

10,8,26 2 Tim. 2:8-26 Mystified by Alternate Truth

We're ready to move into the next section of 2 Tim. chapter 2, so let's look at verses 8-14;

Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, or which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. Therefore, I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. This is a faithful saying:

For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.

As we'll see in a later study, when Paul uses the word "gospel" he's including all that was contained in the revelation God gave him, which Paul explained in his letter to the Galatians. That revelation wasn't just about how to be saved, that's been the same since Genesis – it's always been by grace through faith.

But all that Paul was sent to teach the churches, the "gospel or good news" that was revealed to him, included the mysteries which were hidden from all past generations. I won't take time to list all of them because that word "mysterion" is used 27 times in the New Testament. A few of the more predominant ones that we're probably familiar with are the "mystery" of the body of Christ which is brought out mainly in Ephesians and Colossians; the "mystery" of the rapture in Thessalonians and also 1 Cor. 15; and the "mystery" of the indwelling Christ in Col. 1.

None of these were Old Testament realities, they were "hidden" and then revealed to Paul and the other apostles after the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Paul is reminding Timothy that Paul's preaching of these things caused him to (quote) ". . . suffer as an evildoer, even to the point of chains" vs. 9. This is a

recurring theme in Paul's letters – if we tell the Truth, the whole Truth, the religious crowd will be against us, vigorously against us.

In our country, “chains” are not a legal response to us, but those who hate what we teach would lock us up if they could, because many are convinced that what Paul (and those who follow in his footsteps) are teaching dishonors God and that is something that can't be tolerated. We've already seen in other studies that this was Saul of Tarsus' motive for why *he* persecuted the Church – before he became Paul, he believed that the followers of Christ were the enemies of Judaism, when in reality, Christ is their Messiah.

When Paul said that he was willing to endure all things for the elect's sake; he was willing to suffer in any way necessary to make sure the revelation God gave him reached all who were saved.

You'll notice too that the result of people believing Paul would be that “(They) may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” vs. 10. The way that's worded might lead people to believe that Paul's use of “gospel” was limited to the justification phase of salvation, but in Paul's mind, the word “gospel” included much more than initial salvation – it included the divinely revealed truths related to our ultimate purpose in Christ and the *glory* that “*shall be* revealed”.

As a defense for my position on this, all we have is do what we should always do, and stay in context. If we do that, here's what we saw in vs's 11-13;

This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

That's not an explanation of initial “salvation”; it's an explanation of purpose, of what's being offered to those who *are already* saved. We don't have to “endure” the trials of life to be saved; all we have to do is put our faith in Christ to save us. But if we want to reign with Him and if we don't want Him to deny us this honor, we will have to endure what God takes us through to prepare us for co-reigning with Him in the Ages to come.

I've seen numerous commentaries use this passage to allegedly prove that Christians who deny Christ lose their salvation – that Christ will deny them eternally. But, again, what's the context? This issue is reigning or not reigning and has nothing to do with saved or not saved. Paul even clears that up in vs. 13 just in case some who read his letter wonder if salvation *is* what he's warning them about.

To reassure them that he is *not* talking about saved or unsaved, Paul wrote, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself." The Lord not only promised to save everyone who puts their trust in Him, He also promised not to allow anyone who had trusted in Him to be lost no matter how "faithless" they might become over the course of their lives. They may lose their reward of reigning with Him, but they will never lose *Him*.

I won't tangent off on eternal security right now, but there are two passages that tie into the theme of Paul's comments to Timothy;

(John 6:37-40) All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

(Heb. 13:5) I will never leave you; I will never forsake you (*period*).

Paul closed that segment of his letter by telling Timothy to remind his fellowship of these things as often as needed. We all need to be able to distinguish between Justification and Glorification, between becoming a Christian and accomplishing the purpose God has for us. Grace supports both, but one is an event, the other is a life of growth and spiritual advance.

Initial salvation takes a matter of seconds. Finishing our course in this life victoriously involves abiding in Christ; it involves falling down seven times and then getting back up the eighth time. Its not sinless perfection; it's the ongoing mindset

of taking exactly the same faith we exercised to be saved and then applying that mindset to living the Christian life.

(Col. 2:6) As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him". To paraphrase this drawing out the original meaning, it would be, "In the exact same manner as when you initially received Christ Jesus the Lord, now walk or abide in Him continually".

Simple, childlike trust from beginning to end. As this author described it;

What is abiding? Abiding in Christ is the opposite of abiding in ourselves.

Before I read the rest of what he wrote, here's an application of his first sentence, "Abiding in Christ is the opposite of abiding in ourselves." One sure recipe for depression is spending most of our time thinking about what we want, but don't have.

Only those who lose their lives, find life. We have to *look away* from ourselves unto Christ thinking on things above, not on things here; especially, not on ourselves.

Ok, back to the article;

To abide in ourselves is simply to try to do this living, and this working for the Lord, of ourselves; asking the Lord to help us to do it. Abiding in Christ is simply doing everything, meeting everything trusting in Christ. It is a sure ground. There is no need for question and reasoning: "Can it be done? Can I do it?" Or, "I am not sure about it." Faith says, "Well, in myself the thing would be absurd, and to attempt the thing would be ridiculous; as to myself it would be folly to contemplate it. But it can be done, I can meet this demand, and I can stand up to that one; I can go through with this, 'I can do all things ('all' is a big word) through Christ, who strengthens me.'" It is what Christ is as our secret source of strength, of sustenance, of nourishment.

This is a school, and we learn this lesson in a progressive way. We are learning, often through trial and error, to draw upon the fullness of the indwelling Spirit, working out from a fullness as we press onward to the goal.

We learn progressively, step by step, like little children, first of all learning to walk and to talk. Like them we are confronted with things which we have never done or even attempted before, things which are all new and strange; a new world, sometimes a very terrible world. The contemplation of taking his first step to a little child is a most terrifying proposition. You and I are brought into this realm of faith, wherein the simplest thing at the beginning, the taking of a first step, is sometimes fraught with fear for us. But there are arms stretched out, and those arms now represent for us the accomplishment of what is required of us. The strength is there, available for the matter in hand. Recognizing those arms and trusting, taking the step, we learn to walk by Christ, to live by Christ; and the next time we shall be able to go a little bit further. Each time capacity is being enlarged and we are coming to a fuller measure of maturity.

Every one of us will end up having gone a certain distance in this school of learning how to abide or trust in Christ as we live out our lives. And as we've seen before, regardless of how far short we *feel* we have come, how many times we consciously or subconsciously trusted in ourselves and fell flat on our spiritual faces, the Lord never grows tired of us admitting our mistakes to him (also known as 'repenting') and moving forward, forgetting those things which are behind.

This is true of every Christian who has ever tried to understand and move fully into God's purpose for us. God not only expects it to work like this; He has gone out of His way to reassure us over and over again throughout the scriptures that He will always be there to pick us up when we fall. There is no other way to learn how to live in a way we've never lived before but by repetitious experience – by personal, often crushing, experiences that teach us what academics alone could never teach us.

This is a Bible study about what Paul is teaching Timothy; tomorrow is back to reality and hopefully some of what we learn tonight can be useful if we're willing to apply it to whatever we come up against. We should never assume that because we've learned the principle and it makes sense, that we have thereby nailed it down. It's the combination of theology and life that nails it down. Neither can be

left out of the equation if we want the result that the Bible calls being conformed to the image of Christ.

The main thing for us to remember is not how awesome we might have been from time to time in our application of these things, or to remember how much of a complete failure we were; the main thing is what we saw when we looked at the history of Israel leaving Egypt with the intent of going into Canaan, which was God's purpose and plan for them.

We have to focus on Him and His plan, not on us and on how we're doing.

The majority were content with going only so far as to that inheritance and then staying there and settling down. It was an unfinished course, an unfinished advance. It was simply accepting something less than what God had intended and provided for – it really was (and is) that simple.

It's the same as what our Lord told Sardis in Rev. 3:2;

Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works complete before God.

The word "complete" (sometimes translated "perfect") means, "brought to full measure, to make complete, to fulfil or to bring to realization"

God doesn't expect us to advance ourselves to a 'finished' course; trusting ourselves would be a mistake at every step along the way. But we have to know what the inheritance (what the goal) is, especially in the uniqueness of this generation, and then we have to decide how willing we are to go there, even if we (quote) "suffer trouble as evildoers".

Over the last 50 plus years, I've been a youth pastor (in my 20's), later an associate pastor and eventually a senior pastor. And I was fired from all three churches. It was traumatic each time, and I'm sure some of it was my fault, but not all of it. Sometimes it was simply hatred of the Truth.

So, now, if you ever decide to jettison me, you'll have a reason; you can just say, "If you knew this guy's history, you wouldn't listen to him either."

On the upside of things, for most of my adult life, when I was younger, I was a Probation Officer and then eventually a Prison Chaplain, which became the world I lived in for the last 25-30 years until I retired. Ironically, my bosses weren't Christians, so they may not have believed what I believed, but since I was doing my job well, they encouraged and supported me. It's the religious crowd you have to watch out for.

Anyway, to get back on track. . .

At the end of each dispensation, of each age in history when God's people are nearing a transition into a new dispensation or a new movement of God, there is always an intensification of spiritual, atmospheric antagonism toward those who refuse to settle for the wilderness. It becomes an extremely lonely journey because the majority never wants to go there.

I'm sure the reasons are numerous, but like I said, the governing principle of all this for us personally is very simple – find out what God wants; decide if His interests and desire is more important than ours; and then decide whether the potential resistance from visible and invisible forces is worth the cost we might have to pay to finish our course.

So, I'm sure by now, we can see Paul's point to Timothy in this chapter. He talks about suffering and being accused as an evildoer, and about enduring all things for the sake of the elect – and why is Paul's suffering "for the sake of the elect"? It's so that they also may "obtain the full salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

I don't know how often you stop and think about the impact that *your* advance, however small it might seem to you, is in some way enabling others to either correct their course or to complete it, but we can't see the invisible and we can't read minds. We also can't see all that God did behind the scenes with the enemy or with other people which may have been based on just one or two simple decisions you made about pressing on when pressing on was absolutely the last thing you wanted to do.

Ok, so the next thing Paul is going to do is get more specific on the individual “decisions” Timothy will need to ensure are in action in his life if he is going to finish his own race as an overcomer.

Some of these will be unique to a person in leadership, because that’s obviously Paul’s main emphasis in this letter, but most of his exhortations apply to all of us. Also, many of Paul’s statements are very self-explanatory; like “flee youthful lusts and pursue righteousness”, or “be gentle and patient”. So, rather than consume a lot of time breaking down and explaining what we already understand, I want to select some of Paul’s instructions that aren’t as obvious, but are still very important to understand.

But first, let’s read through the next section (vs’s 15-26)

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless, the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

In vs. 15 Paul actually lays the foundation, at least in principle, for the rest of what he wrote; “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Even though this has a significantly increased importance for a teacher than someone who is not in a leadership role, “rightly dividing the word of truth” definitely applies to all of us because every time any of us tries to explain something from the scriptures to help someone else, it’s important that what we tell them lines up with what *God* meant by what He wrote.

We’ve all heard verses misinterpreted and we’ve seen the damage done. Whole movements in Christian history have been initiated by a misunderstanding of what might even be a single verse taken out of context. So, to be “approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed” definitely involves handling the word of truth accurately.

However important that may or may not be to contemporary pastors, it’s obviously important to the Lord. The only reason I threw that in is because I’ve heard a lot of end-time podcasters lately talk about the danger of false doctrine being part of the apostasy of our generation and then they will have someone who teaches false doctrine on their program for an interview.

The podcaster is both interviewing and promoting the other guy’s ministry, while at the same time he’s fully aware of the fact that both of them are “dividing the word of truth” differently on some very crucial doctrinal issues. The podcaster must have read passages like Rom. 16 and 1 Tim. 6, but for some reason, they don’t seem to think it applies to them.

(Rom. 16:17-18) Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and *avoid them*. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

(1 Tim. 6:3-4) If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the

doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing. . . *From such withdraw yourself.*

Phrases like “avoid them” and “from such withdraw yourself” are pretty clear, and especially so for a leader who has influence over God’s people and will give account for that influence.

I’ve really struggled with this, because I know it can be construed as being judgmental and hyper-critical, but I don’t think Paul was either of those, he just wanted to protect the Christians who could be harmed by false teaching. Protecting the Church and maintaining the Truth are core requirements of approved leadership. Paul drives that home to the elders in Ephesus in Acts 20:30-31);

From among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. (The word “perverse” lit. means, “misleading”).

Night and day with tears for three years doesn’t sound judgmental, it sounds like Paul sees a danger in false doctrine that apparently most pastors in our generation don’t see. That’s partly where my struggle comes in. I know it’s not a problem to expose false teaching, but should we ever get specific – should we name names?

(Phil. 4:9) The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

And as we’ll see, in instructing Timothy, Paul definitely named names. The reason I struggle with this is because I know from experience that it’s possible to warn people about a certain doctrine or movement, and even explain some of the details that should red-flag it, and then I’ll receive a random email recommending a message or article by someone who is teaching exactly what I was warning about. They couldn’t connect the false doctrine with the person because the person was such an incredibly good speaker or writer and seemed so loving, so compassionate and “down to earth”, etc.

So, even though I don't plan to go nuts listing everyone I disagree with, I will occasionally mention the names of those whose theology, I believe, is genuinely dangerous. And I realize that there are a massive number of things doctrinally we can let slide because they *aren't* essential to have nailed down in order to move forward – they won't necessarily side-track us. We can agree to disagree and move on, no problem.

Anyway, you can pray for me so I don't get out of hand, but I also don't want to neglect to do what Paul did in this section of Timothy if it really *is* needed (and apparently Hymenaeus and Philetus needed to be called out, by name, even to someone as mature as Timothy). So, I want to be obedient to Phil. 4:9; "The things which you . . . heard and saw in me, these do." But I also need to know the *who* and the *when*, rather than just take that verse as a blanket permission to go witch-hunting whenever I feel like it.

It's obviously very unpopular to do this, which may have been one of the reasons Paul "suffered as an (accused) evildoer"). But Paul's tears in Act 20 at Ephesus show that what motivated him to risk it was not his desire to make himself look right and everyone else look wrong, it was genuinely a desire to protect the people he cared about.

So, in our passage in 2 Tim. 2:17-18, Paul wrote; "Their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth . . . and they overthrow the faith of some."

That's what I mean by "motive". All it took for Paul to "name names" was watching young believers have their faith weakened through false teaching. Popular or not, Paul wasn't going to stand idly by and let that slide.

Now, let's look at another of Paul's statements in our passage that I believe was the result of the same motive that moved him to risk his reputation to protect others. At the same time Paul is warning about false doctrine and its potential effect on the faith of young believers, he adds a warning about things that side-track us, not just things that set up a false theology in our minds. Here's Ironside's comments on that principle;

It is so easy to become occupied with minor details in regard to the Christian message, which, after all, have nothing to do with the great fundamental issues. How many there are who become occupied with some of these side issues, stressing them on every occasion, and even dividing the people of God because of them, instead of placing the emphasis on the great central truths of the Word that are so tremendously important. We are not really serving the Lord when we are striving with one another about things that are unprofitable. As a rule, it is these minor things that lead to contention when they are emphasized out of all proportion to their relative importance.

On the other hand, the Christian needs to give himself to a careful study of the Scriptures in order that he may understand the truth and use it aright, as we get it in verse 15: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Paul himself says elsewhere that he was not at all concerned about having man's approval. In writing to the Corinthians he says, "With me it is a small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment" (1 Corinthians 4:3). It made little difference to him whether men approved or blamed him, but he was greatly concerned to have the approval of the Lord. And this is what he stresses here for us-that we need to study the Word so that we may be pleasing to Him who called us by His grace, who, has saved us in His infinite, loving-kindness, and has left us in this scene that we may glorify Him.

The enemy will use whatever works best on his target. But here's another example of Paul seeing something most of us would probably have missed.

(2 Tim. 2:24-26) A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

Paul starts with the extremely important advice related to our approach when correction is needed. Paul doesn't see Christians who are deceived as the enemy,

but as *victims* of the enemy. And the goal is not to condemn those who have been taken in by someone like Philetus, the goal is to do all we can to free them.

It's just interesting to note that believers who are entrapped by false teaching are, in some sense, "taken captive by the devil to do his will". Can Christians do the will of Satan if they are deceived?

(Matt. 16:23) Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

The devil's will for all Christians is that we "do *his* will" rather than *God's* will. So, yes, we can, on occasion, choose the wrong team. But how many of us would ever think of false doctrine being that serious? This isn't the first time while reading Pauls' letters that I've seen Paul write about something extremely serious with immense spiritual ramifications that most of us would probably write off as nothing more than a gentlemanly theological debate – nothing to worry about.

The bottom-line is that Paul was very concerned about things we are barely interested in, and if he were here in our time, he would definitely be accused of blowing things way out of proportion; of significantly exaggerating the danger and potential damage of false doctrine.

In 2 Tim. 2:19-21 Paul describes the foundational reality of what matters most and I think that if most 21st Christian believers were asked to state *their* reality of what matters most, I doubt that they'd give the same response as Paul; here was Paul's;

The solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

There is a definite, unfortunate, and extremely important division within the body of Christ, and ignoring it won't make it not exist or go away. The Church universal is made up two types of vessels, honorable and dishonorable. If we continue with

the Lord; if we press for the upward call of God in Christ, the Spirit will enable us to “cleanse (ourselves) from that which is dishonorable” with the result that we will be prepared for “every good work”.

It’s the exact same language Paul uses in 1 Cor. 3 to describe the final evaluation each of us faces at the Bema Seat of Christ (gold and silver vs. hay and stubble). It’s also the same as the author of Hebrews describes in 5:14 where, in the original Greek, “good” and “evil” are actually words that mean “that which has value” vs. “that which does not have value”. In this context of comparison, gold has value, wood does not.

And when we look at what Paul has been discussing about what makes each thing the kind of material it is, as being (or not being) useful to the Master, it boils down to Truth vs. Falsehood when it comes to the knowledge of the scriptures. It’s like what A.W. Tozer wrote, “Satan’s greatest weapon is man’s ignorance of God’s Word”; which he might have drawn from Hosea 4:6, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”

It is impossible for a man or woman of God to be “gold”, to be a vessel fit for the Master’s use, if the enemy has been able to build a fortress of false doctrine in their soul. This is one of the main reasons Satan encourages Christians to attend Church, and the bigger the better, *as long as* whatever is taught is either milk or false, because either way, the Christians who attend will never be a threat to him, nor will they be “workers who need not to be ashamed”, instead, they will be exactly what *Paul* says they will be;

(Eph. 4:14) We should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine (in other words, susceptible and vulnerable to deception).

(Heb. 5:13) Everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a child.

And 2 Tim. 2:26 gives us the inevitable result, “(They have been) taken captive by (the devil) to do *his* will.”

Being a child when we're young is obviously not a problem; but *staying* a child when we should be moving past that phase, *is* a problem.

(Heb. 5:12-13) Though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a child.

(1 Cor. 3:1-2) I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal.

Prolonged childhood spiritually is the same as being "carnal", which means "controlled by the flesh". And that's a problem.

I realize that much of what Paul has written may seem harsh, but don't forget the heart of the man who wrote these things, and the heart of the Holy Spirit Who guided him. Paul was probably more aware of the reality, the danger, and the immediate presence of the spiritual realm that we wrestle with than anyone in his generation.

He's not harsh; he's pragmatic. And as much as he hates evil, he loves those who are in Christ even more. He would do anything, even unto death, if necessary, for the sake of the elect. Because in his inward conformity to Christ, Paul genuinely felt the pain the Savior felt when He wept over the city of Jerusalem and pronounced their destruction.

So, if a man like Paul was moved to write this passionately when speaking of Truth and Error, then it must be more important and more serious than most people realize.

I'll close with a couple of writings by commentators who seemed to understand the importance of this. First, from Edmund Hiebert;

The devil's method of taking men captive is to benumb the conscience, confuse the senses, and paralyze the will. As men who are drunken, they are

unable to free themselves from the snare of the Devil and they need our help.

Finally, from Guy King;

How many are all unconsciously ensnared in that trap. They would be greatly surprised, and highly incensed, if they were *told* they were, and it is only when they try to escape that they become really aware of their imprisonment. How cleverly the devil lures us, working with, and working upon, the thing that fascinates us. Mice don't like traps; but they do like cheese- and there lies the tragedy. There is a passage (James 1:14), where we are given what one might call the physiology of temptation- "every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." That is the way Satan lures us, draws us away: he plays upon our lust, our desires (philosophically or theologically), our particular strong leaning or liking- that's the cheese! So, he gets us. How did these people of Timothy's get into that undesirable situation? They were pleasantly mystified by what was offered.

What we are studying is not milk alone; we have been digging into a lot of what the Bible calls "solid food", which would include the spiritual realities of God's eternal purpose and the incredible privilege of being a part of a new creation. These aren't 'child' concepts, and if we understand even part of these things, it's a sign of our advance beyond childhood. That's a good thing and something we can be very grateful for because in spite of whatever faults and failings we might have, God has graciously allowed us to venture beyond the spiritual status quo of this final generation and get a glimpse of the wonders that belong to us and that await us in Christ.

We could be floating blindly down the river of ignorance, but the Lord has rescued us from that by bringing us the light and life we need to swim against the tide and have the opportunity of glorifying Him in this time of sustained spiritual childhood. We just need to stay on the course God has given us and not fall back into the darkness and confusion of spiritual infancy.