

THE SERVANT OF THE LORD MUST NOT STRIVE

TEXT: II TIMOTHY 2:24-26

INTRODUCTION:

1. Second Timothy 2:23 says, "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender (bring forth) strifes."
2. Then the next verse says, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive..." (2:24). "Strive" is the verb form of the noun word "strifes."
3. Paul told Timothy to avoid needless fights and quarrels, because "the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient..." (2:24).
4. This passage perfectly describes the Lord Jesus Christ. In the book of Isaiah, the Messiah is referred to several times as the servant of the LORD.
5. Isaiah 42:1-3 says, " Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth."
6. Matthew 12:17-21 quotes this prophecy, and states that our Lord fulfilled it -- "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold my servant, whom I have chosen..."
7. The great Messianic prophecy, Isaiah 53, actually begins at Isaiah 52:13, "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high."
8. Isaiah 53:11 says, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities."

I. THE SERVANT OF THE LORD MUST NOT STRIVE (2:24).

1. The servant of the Lord should not be quarrelsome. These should be the marks of a Bible preacher, and true Christian gentleman (2:24).
2. Jude 3 says we are to "earnestly contend for the faith." We are to take our stand for what is right, but while we contend for the faith we must "be gentle unto all men" (2:24).
3. "Gentle" does not mean weak or cowardly. F.B. Meyer said, "In gentleness there must be the consciousness of a considerable reserve of force."

4. "Gentle" means, affable and mild-mannered. The Greek word is only found twice in the New Testament, the other reference is I Thessalonians 2:7, "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children."
5. Many of you probably heard about the thirty violent motorcycle riders who attacked a family on the Henry Hudson Parkway on Sunday.
6. One biker deliberately stopped his bike, forcing the driver of an SUV to accidentally bump him, thereby causing an angry confrontation, etc.
7. One of the trouble-makers is now in the hospital with two broken legs, spinal fractures and bruised lungs. He is in a medically-induced coma and doctors say he may never walk again.
8. Too bad he did not obey the Scripture, "the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men" (2:24).
9. In Guy King's commentary on II Timothy, he says the hostile attitude of some unbelievers "may have been born out of the evil effect of a professing Christian's inconsistency. I wonder if we Christians realize how much harm can be done by a careless walk, and how many have been 'put off' by our unworthy behaviour" (*An Expository Study of II Timothy*). This thug in the hospital's father is a pastor.
10. Isaiah 42:3 says, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax (dimly burning wick) shall he not quench."
11. Albert Barnes said, "A bruised, broken reed is an...expressive emblem of the soul broken and contrite on account of sin; weeping and mourning for transgression. He will not break it; that is, he will not be severe, unforgiving, and cruel. He will heal it, pardon it, and give it strength. Smoking flax - This refers to the wick of a lamp when the oil is exhausted - the dying, flickering flame and smoke that hang over it. It is an emblem, also, of feebleness and infirmity. He would not further oppress those who had a little strength; he would not put out hope and life when it seemed to be almost extinct. He would not be like the Pharisees, proud and overbearing, and trampling down the poor."
12. It is a profitable Bible study to look at the way the Lord Jesus spoke to various sinners -- Nicodemus, the woman at the well, Pontius Pilate, and so on.
13. John 7:45 says, "Then came the (temple) officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him?" "The officers answered, Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46).

14. First Peter 2:21 says, Christ left us an example, that we "should follow his steps."

II. THE SERVANT OF THE LORD MUST BE APT TO TEACH (2:24).

1. Paul used that expression, "apt (able) to teach" before in I Timothy 3:2, "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach."
2. Once again, the Lord Jesus is our great example. Matthew 7:28 and 29 says, "the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."
3. Though Paul is writing to Timothy, who was a preacher, and though Paul is giving the qualifications for a pastor in I Timothy 3:2, every Christian should be "apt to teach" (cf. Hebrews 5:11-14).
4. First Peter 3:15 says we should "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

III. THE SERVANT OF THE LORD MUST HELP THOSE THAT ARE HELD CAPTIVE BY THE DEVIL (2:25, 26).

1. When dealing with difficult (stubborn, angry, immoral, those mixed up in doctrinal error, etc.) people, we must be "patient" (2:24) and "meek" (2:25).
2. First Timothy 3:3 says a bishop must be "patient, not a brawler."
3. Once again, the Lord Jesus Christ is our great example. First Peter 2:23 says, "when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously."
4. Our Lord rebuked sinners but He did it in the right spirit and so must we. It is interesting to consider that our Lord's strongest rebukes were directed at the scribes and Pharisees (cf. Matthew 23).
5. Mark 12:37 says, "The common people heard him gladly."
6. The servant of the Lord must be meek (2:24). The Lord Jesus Christ is our great example. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, "Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (II Cor. 10:1).
7. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:22, 23).

8. Galatians 6:1 says, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."
9. Ephesians 4:1 and 2 says, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."
10. Colossians 3:12 says, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering."
11. In I Timothy 6:11, Paul told Timothy, "Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness."
12. Titus 3:2 says, "To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men."
13. Haughty and proud Christians are a hindrance to the Gospel.
14. Second Timothy 2:25 refers to "those that oppose themselves." They not only oppose God, and oppose the Word of God, and oppose the church, etc. but they actually "oppose themselves."
15. William MacDonald said, "A person wrongs his own soul by refusing to bow to the word of God."
16. People need to be "instructed" (2:25) in the truth. Sadly, they often refuse instruction. Perhaps Paul was thinking of Hymenaeus and Philetus (2:17).
17. Unfortunately there has never been a shortage of trouble-makers in the churches. We must be "patient" and deal with them "in meekness" (2:24, 25).
18. We need to pray that God "will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2:25, 26).
19. Acknowledging the truth, and recovering out of the snare of the devil, accompany genuine repentance. If a person refuses to acknowledge the truth, and if he is still ensnared by the devil, then he has not repented.
20. "Peradventure" (2:25, "perhaps") does not mean God is unwilling to grant the gift of repentance. It means some people do not want to accept it.
21. "Recover themselves" (2:26) carries the idea of "sobering up." A lost sinner or a rebellious, backslidden Christian is considered held captive by Satan, and intoxicated or bewitched by Satan.

22. The NKJV says, "that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil."
23. "Recover themselves" and "come to their senses" signifies genuine repentance. Luke 15:17 says the Prodigal Son "came to himself," and he said, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!"
24. The world cannot help people that are ensnared by the devil. Psychiatrists cannot help them. Drugs cannot help them. Therapy cannot help them. Ten-step programs and self-help seminars cannot help them.
25. Certainly religion cannot help them!
26. Only God can help them!
27. Only God can help them because it is a spiritual problem. They need to repent and get right with God.
28. We see the pronouns "him" and "his" in II Timothy 2:26. There is some disagreement upon commentators but I believe both pronouns refer to the devil.

CONCLUSION:

1. Second Timothy 2:26 refers to "the snare of the devil."
2. The devil has many diverse snares.
3. Ephesians 6:11 says, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."
4. The devil has many wiles (schemes and tricks).
5. Second Corinthians 2:11 says, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."
6. The devil has many devices.