



Have you ever had a run in with a dodgy tradesman? We've had a good run recently, because we only go to people who are well recommended. Once we tried a mechanic that we didn't know – it didn't work out well!!

If you've been ripped off you remember it! You -- ? Someone didn't deliver as promised? Paid good money for bad work? It leave a bad taste in your mouth...

In this passage Paul uses the picture of a "gospel tradesmen" or a "gospel workman". The big question: Are we a reliable Gospel tradesman or a dodgy Gospel tradesman?

What impression do we leave with people? Would they recommend us as reliable? Or do we leave a bad taste in their mouth?

Because we don't fix cars or install plumbing -- we carry a message of grace, forgiveness, salvation! **Does our manner match our message? Does our life match our words? We speak a gospel of grace – do we live a life of grace?**

Being entrusted with the gospel is more than a task for us to do or a message for us to deliver -- it's our whole life.

2 Timothy 2:14-26 is a passage of practical instruction to those who have been entrusted with the gospel. Paul discussed four ways we can be someone who correctly handles the word of truth

1. Correctly handle the word of truth by avoiding godless chatter

Read: v14-19

Picture #1: Workman tested & approved... Like an apprenticeship, with a supervisor keeping an eye on the work so that it can be signed off, a series of tests.

Paul says that as gospel workman we'll face a constant stream of tests – will the outcome mean we are approved or ashamed?

-- To be approved means to correctly handle the word of truth.

-- How might we be ashamed? It's a process that starts small & grows:

v14 -- Quarrelling about words (splitting hairs, quarrelling over obscure details)

v16 -- Godless chatter (**ungodly attitudes to minor issues**)

v16 -- Those who indulge become more and more ungodly

v17 -- It spreads like gangrene!!

v18 -- Until like these two men, you wander from the truth and abandon the gospel entirely. (Without a resurrection we have no hope and no gospel at all)

v19 -- The end result? Destroy the faith of others (the opposite to Paul's intent!)

This is a serious warning! Godless chatter? **Ungodly attitudes about minor issues** easily creep in under the radar? We avoid big sins but indulge in godlessness in everyday chatter?

- Details of church service? Communion, morning tea, music, rosters...
- Life together? Small time gossip... , ignoring someone...
- Discussion at work, socially, at the school pick up...
- Manner at home with family? **Ungodly attitudes about minor issues...**

Do we pass the tests? We have to apply the gospel to our everyday chatter. The gospel not just about eternity – it's about every little moment! That's how to be tested and approved instead of ashamed.

Warning: From little things, big things grow. If your Christian faith is characterised by "godless chatter", what will it look like in 5 years time? In 20 years time?

2. Correctly handle the word of truth by fleeing evil desires

Read: v. 19-22

Picture #2: Household vessel A family water jug vs a dirty garden bucket. Would I plonk the garden bucket on the table at dinner??!! If we want to be a vessel for noble use, we need to be clean.

Our lives need to reflect the gospel we preach!

- v19 -- turn away from wickedness
- v21 – be cleansed, "made holy", useful to the master, prepared for good work!
- v22 -- FLEE evil desires .. PURSUE righteousness, faith, hope and peace
- v22 -- choose good company!

FLEE: Drop everything and run for your life!

PURSUE: Run after it like your life depends on it!

What does this have to do with point 1 – avoiding quarrels and godless chatter?

Read James 4:1 Flee evil desires, because evil desires cause the quarrels!

- Evil desires are reflected in our "godless chatter", our minor attitudes!!
- Don't just try to change behaviour – ask God to change your heart!
- So FLEE them! Flee the desires that lead to the **godless chatter**. Our pride, our selfishness, our fear, our self-confidence.
- PURSUE instead what God has given us, by grace, through Jesus, in the gospel -- **righteousness, faith, love, peace.**
- "Along with those..." Choose people who are doing the same.

3. Correctly Handle the word of truth by gentle instruction

Read: v23-25a

Picture #3: Humble servant/slave. Doesn't serve his own interests. Puts aside his pride for the sake of his master. Concerned ONLY about his master's point of view.

We are God's servants, entrusted with his message.

- Is this just repetition? Same as point 1, but stronger language, right?
- BUT says Timothy... "What if Hymenaeus and Philetus come in to our meeting proclaiming their false gospel? Should I just say 'Come on in fellas, we have room for every point of view'?"
- How would Paul answer? 4 things (v24):
 - 1. Be kind
 - 2. Teach (the true gospel you've been entrusted with!)
 - 3. Don't be resentful – patiently endure
 - 4. Gently instruct those who oppose you.

There is great strength in this response:

- BE STRONG: Teach the true gospel; instruct those oppose you. (Chapter 1: Guard the gospel)
- BE STRONG: Don't give in to the temptation to respond with anger and resentment. Instead respond with kindness and patience.

We don't have many blazing arguments, controversies and quarrels?! Things are pretty civilised around here! We mostly get on, right...?

Yes, because we only have 2 ways of dealing with disagreement & conflict:

1. One extreme: angry, hurtful argument/quarrel (rare but major)
2. Other extreme: Sweep it under the carpet. "Pseudo-peace." Avoid the issue.

Paul is describing a middle path: **gentle instruction**

- Speaking the truth in love. An ongoing habit, so not a really big deal.
- **Confrontation:** Godly, biblical, loving confrontation

None of us are very good at this. But we can get better at it. And if we are for real about together being God's people, one in Christ – we need to!

- Confront with Kindness/gentleness (match the manner & message of grace)
- "Teach" i.e. talk about the gospel, talk about the bible, talk about Jesus
- "Patiently endure evil" – Confront one another not because we've been hurt and we want revenge. Our goal is the good of the other...
- Accept instruction and loving confrontation in the same way

4. Correctly Handle the word of truth so that God will grant repentance

Read: v25-26

Trap – mouse trap? Lobster trap? A trap is a bad place to be! I was trapped in a stairwell once, with no way out except through the fire alarmed door...

This is a Seriously bad trap to be in. It's Satan's trap, and only God can rescue people from it

So there are 2 possible outcomes resulting from our gospel ministry:

- 1. Through our instruction God grants repentance, knowledge of the truth, and our people escape!!!!
- 2. They remain captured by the devil to do his will.

This is **very serious**. The gospel is a matter of life and death. As we live as those entrusted with the gospel, the fruit of our lives will echo into eternity. We would like to play it down. And usually we do:

1. Godless chatter is not usually a big deal to us? **Ungodly attitudes about minor issues** go under the radar. Yet it leads to destroyed faith!
2. **Evil desires of youth are easily tolerated and excused.** But Paul says Flee!!! Pursue!!!
3. **Sweeping a disagreement under the carpet? No big deal?** Yet people are captured by the devil, and through Godly confrontation they may escape.

What does our life and manner reflect? Godless chatter or gospel truth?

What do we pursuing? What are we fleeing from? Do we have it backwards?

- Flee from confrontation instead of pursuing it?
- Pursuing godless chatter instead of fleeing it??

We've been entrusted with the gospel. Salvation in Jesus Christ for all who believe. It's not just a task to do or a message to deliver. It's our whole life. Are we living a life that matches our message? A life that can be used by God to help others escape the trap of the devil?

As 2 Timothy 2:16 says, let's do our best to present ourselves to God as those who do not need to be ashamed and who correctly handle the word of truth.