of two factors here. There is a seal because God knows those who are his. He has a seal on the foundation of our lives. At the same time let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity. You can't have a situation where once saved always saved. I'm a Christian, the Lord knows who I am. I can do whatever I want. God saves us by us departing from iniquity. It effects a change in us that we will depart from iniquity. You will not see it those who belong to God and not depart from iniquity, it doesn't happen.

Why? Because our calling. 1-Timothy chapter 1,

God who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our own works, but because of his own

purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,

Our calling tells us what he calls us to. We're not being saved for the sake of salvation in heaven. We're called to be his holy people for his own purpose, not for our own purpose. So therefore there are two interplays here. The Lord knows those who are his and those who are his depart from sin. That's the most important aspect in this particular passage.

1 Peter chapter one verses three to five, a great passage that talks about our protection from God,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for salvation.

So therefore the fact is we have a inheritance heaven and God's going to guard us to ensure that we reach the new heavens and new earth and this guarding is through faith. It is like this guy hanging on, taking a free ride, he is on the skateboard and the taxi is powering ahead. Imagine the taxi is God's power and holy living is where he is moving and the only way hangs on is by his hand of faith, he trusts God's power. He put his hand there and it empowers him to holy living. That's a picture of what we're going through.

Then Paul goes into a vessel metaphor to encourage Timothy to live for him.

Now in a great house there are only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honourable use, some for dishonourable, 21 therefore if any cleanses himself from what is dishonourable, he will be a vessel for honourable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

And so therefore there are different vessels or basically pots and pans or goblets inside the house. You could have done them made of gold, beautiful gold goblet, you have to put wine, you are putting your spaghetti. You are putting something beautiful inside, something tasty, something very important and then you have got this, you know what this is, this is an ancient Greek potty and you put urine and faeces inside. So God is saying in the household, they have got great vessels, which are made of gold and to put important stuff. And then you've got the horrible ones and you put the waste of life there, you can decide. And so therefore, what kind of vessel you're going to be in God's house, so if you want to be a vessel of gold, you have to flee from youthful passions, pursue righteousness, faith and love along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

This is what we need to be. We are fleeing from all the things that would distract us and pornography, lustful thoughts, not useful activities and pursue righteousness, ethical living, trusting in God, Love for your fellow man and peace with everyone else. So basically this is the picture of what we should be. So we're either a potty or we are a golden goblet, we have to decide. Timothy has to decide.

Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. 21 And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness.

Therefore he is advised that we are to correct our opponents, not with strident gestures or shouting or debating, but basically with gentleness. Godliness is seen not just by holding up the Bible, but actually going into the Bible, having it transform our lives so that people can see, we live godly lives, characterized

by faith and love for people and not by promoting ourselves or talking about all sorts of prosperity gospel.

There was a 2014 survey looking at Anglican priests, they may be Anglican priests but 2% Anglican priests do not even believe in God, 16% of them are actually agnostic, which means they don't know whether there is a God as well. So what Paul is telling Timothy is that you have to be an authentic servant of God where your faith and your actions they both match.

Now this is what happens if false teachers come into the church and affect the church. It is a real problem even today. If you look at the Episcopal Church, which is the Anglican equivalent in America. In general convention in 1976, they decided that LGBTQ people are the children of God and deserving full acceptance and care from the church. What does that mean? Are they members, even though they are having homosexual relationships, it is very unclear, but the past that then in 1994 it is a salami technique you take one bit at a time the church then started to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation including ordination, and then the kicker came in 2003, Bishop Gene Robinson, the first openly gay Bishop elected to the Diocese of New Hampshire. Here is a picture of him and his partner, Mark Andrews getting married in 2003 and he says, the reason why we should allow this is that Paul didn't talk about this notion of a homosexual orientation that this is something new. Paul didn't have that in his time which is actually a lie. What we must actually promote is not about a man and a woman, it is about a monogamous lifelong relationship irrespective of whatever race. As long as we are faithful to each other that is what counts.

This homosexual monogamous relationship is something new, Paul didn't know about that but that is actually false, because there was plenty of homosexuality during the time of Paul and Paul condemned it. And the thing is that he actually divorces this man, if he is talking about monogamous, faithful relationships even that he failed because in 2014 he divorced his own partner. And he says,

*It is a small comfort to know that gay and lesbian couples are subject to same complications and hardships that afflict marriage between heterosexual couples.*

Having a homosexual marriage is not very much different from homosexual marriage. All right. Because the same factor of sin is still there. And, that even it's a non-starter because you shouldn't have had that marriage in the first place.

We don't have to get flustered because in 2 Timothy 2, he says,

**God may grant them repentance leading to knowledge of truth. They may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil after being captured by him to do his will.**

So therefore in the end, whether they turn back to him is granted by God, God does the work. Ps Rick Wiles is a mega pastor in United States. He actually came out against vaccination, he said that vaccination is a conspiracy to cause mass deaths for all the Christian, so therefore he told all his church members not to get vaccinated and recently he was actually hospitalized. His own family congregation, all hospitalized with oxygen because of COVID-19. You see whatever you believe, one day the truth will ultimately come out.

If that is the case, if God is going to basically convict people of truth, we need to be correcting our opponents with gentleness. It causes a lot pain and suffering when we got false teachers but it needs to be confronted. Let me end with the story of Reverend Dr Peter Sanlon in the Church of England. He actually recently left the Church of England to join the Free Church of England because the Church of

England bishops had issued some directives called the pastoral guidance and it started to undermine marriage, having LGBTQ unions, to the Quran being read in cathedrals and transgender liturgy and he who documented all this in his book called The Bible Theft of who people are stealing biblical faith from the Church of England. In the end, it caused a lot of rockers with he left, but these are the words he said, which is very, very poignant for us to remember as I end,

*“That has created a lot of confusion and a lot of pain and ultimately division in church. The Bible is very clear, division in the church is not caused by those who stand up to and will not embrace false teaching. Division in the church is caused by those who teach it”.*

May God add a blessing to you as you stand up for the truth in your lives.