

The Lord's Slave

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Bible Text: 2 Timothy 2:23-26
Preached on: Sunday, March 13, 2022

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Well, grab your Bibles and go to 2 Timothy as we continue in our exposition of this wonderful New Testament epistle as the Apostle Paul is writing from the Roman prison to Timothy. He's left Timothy in charge of the church at Ephesus and he, in effect, is superintending through Timothy the pastoring of this church, and particularly how to organize it and how it should function. I call this "Beautifying the Bride." If we do the work of the church, the local church, God's way, then God gets glory and that's what the church is for. His beauty is shined forth out of the church. The church is his theater by which he portrays who he is, his power, his wisdom, his beauty. So as we obey what the word says in the power of the Spirit, we are reflecting our God to the world and that's the most important thing that God is glorified.

So we come to 2 Timothy 2 and today's section is verses 23 through 26. Yes, this is somewhat repetitive but that's the way Paul is; he keeps hitting on certain themes because he knows Timothy needs it, the church at Ephesus needs it, and the church of every age needs the reminder. Verse 23,

23 But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. 24 The Lord's bond-servant [or slave] must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

I've entitled this exposition "The Lord's Slave." Paul has been using a lot of metaphors in this letter, he used house and household, and we talked last week about the vessels or utensils in a house and how he used them figuratively, now he uses the metaphor from the world, the, the, the age, uh, that he was living in and that was that slavery was very common. It was common throughout the world. Matter of fact, in world history almost every corner of the globe had extensive slave practice. It was certainly true in the ancient world in which Timothy was living but here Paul uses it for us, Christians, believers in Jesus Christ. We are slaves, bond-servants, same thing, of Christ. You see, everyone is held captive, everyone hearing my voice or who lives in the whole world is, is in bondage. Everyone is a slave. You're either in the captivity of or in bondage to or a slave

of Christ or of Satan and sin. But everyone is. There is no exception and there is no neutral ground. Those who would claim, "Well, you know, I may not be a Christian, I'm, I'm not really committed to God and committed to His Christ but I, now I'm no servant of, of evil either. I'm a good guy." No, you're, you're the worst of the worst. Those of you who think you're on neutral ground somewhere in between, you're the best instrument Satan has, you're the best message that you can be "somewhat ethical or clean or morally upright but not a fanatic, not really sold out to Christ." You can lead more people to hell than anyone could. Well, there's no neutral ground, you're either Christ's slave or you're Satan and sin's slave, and in our text today he picks up on that metaphor and we see it in verse, um, 24, "The Lord's bond-servant," the Lord's slave. So that's what I've entitled this, "The Lord's Slave."

I. He says about the Lord's slave, now let's back up a second before I unpack this, now this is written to Timothy, the pastor of a local church, so it has special application to church leadership but it certainly has instruction and application for all of us who name the name of Christ and belong to his church. Well, I., he's to reject foolish and ignorant speculation. He's to reject foolish and ignorant speculation. Why should I reject that? Now we're talking about within the church when there is what Paul terms here foolish and ignorant speculation comes up in a church body. Uh, why are we to reject that? Why don't we just try to keep everybody happy and kinda accommodate some of these strong personalities who want to have their own, uh, spin on things and they're own viewpoint? Well, the reason we have to do it is because we're not our own boss. We have a boss. We're slaves of someone else and our Master said to reject it, and that ought to be enough. Can I get an amen? There's something called authority and God has all authority.

Well, first of all, reject foolish and ignorant speculation. A) because it's foolish and ignorant. I mean, that's exactly what he says here and I want to unpack this. The word "refuse" has a, an idea of hearing, understanding and then setting it aside. So you're to hear their, their narrative, if you will, their viewpoint, when you find out it's just speculation, it's extra-biblical, there's no sound Bible basis for their viewpoint, their teaching or their movement, then you're to reject it. Don't let it get a foothold in God's church. Uh, the same word is used in 1 Timothy 4:7 where he says "have nothing to do with worldly fables." Don't entertain it.

Now then he says it's, it's foolish and ignorant. The word "foolish" comes from a base word that the scholars say has the idea of one who is dull, you're gonna like this, one who is stupid, one who is blockheaded, one who is without reason or want of mental sanity. He's saying, "Now, Timothy, there's gonna be those groups," now this is, is especially true in immature churches, they haven't had a chance to reform to any good level of biblical spiritual health, "When you're in those churches, there are gonna be these guys pop-in and pop-up among you and they're gonna say, 'Man, we think we outta move this way and now we think this is a better teaching than what Paul's doing or what Timothy's doing. You outta hear us out.' And Timothy, when you realize they're, they're going on human emotion and speculation, not on sound biblical exposition, then you're to understand something, that's stupid." That's what Paul's saying, "That is stupid and

blockheaded. It's foolish. It's, it's the words of a fool or at least one who's acting foolish and you're to reject it."

So not only foolish, i.e. dull, stupid, blockheaded, he said it's ignorant. It's like Paul says, "I can't put enough superlatives on this to make my point." Ignorant has the idea of half-educated or uneducated. So these are stupid, blockheaded arguments from people who are half-educated and all it is is speculation. Speculation has the idea of questionings. And, and brothers and sisters, always remember that, and for moms and dads this is very true about your children, there are evil forces out there who wants you to always say, "Well, I don't know about the pastor and the elders there." Ah, just, just, just to get you to call into question. Moms and dads, there are evil forces, and by the way, in the mechanism they've taken over public education. Now thank God we still have godly influences out there and God bless you if you're in public education, we need to pray for you. Uh, you're the front line of the war. But there are strong forces and if they can do it, anything, they'll start with, "Ah, you think mom and dad's morals, mom and dad's values, they're not right." And they want to start this wickedness in kindergarten and that's all it is is speculation and disputations, questionings.

Well, in our context back here, Paul is writing to the church and he says, "Now Timothy, this stuff is foolish and it's ignorant. This disputing and questioning is not to be allowed. Refuse it." The idea again is hear it, when you understand what it is, reject it and shut it down. Proverbs 26:4 and 5 ties in strongly here, "Do not answer a fool according to his folly." In other words, you're not to answer a fool according to, uh, his argument of foolishness. You're to answer him according to what he deserves. So what does a fool deserve? To be shut down. He's not to be allowed to be heard.

Now it's been, we can say, decades now since we've had any, uh, out-and-out foolish ignorant speculations trying to trouble this church and thank God for that. Can I get an amen on that? We're now can say going on decades. We've had such a long season of sweet spiritual, God-centered unity and blessedness here and I praise the Lord for that and that's the mark of a church that has not arrived but has matured in Christ. But there are those times and for our church plant pastors and pastors trying to, to reform typical churches to biblical health, there are gonna be times when you have to have a backbone and you have to shut some things down. There are people that you're gonna have to say, "We're not hearing you again. There's no biblical basis."

In those early days when we went through long, long years of difficulties and strife and speculations and divisions, it was hard and I had a common phrase I would tell people. I would say, "Bring me an open Bible, prove to me thoroughly from Scripture where we're wrong and I'll agree with you." And I mean that. This isn't about me, brothers and sisters. You can't stand the way we've stood for these decades if it was about us. You can only stand the way we've stood for these decades if it's about him because then he gives you the strength to stand or you won't be able to stand it. Anytime, anywhere, anyone, I mean, I extended Anchored in Truth family, "If you think we're off-track, bring me clear Scripture and I'll agree with you." And by the way, we've had a person, I was going to say a person or two but actually a person in recent years come and after we presented the

budget said, "I think this outta be like this and this outta be like that," and I looked at what he was saying and it amounted to no change in doctrine and no problem in the church so I said, "Okay, we'll change it." And he just looked at me like, "I thought we was going to have to fight." I said, "No. You wanted \$5,000 here rather than \$5,000 there," that's just a figure of speech, that's not exactly what he was saying but it was just a little thing and I said, "Okay, we'll do that." Why not? But now if he got down to foundational doctrines of church structure and function, then I'm not dogmatic, I'm bulldogmatic. Some things you have to refuse.

Well, these kinds of foolish and ignorant speculators do not promote the faith and morals of the church and the spiritual unity of the church, just the opposite. Um, he says there in verse 23, he continues, they produce quarrels, the very end of the verse. Uh, I'll speed through this because this just means they produce divisions. It's literally it means produce has the idea of a breeding ground. It's a breeding ground for fighting when you allow those people to have a voice in the church. Now in one sense, everyone has a voice but not if you're trying to undermine the church's doctrine and purposes that are decently, if not thoroughly, biblical.

Now we do know that in the early church they had a lot of this going on and there was a lot of difficult. Matter of fact, Paul when he leaves this church before he's arrested, he tells the elders of this church, I don't know if Timothy was already installed to oversee at that point or not but he tells the elders, the elder body, "There's gonna be savage wolves come in from without and rise up within and try to lead away the flock." He told them this was going to happen. Now it's happening and he's telling Timothy, "Fight against it. Don't let it have a foothold." We must reestablish our conviction that all basis for all teaching in the church must be sound doctrine from the word of God. There are those who would like to come in and take, uh, their speculations and paste on a Scripture here and there to try to make it look orthodox when it absolutely is not. All discussions must have the Scriptures as the ground of authority. We do not allow doctrinal discussions to carry on without or apart from the sound exegesis of the biblical text as the ground of authority. We must not entertain teaching based on man's opinion. Paul says that's boneheaded, stupid and uneducated and it's speculation and you are to refuse it.

Well, a third thing, not only does it, is it foolish and ignorant so that's why you refuse it, not only, uh, does it produce fights, it's a breeding ground for fights, thirdly, and I bring this from the systematic context of all of Scripture and that is it does not serve God's purposes and God's glory. It does not serve God's purposes and God's glory. The purpose of the church is to glorify God, bring him honor and praise and glory. And who is he? He's the God of all truth so if we allow "in order to not hurt people, people's feelings," or "in order to not upset So-and-so because he has a strong impression about something, he'll get his feelings hurt and try to hurt the church," if we allow them to have their way and have their say and they're not really grounded on truth, then we're dishonoring the God whom we're supposed to be glorifying. We're casting forth in non-truth rather than reflecting and emitting out from us God's truth.

So these things have to be dealt with because God's purpose is that his church glorify him. Ephesians 3:21, again it's somewhat of a theme verse for our ministry here, "to Him be the glory in the church," now this is written to a local church and all we know until the glorified state occurs when Jesus returns is glory, is local churches, "to Him be the glory in the local church and in Christ Jesus," horizontal plane there, he puts them side-by-side, Christ and his church because they are one both for time, what's he say, "to all generations," and then, "forever and ever." So it doesn't serve the purposes of God and his glory.

All right, that's number 1: refuse foolish and ignorant speculation. Now why? "Because you're the Lord's slave, Timothy." This isn't fun. This isn't easy. Matter of fact, uh, uh, if, if, if a lot of pastors were honest, being an effective pastor is too often defined by a guy is able to keep the power-brokers in the church happy by letting them have enough of their way. Well, that might be easiest for a while but what are you gonna do when you face Jesus Christ to whom you were supposed to be a slave and you were supposed to pastor his, God, his church, his way? That's an idolatry. We can't do that.

Now II., avoid quarreling. Why? Because you're the Lord's slave. "So Timothy, when you're dealing with some of these things, it's going to be a temptation for you to get in the flesh and just be quarrelsome, if you will." And that's the phrase he uses here in verse 24, look at it, uh, "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome." Now I think in the context, what Paul's most likely saying here if you entertain these foolish and ignorant speculations, you yourself are producing an atmosphere of quarrelsomeness. "Timothy, you're, you're adding to be, being a quarrelsome environment. You're supposed to, uh, hear it, identify what it is and if it's not biblically thorough, just shut it down." Uh, uh, when, when, when you are hearing these things and you are observing these things and you do shut them down, then you are doing what the Bible says to earnestly contend for the faith and, and that's our, our first subpoint here. You shut down quarrelsomeness by contending for the faith. "So Timothy, you're contending for the faith when you shut down these extra-biblical speculations that want to divide the church."

Now contend, contend, contending rather for the faith in, includes silencing unbiblical speculation and doing the hard work of expositing the biblical text so the church knows the truth. All right, now, not only contending for the faith is to avoid quarrels but, secondly, by being kind to all. That's what he says in verse 24. "Timothy, on top of this, as a lot of people are ugly and harsh and mean, you may have to be very firm but you can maintain a kindness." It has the idea of being gentle. I, I, I see, a, a, a note of Paul's maturity here as he's saying, "Now Timothy, you have to be balanced. Yes, there are times when, uh, you have to be like Jesus when He rebuked the Pharisees over and over and He publicly, scathingly, precisely, powerfully embarrassed them, called them a brood of vipers, called them dead men's bones," which in the Jewish context, uh, the place of death was uncleanness. I mean, that's pretty, that's pretty manly when you in this context, context of 2,000 years ago in Jerusalem looked at the religious authorities and said, "You're a bunch of dead men bones is all you are." So sometimes Jesus was real straightforward, real harsh, and real, uh, convicting and rebuking. There's a time for that but Paul says, "Timothy, also," and by the way, unless you're called to be Jesus or a

pastor, this probably isn't your role so much. Uh, there's a difference between called to expound and lead and oversee, expound the truth and lead and oversee the church and the way the laity should, should respond to each other. Now every now and then somebody rises up in the church and they appoint themselves John the Baptist, you know, John looked at Herod and said, "You've got another man's wife," and just publicly shamed him. Well, that's probably not the role of the average church member. But let's be balanced here, "Timothy," verse 24, "let's be kind to all. You need to have the wisdom to know the difference, Timothy. There's sometimes when you're hard like steel but most of the time you're to be soft like velvet." What did they say that Abraham Lincoln was steel velvet. I want to be more like steel velvet.

So this includes the spirit and the tone. It has the idea of patience and we'll pick up on that in a moment. And we have to remind ourselves in a, in a church environment or really in any environment where there's truth and error raising up and the truth is combating the error, there's sometimes even God's elect can get crossways in the war and they need the continually kindness of the shepherd to guide them back to the truth. But in balance we're reminded if they do not receive the shepherd's kind exhortations, they may end up receiving the shepherd's excommunication. Titus 1:10-11 reminds us of the same thing in, uh, in the isle of Crete as Paul's telling Titus to get those churches in order. He said, "For there are many rebellious men," notice, "empty talkers," there's the speculation, there's the speculators again, who, verse 11, "who must be silenced," that's strong again, "because they are upsetting whole households," messing up God's church. "But in balance, Timothy, strive toward being the Lord's shepherd as a patient and gentle one, correcting the error so that some of the genuine sheep caught, caught in the crossfire can be guided back to the truth."

Now this happens really every Sunday when the word is preached. There is a shepherding of our hearts back to the truth. There's a shepherding of our thinking back to biblical thinking. There's a shepherding of our values back to biblical values. There's a shepherding of our priorities back to biblical priorities. Why? Because we're not our own, we're somebody else's slave. You understand a bond-slave had no rights and that's the Greek word Paul uses readily for believers and here for himself and for Timothy but obviously it's true of all of us.

Well, thirdly, avoid quarreling not only by, by contending for the faith, that is, excluding those who are quarrelsome, secondly, by generally being kind to all, thirdly, by being patient or rather able to teach. Being able to teach. This has the idea of solid teaching and tireless teaching because, as I just said, the sheep are constantly needing correcting and reminding, something that's been so real in my heart for many years now is my growing love for the sheep. I love you. I really mean that. And there's not anything in me that enjoys a harsh correction. I would do it if necessary but quite honestly it hasn't been necessary in a long long time. So generally as much as possible, the shepherd wants to lead with that gentleness and patience in his teaching the sheep to get back on track.

Then, fourthly, patient when wronged. If you're gonna be a leader of God's church, if you're called to preach or by the way, if you're gonna be in a sound church and faithfully

serve God in it, you're gonna need this truth, patient when wronged. A. T. Robertson, Baptist, most esteemed Greek scholar, says the phrase "patient when wronged" means putting up with evil. If, if you're gonna be faithful in doing God's work, you're gonna have to put up with evil and the idea here is there will be evil done against you and it's going to be continually done against you if you're a faithful undershepherd of Christ the chief Shepherd. "And Timothy, you can't retaliate every time they attack you. There's not enough you to retaliate that much." Balance again, Paul did defend himself and retaliate against some of the false things said about him. He did it quite exhaustively, uh, for example, to the Corinthians, but he did it because if they can diminish Paul's reputation, they diminish the effectiveness of his office of apostle. And so a pastor has to discern when are these attacks diminishing my reputation and therefore they're diminishing Christ's effectiveness through my ministry. Now that's serious. I may not matter but Christ's ministry through me matters. But in balance of things, overall you're gonna have to just be patient and endure through a lot of that because there's a lot of that going on.

I don't know if you're aware of this but maybe more so in the past, matter of fact, I'm sure more so in the past, there's been a lot of strange stuff said about me and us. Are you aware of that in the community? Just strange stuff. The one that never let's go is you have to turn in your W2 when you join the church so they can make sure. Every one of you that was asked to turn in your W2 when you joined Grace Life Church, would you raise your hand? All right, if you're listening out there in radio and television, internet land, nobody's raising their hand. But yet those kind of things to put the leadership in a bad image, you're just gonna have to live with that and, and I do feel a lot like Spurgeon when Charles Haddon Spurgeon was pastoring in London. He had the public media that hated him because he was incredibly popular and influential in London. Secondly, he had the Arminians that believe you help save yourself, they hated him because he was a staunch Calvinist, held to sovereign grace. But then he had the hyper-Calvinists who didn't believe in calling men to repentance and faith or doing missions, they hated him. So he was hit by every side and Spurgeon once, one day said, "Well, they can't hurt me anymore. Everything that's possible that you could possibly say about somebody has now been said and I've gotten through all of that. They can't hurt me anymore." Well, here's what I'm saying: if you're a leader in a church or a faithful member in a church or a small group leader in a church or a deacon in a church or an elder in church or the preaching pastor of the church, you're gonna have to be patient when wronged because, Brother Steve, there's a lot of that out there. You just gonna have to be patient.

Matthew 5:11, Jesus said it so clearly, "Blessed are you," not if but, "when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you," now notice, listen to this, when they do all of that, all of that evil against you, here's what Jesus said, "because of Me. It's because of Me." Paul had experienced so much of this. Paul is in prison. Paul is on death row. Paul will soon be executed because they persecuted him and said evil about him that was untruth because of his love for Jesus. So Paul knew it. Timothy's younger, he's writing to Timothy and Timothy needed to be reminded that this goes with the territory. But we need to remember if one is a man of God or a woman of God, the attacks against him are against the God of the man. They hate Christ and they will hate you. John 15:18 and 19, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it

hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world," ekklesia, the word for church means, uh, uh, the called together ones, the assembled ones. "I chose you out of the world and because of this," he says, "the world hates you."

So real quick, how can we continue then as, as pastor and people to teaching God's truth and standing for God's truth? How can we continue to be kind to all? How can we continue to be patient when the world and, and so many others are against us? Let me give you three quick thoughts and we'll just hit this and run on, okay? You don't have, this is a long outline. You don't have time to get it all down, just try to remember what the Spirit wants you to remember. How are we gonna do that?

1. Remember it's not against you and it's not about you. Can you remember that? It's not against you if you're standing for God's truth. It's not against you, it's against Christ. It's not about you. You're to be crucified with Christ. I'm to be crucified with Christ. It's not against you. It's not about you. Uh, when we were going through difficult difficult years, I should say, I was going to say days but years, uh, Miss Pam would often remind me and she just seemed to hold up real well in it and she said, "I knew you were God's man and this was God's work and they were against God." And she just had a peace in that. She did better than I did. She's also said through the years, "Jeff, have you not seen the long-term results of those who so viciously raised their head to undermine God's work? They didn't do well. Their lives didn't do well. Their families didn't work out well." It's not against you. It's not about you. It's about the God we love and serve. That's who they're attacking, folks.

2. It's predicted and expected. Remember, God, Jesus told us very clearly and, by the way, are you listening to me, church? Our world is not the same world it was 20 years ago. You understand we're really square pegs in a round hole now. So it's predicted and expected we could get some backlash. Paul says in Philippians 1:28, "in no way alarmed by your opponents." That's all I want to hit on here. What is he saying? Why are you shocked that you've got people who oppose you? Why are you shocked that many who claim to be God's people oppose what you're teaching and preaching? Paul says why does this alarm you? This is the way it is. So that's why you can keep on teaching and keep on being kind and be patient when all this is happening.

Well, number 3, another reason why we can do it is not only is it not against you and not about you, not only is it predicted and expected but, thirdly, as the church matures it will diminish and that's why I can say that whatever evil that arises, we're not seeing it come up within the body anymore. We saw that a lot in years past but it's been a long long time and so I wanna, you just don't know how much pastors out there that follow our ministry need to hear that word because they're right in the middle of it. They're thinking will it ever end? Will the undermining, will the backbiting, will the questioning, will the speculation, will the, will the slanders against my character, will it ever end? If you'll hang in there, brothers, it will diminish greatly. Greatly. Psalm 133:1 says, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity!" That's a picture of a mature spiritual fellowship and it's good and it's pleasant.

All right, hurrying on. III. As the Lord's slave you're to be correcting the erring who will listen. Correcting the erring who will listen. That's, that's one of the difficult parts of pastoring or leading in a church is it's a continual role of correcting. That's what preaching the word does. It corrects me as I'm studying and preparing to preach it, corrects you as it goes out, but we're, we, we're blessed to be corrected from God's word. Verse 25, "with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition." Now, now this is, this is those who are not quarreling in any longer, they're willing to listen to their shepherd. They're willing to say, "Okay, I, I need to understand better. Help me understand better then." Well, how are you gonna do that? A) with a gentle tone and tenor. This is the second time he's hit on this idea of gentleness.

So let that be a, a word for you parents. Sometimes as a parent you've gotta crack the whip, you've gotta have a harsh word. I get that, that's part of parenting, but most of the time if you'll speak the truth – now listen to me – not with a lot of drama but just a clear word with the tenor and the tone of gentleness, it's powerful. The Bible says a gentle answer turns away wrath. There's a lot to that. A lot to that. If they're not obstinate and brazen and harsh, then you use that tone and that spirit, that gospel humility in you out to produce that. Galatians 6:1 says to restore an erring one in a spirit of gentleness.

Now again, the context is if they're willing to listen and they're gonna try, then, look, brothers and sisters, we're all erring ones, amen? If you weren't erring ones I could just preach to y'all one time for about two hours and we'd just dismiss until, until we get glorified. But every week I err and you err. Uh, sometimes I call it you leak. Every week we need correcting again and people, people would say, "Well, why do you enjoy that strong preaching and correction?" Because I've got a new love in my heart for the God who's holy and perfect and it's my joy to want to be more like him and I need the preaching of the word. It's my food. The psalmist said it's better than silver and gold. It's better than the morsels I'll eat. I don't know about you but I need it.

I've been listening to old Dr. Vance Havner some lately on podcast. The man has enriched my soul because Dr. Havner in the 1950s and '60s was saying what we're saying today about the church. He'd, he'd, he'd, he'd turn over, well, he's in his grave so I guess he is turning over in his grave if he could understand what's going on in the church today. He couldn't imagine how far we've gone.

Well, gentleness correcting, he says. Actually the word "correcting" there means "disciplining." It means "instruction with correction." So we're not going to leave someone in sin and error with gentleness, small group leader, with gentleness, brother to brother, sister to sister, with gentleness pastor to people. If they're trying, gentleness, never harshness, never coldness. Correcting one another.

This foolish and worldly concept that, "Well, I can't discipline my children because I love them." You need to repent. You don't get to raise your children according to your emotions. You raise your children according to the one to whom you serve as slave. He tells you how to raise your children. You're to raise your children in the discipline and

instruction of the Lord and that's a lot of unconditional love, that's a lot of forgiveness, and that's a lot of gentleness but it is correcting discipline. You see, if you, if you don't discipline your children, it's not because you love them, first of all, it's because you don't love them. You don't love them if you don't discipline them.

Secondly, if you don't discipline your children, you have the sin and idolatry of your feelings because you're putting your sentiment and your feelings and, by the way, that's what's running our culture today is a bunch of silly, nonsensical, immature, childish feelings and emotions. "Well, I feel it. It's my truth." You don't have your truth. God is the God of truth. God is truth and we tell our feelings, "Submit to our God." You'll find out if you'll commit to what's right, your feelings catch up and pretty soon you'll feel good about what's right, not about what's wrong. You, you're making an idol out of your sentimentalities, your feelings over God's wisdom. You don't discipline your children or anyone because "you think you love them," then if they remain in error their life is dishonoring to God and robs God of the glory he deserves.

Well, first of all, correct the erring who will listen with a gentle tone and tenor. You say, "Pastor, you didn't preach that with a gentle tone and tenor." Well, I mean to but I just want you to hear it. I, those folks in the back of the balcony, it takes a lot of volume to get up there and help them. I'll never get you out of there, will I? You're, you're just, you've nestled in up there. You're just scrunched up with momma. I see you, Randy, scrunched up there with momma and you'll never come down. You're in Moab. You need to come down. [laughter] I'm teasing. I'm glad you're up there so you won't spread your germs all over us down here. That's what we're doing, aren't we? We're spreading out so the germs won't get us.

B) Correct the erring ones with a gentle tone and tenor. Correct the erring ones with the hope that endures. Oh, my goodness, strap in for this. Verse 25, "with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance." The phrase "if perhaps" is a word that literally means at any time God could do it. You, you don't know when you start gently correcting one that's willing to listen, these aren't the brazen obstinate, they get a firmer hand, but these are the ones who have said, "Okay, I'm open." Because you don't know at any time God may grant them repentance. This is a powerful encouraging truth. We never know when God's Spirit may move on a person's heart. Keep on loving them with the truth. Keep on teaching them with the truth. Keep on correcting them with the truth. Keep on gently shepherding them by the truth. You never know when God may move, move in.

Romans 10:16 and 17, "However, they did not all heed the good news," preaching the good news, a lot of people reject it. Paul's writing to the Romans saying, "A lot of people rejected it," probably the context here is the Jews, the Jews overwhelmingly rejected the good news of their Savior Christ, for Isaiah said it was gonna happen this way, Romans 10:16 and 17, "'Lord, who has believed our report?' So faith comes from hearing," present tense, hearing and keep on hearing, hearing and keep on hearing, and hearing what? "The word about Christ. Hearing the truth about Christ. This is the context of believing for

salvation. We know that if they keep on hearing, some will repent and be saved. God will grant repentance.

And note, folks, note brothers and sisters, to bring someone to Christ is not that we want to give them the least amount of truth and stop. We want to give them the most amount of truth about Christ. The more we can get them under Bible preaching and teaching, the more we can get them in small groups, the more likely God is to grant them repentance. That's a hope that endures. Listen to me, folks, if God does the granting, therefore God does the saving – listen – no one, no one, no one is without hope. It may be the last moment of a terrible tragedy and a rebel is going out into eternity but if they've heard the gospel it's possible that in the last moment they cry to God and are gloriously converted. I'm not promoting deathbed conversions, trust me, but what I'm promoting is there's great hope. This hope endures all the way to the last breath because it is God that saves but if you tell me this person's gotta jump through this hoop, he's gotta jump, jump through that hoop, he's gotta walk this aisle and do this thing and that ritual and that sacrament, then there's not hope for a lot of people but if God does it in the heart there's hope. There's hope.

The word "grant" here is the same thing that was said in Acts 11:18 when they were worried about all the Gentiles coming to Christ. You remember the Jews first thought only Jews could receive the, the Savior. Then all of a sudden all these non-Jews, these Gentiles start getting saved and they had a meeting about it and, "When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, 'Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.'" Praise the Lord, repentance is a change of heart, it's a change of mind, it requires both. When the mind changes, you begin to grasp who is truly wise. You begin to say, "I'm not the wise one, God is. I don't know how to run my life, God does. I don't, I can't trust my eternal future to what I think, I must trust it to God's Christ and rest on Him." Your mind changes. Your mind goes from silly man-based specul, speculations, rather, to the truth. But also repentance is not only a change of mind, it's a change of heart. From your heart what you've been looking to and what you've been embracing as your joy and your pleasure has changed, and we might say continues changing. Now you find your delight in this Triune holy God. Now you find your joy in his Christ who died for you and loves you immensely. Now you find joy in hearing his word proclaimed straight and true because your joys have changed.

Now trust me, brothers and sisters, that does not – now listen – it does not mean that this old, unredeemed, human humanity we're housed in doesn't still have it's "joys and pleasures," but there's at least the strong germ of the new joys and the new pleasures in God that's in there. You just need to keep feeding it and cultivating it and growing it because, guess what? All the joys in this world will pass away and do nothing for you but the joy in Christ will increase on forever into eternity. What a gift God's given us. Now listen to me, what a gift God's given us to give us the capacity to find joy in him. That's repentance. I've turned from thinking I'm smart and know the way to thinking, "No, only Christ is." And I've turned from thinking that, that, that, uh, I can have joy and pleasures in this world and that's all that really matters to saying, "No, that still appeals but something else appeals to me, it's joys and pleasures in Christ."

Have you had that change? Has that changed in you what the Bible calls the new birth? That's what the Bible calls being made alive in Christ. That's what the Bible calls believing on Jesus Christ. Our hearts change because, you see, the heart of our problem is the problem of our hearts. The person who disputes against the clear teaching of Scripture has as his root problem the problem of from his heart loving sin. That's what his heart embraces. The problem is not an intellectual problem first, it's a moral problem first. From the heart the lost man loves self and he loves sin and that's why he develops theologies, speculations about what teaching outta be right instead of going to the book.

You remember the, uh, well, most of you weren't here but in the sessions during the True Church Conference I talked about John 7:17, if anyone's willing to do his will, he will know the teaching. In other words, if there's a heart change and there's something in you that says, "I want to please God now. I want to, I want to glorify Him, not what I think, not what the world thinks but what does God think. I'm drawn to want to do that now." He says if that's your heart, then you'll identify, you'll be able to know what is truly authoritatively God's teaching and what is not. It's a process but that changes when your heart changes. You will begin to reject the speculations that have no real biblical foundation that the world would bring into the church and you anchor your soul on the truth of sound doctrine from the word of God.

Now verse 26 and I'll close. He said God can grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, verse 26, "and they may come to their senses," it's the idea of going from insanity to sanity, "and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will." Pretty powerful denunciation of the speculators that we saw in verses 23 and 24, is it not? They're held captive by Satan and they're doing his will. Tell, Paul tells Timothy, "Here's a way that you might win some of them, if they come from the insanity of their unbiblical viewpoint to grasp the new viewpoint and come to sane," and actually the insanity word in the Greek text is usually moron. It's a, a, a, it's a word that, that we get moronic from or moron from, but to go from moronic thinking to sane thinking.

Until that happens, Satan has complete power over them and they live so many of them in open denial. Have you ever seen that? People who are blind think they see it all. Satan's blinded their eyes but they think they can see and they flaunt their freedoms. Do we not have some of those gross, unbiblical immoralities being flaunted today under the guise of, "We're free"? They flaunt their freedoms yet they are in chains. The Bible says they're held captive by Satan. They're both blinded and bound. Their minds and their lives are captive to Satan and he turns them wheresoever he wishes. This is the pitiful course until the power of Christ changes them. They know not freedom until they become the captives of Christ.

We live a paradox, you know that don't you? We're slaves and we love it. He's freed us. We're captive to Christ and it's a wonderful captivity that we long for more of. You see, because every one of you is a slave to somebody. Every one of you is held captive by something. Every one of you has a master, it's either God or Satan. Every one of you.

Who is it? Bob Dylan after he made his profession of faith in Christ, however genuine it is, I'm not real sure, but he did write some powerful biblical lyrics and very simple ones. I play them sometimes because my wife hates Bob Dylan and I, I just think what he says is so good. He's got a song called "You've Gotta Serve Somebody," and he goes all through that. No matter what you are, and he gives all these places in life, he says you're gonna have to serve somebody. It may be the devil or it might be the Lord but you've gotta serve somebody. He's right.

Are you a slave of Christ? Well, in our context here's the way to deal with certain things. Whole, whole, whole lot more being a slave to Christ than what this text points out but this text Christ, text points out how we deal with issues, conflicts, problems in the church as a slave of Christ should do it. But what powerful parallels there are for your life, your home, your marriage, your family, your world. You've gotta serve somebody. It may be the devil. It might be the Lord. But you're a slave of somebody – listen to me – right now this moment you're a slave. Is it the glorious freedom of Christ or the terrible wrath-coming bondage of Satan?