

# Two Steps To Protecting The Scriptures

This is our last study in the book of 1 Timothy. In chapter 3 and verse 15, Paul gives us the reason the book was written. He said it was written so that Timothy would know how one ought to conduct himself in the church of God. So, the book contains instructions about many topics: qualifications and the discipline of elders, honoring elders, the role of women in the church, honoring widows, honoring those who are older and younger, honoring employers, not loving money, sharing money, how to teach the Scriptures, the role of the pastor, apostasy, and false teachers. If we step back and examine each chapter, we discover that a major theme in most of the chapters of the book is how to defend against false teachers. Why? Because false teaching is the most serious threat to the Scriptures. False teaching does not have to remove the truth of what is taught in the Bible. It just twists, and distorts what it says.

It is amazing that eight times Paul urged Timothy to do something about false teachers. When he did that, he also instructed us to do the same. The first time Paul did this was in 1 Timothy 1:3-11. In that passage, Paul urged us to instruct those who teach strange doctrines to stop.

In 1 Timothy 4:1-5, Paul told us that false teachings come from deceitful spirits and are doctrines of demons. He said that the conscience of false teachers has been seared as with a hot iron. That helps us to understand them better. They are blind to their errors. Yet, they teach the Scriptures from pulpits, in Bible classes, and Bible studies with confidence. He

also gave us some examples of false teachings.

In 1 Timothy 4:7, once again he urged us to have nothing to do with worldly fables. Then in 1 Timothy 4:11-16, Paul said all who teach the Bible should pay close attention to what we teach so that we avoid teaching error. It is important to notice that Paul did not urge Timothy to pay close attention to the music in the church, the organization of the church, or the order of the worship service. Paul and the Holy Spirit focused on the teaching. That reveals what is important in the worship service. In some churches the worship service has almost become entertainment.

In 1 Timothy 6:3-5, Timothy and we have been told that

if anyone advocates a different doctrine that does not agree with Scripture, that person is conceited and understands nothing. They have a depraved mind, and are deceived about the truth. They are not believers.

The sixth time Paul urged

Timothy to do something about false teachers is in 1 Timothy 6:12. In that passage, Timothy was urged to fight the good fight of faith. That is, the faith is a fight. Paul was becoming more serious. Every Christian enters into a fight for the faith at the moment we become a believer because Satan attacks our faith and what we believe. Satan sends us demonic lies and doctrines that he has created. So we are urged to take up the armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-17). We have been taught about the armor of God because the fight is real and we must resist Satan. It is a good fight that we must fight. The primary way we



do that is to get a grip on the fact that we have eternal life. That will energize us to defend the precious truth taught in Scripture. I found a very meaningful statement made by Lucian of Samosata, the Greek writer who lived about A.D. 120-180. He said this about Christians,

You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explains their contempt for death and self devotion (sic).<sup>1</sup>

He was amazed that Christians fought for the faith because they believed they had eternal life. So, Paul says get a grip on eternal life. Eternal is real. Fight for the faith, even if it does cost you possessions and your life.

**OUR STUDY.** Our study is 1 Timothy 6:20-21. It gives us the seventh and eighth things that Timothy was to do in defense of the truth. Paul wrote,

**O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge” — which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith. 1 Timothy 6:20-21a (NASB)**

In this verse, Paul told Timothy and us what to do and what not to do. We are to guard the truth and also to avoid the false.

**O TIMOTHY.** This verse and the next one are the final verses of the book. Paul focuses on the Scriptures and false teaching. In this verse, Paul says, “O Timothy.” Those two words are an expression of Paul’s love for Timothy, and also an urgency to act on what Paul had written. Paul wanted Timothy to take what he had written seriously. Paul did not give him some nice thoughts to be ignored. It appears that Timothy may have earlier ignored some of Paul’s instructions. In 1 Timothy 1:3, Paul wrote, “As I urged you upon my departure,” and then told Timothy to not allow men to teach false doctrine. Then fourteen verses later, Paul commanded Timothy to fight the good fight. Apparently, Timothy was not doing that. In 1 Timothy 4:14, Paul told him to not neglect the spiritual gift that was given to him. Later in 2 Timothy 1:6, Timothy was told to kindle afresh his spiritual gift. Apparently, Timothy was not

developing his spiritual gift of teaching. He may have become lazy. So, Paul urged him to act on what he had been taught.

This is a good reminder for us. When we read Scripture or hear someone teach, we should listen and act. It appears that Timothy was an example of a pastor who was not totally sold out for God. Some believe that is why the church in Ephesus, which he pastored, was warned in Revelation 2:1-7 that they had left their first love. So Paul says, “O Timothy.”

**GUARD THE DEPOSIT OF THE FAITH.** Then Paul said, “guard what has been entrusted to you.” The Greek word for “guard” is *phyllasso*. It has the meaning of “to guard” or “to protect.” It is used in Luke 2:8 to refer to the shepherds keeping watch over the flocks on the night that Jesus was born. In Luke 11:21, the word is used to refer to a strong man who guards or protects his house and possessions from a thief. So, Timothy was to guard or protect what had been entrusted.

But what has been entrusted to Timothy? The Greek word that is translated as “has been entrusted,” is *paratheke*. The word is a technical term that was used in banking, according to the papyri. It referred to a deposit of money or a treasure that was given to someone for the purpose of safekeeping.<sup>2</sup> If we read the rest of the verse, it is clear that *paratheke* refers to the Scriptures, the Word of God. That has been Paul’s message throughout this book. Timothy had the responsibility to defend the Scriptures from being distorted by anyone. Someone has said that today Christians are too quick to accept different interpretations of Scripture as being okay. They need to realize that Timothy was to prevent that.

**Protect By Knowing Scripture.** So, how could Timothy and how can we protect the deposit or the treasure, called Scripture? Let me give you four actions that believers can take. The first step to protecting the deposit has already been given by Paul. He told Timothy to study the treasure of Scripture in 1 Timothy 4:11-13, 15. In chapter four, verse 13, Timothy was told to read, teach, and apply Scripture. Then in verses 15-16, Paul commanded him to “take pains with these things and to be absorbed in them. Then Paul commanded him to pay close attention to his teaching. That is, be sure you are teaching what the passage or verse says. Later in 2 Timothy 2:15, Paul

<sup>1</sup> Lucian of Samosata. *The Passing Peregrinus*.

<sup>2</sup> A.T. Robertson, *1 Timothy*. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Baker Book House, 1931. vol. IV. p. 596.

will tell Timothy to teach Scripture accurately. He wrote,

**Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15 (NASB)**

So as Timothy was absorbed in studying and applying the treasure, he would reveal that he was a faithful workman of God who was “accurately handling the word of truth.” As he paid “close attention to his teaching,” he would protect the treasure.

We must remember the treasure did not belong to Timothy. It was not his to edit and modify to fit his own personal needs or those of the saints in the church. The treasure was not his to embellish for some effect and for praise from the people. He was not free to rewrite it by preaching something God did not even say in the passage. He was not free to ignore the meaning of the passage and launch into some unrelated application, and leave the people thinking that was what God said in the passage.

The same is true of us. The first step to protecting the treasure is to be absorbed in the study of Scripture so that we can know it. Make sure you have an accurate translation of the Bible such as NASB, LSB, ESV, or NKJV and use it for Bible study. The Spanish Bible we recommend is the NBLA. When available, you should also try to take classes where you study the doctrines of the Bible. The class should require that you must do homework because the goal is to learn. In Revelation 2:21-23, God told the followers of a false teacher that He would judge the false teacher and them because they followed her.

*Protect By Obeying the Scriptures.* The second step to protecting the treasure is to obey it. Jesus tells us in John 14:21 that He will not reveal Himself to us if we do not obey Him. This is an important truth. That is the reason we have read the verse so many times before. The verse says,

**He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” John 14:21 (NASB)**

Jesus’ message is very clear. He will only disclose Himself to those who obey Him. That is if we obey Him, He will help us accurately understand the treasure in the passage or verse we are studying.

*Protect By Teaching the Scriptures.* The third step to protecting the treasure is to teach others. Hebrews 5:12 says that every believer should be able to teach others. That is, it does not matter if you not a pastor. You should know Scripture well enough so that you can teach someone else. Every believer needs to grow in their knowledge of Scripture so that they can at least somehow explain it.

In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul told Timothy,

**The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. 2 Timothy 2:2 (NASB)**

Here Paul told Timothy to find others in the church to also teach Scripture. Teaching can occur in a formal or informal setting to a single person or to a small group somewhere. For most believers, God gives us opportunities to informally teach it. We can teach our children, teach others on social media, or to a group. If we do, we will learn more about Scripture, because we will have to study, organize our thoughts, and prepare to teach. As we do this, we grow in our knowledge and understanding of Scripture. We will be defending the truth.

*Protect By Lovingly Correcting Those in Error.* The fourth step to protecting the treasure is to lovingly correct others who are in error. A good example is found in Acts 18:26. In this passage, we are told that Priscilla and Aquila had heard Apollos make some errors in his teaching. Verse 26 says Apollos,

**... began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. Acts 18:26 (NASB)**

We can do as Priscilla and Aquila did. We can also share the Word of God as we share the gospel about Jesus Christ. This is a major opportunity for believers.

So, when God gives us opportunities to be a Priscilla or

Aquila, we need to lovingly and boldly correct those who do not teach Scripture accurately.

**AVOID FALSE TEACHING.** Then Paul commanded Timothy to avoid three things in the last part of 1 Timothy 6:20.

... avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge” — . . . 1 Timothy 6:20 (NASB)

The Greek word for avoid in this verse is *ektrepo*. It literally means “to turn aside from.” That is, Timothy was commanded to turn aside or to turn away from two types of false teaching. He was not to dwell on false teaching or study it. He was to turn away from it.

I knew a young woman who once wanted to investigate Mormonism. She had been warned to stay from false religions. But she invited them into her home anyway, and then asked me to join her and counter anything that was taught incorrectly. Once I was aware they were already coming to her home, I joined her. The Mormon elder told her they believed what she believed about Jesus. When he said they believed Jesus was God, I stated that they did not believe that Jesus was always God. Mormons believe that Jesus was created and was a man. When he heard me say that, he said that was their deeper teaching. At that point the meeting was quickly ended. He was a heretic. She should have avoided them. What is the benefit of listening to the doctrines of demons.

*Such As Worldly and Empty Chatter.* The first type of false teaching that we are to avoid, Paul called worldly and empty chatter. 2 Timothy 2:16-18 helps us understand that this refers to a special type of false teaching. Apparently, it refers to false teaching that is easily proven to be wrong. In that passage, Paul says that two men named Hymenaeus and Philetus were teaching that the resurrection had already occurred. The passage says,

16 But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, 17 and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some. 2 Timothy 2:16-18

(NASB)

Notice that the worldly and empty chatter these two men were teaching was that the resurrection had already taken place. Paul does not give us complete information as to what was being taught about the resurrection. There are two main views.

The primary view is that the false teaching of these two men was that the resurrection was a spiritual one. Baptism symbolized our spiritual resurrection. But Paul easily refuted the false teaching that the resurrection is not physical but spiritual in 1 Corinthians 15:12. In that passage, Paul said Christ, Himself, was resurrected. Jesus proved the resurrection is real. We should also remember that Jesus said in John 6:44 that He will raise up believers on the last day. In John 11:25 He said that He is the resurrection and the life. The error of these teachers was easy to refute. Isn't it wonderful to know that we will have a body again after we die? That is God's plan for us.

The second view is that these two men said the resurrection occurred at the time of the new birth (John 3:5). But that is also easily refuted by the same argument we just discussed.

“Worldly and empty chatter” refers to false teaching that is easily disproved. The Greek word for “worldly” means “opposite the sacred.” The Greek word for “empty chatter” means “babblings or empty discussions.” That is, their teaching was opposite of the clear teaching of Scripture. Their teaching was babbling. It was silly.

*Opposing Arguments.* The second type of false teaching to which Paul referred was opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge.” This refers to counter arguments in a debate.

Examples of this type of false teaching are Christians who argue that Genesis 1 supports the concept of evolution. Their false teaching is much more sophisticated. They argue by changing the clear meaning of Hebrew words. Some insert an entire new creation between two verses. They also must argue that sin entered the creation before Genesis 3 because evolution requires death and decay. But sin did not enter the world until Genesis 3. This is an example of a very dangerous false teaching. They attack the Scriptures in order to accommodate science. John MacArthur refers to this as the “battle for the

Bible.” He wrote a book about this false teaching with that title. This false teaching distorts Scripture at a foundational level.

So the second type of false teaching to avoid are systems that attack the sacred treasure called Scripture with intellectual arguments that attack the very foundation of Scripture. We must avoid them.

**CONCLUSION.** As we close I would like to add that there are times when we should be willing to answer questions about Scripture and respond to unbelievers who are open to the truth. Also, we must share the gospel just as Paul did when he was on Mars Hill in Acts 17:22-31. We are told that when the listeners began to sneer at him, Paul left them. Paul left them because God the Holy Spirit had not opened their minds to the truth. They were not knowledgeable about Scripture yet.

Those are the eight times that Paul urged Timothy to do something about false teachers. We have also discovered what we are to do. Paul’s last command gives us the purpose. We are to protect the most valuable treasure we have on this earth. It is the Scriptures. Without it we cannot know any specifics about God. We would not know about our sinful condition and the need to be forgiven. We would not know anything about our Savior, Jesus Christ. We would not know anything about the future. Without Scripture we have no hope! So, we need to defend the faith and avoid false doctrine.