

Fresh Commitments for 2017

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[0 : 00] I want you to take your Bibles, if you would, and turn to a passage of Scripture.

It is actually Paul's second letter to a young preacher by the name of Timothy. So you know that is 2 Timothy. And if you would turn to that book. And our text for this morning will come out of chapter 2, verses 15 through 19.

In fact, I want to go ahead and read that portion of God's Word. 2 Timothy, chapter 2, verses 15 through 19. Where Paul says to this young preacher, he said, 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. 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.

[1 : 24] Nevertheless, the solid foundation of God stands. Amen to that. Having this seal. The Lord knows those who are his.

And let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity. Excellent passage of Scripture. And strictly speaking, Paul, of course, is writing this passage.

These instructions, these admonitions. Well, to Timothy, specifically. A preacher. But by extension, and as you read through chapter 2, you learn this.

By extension, not only Timothy, but to those he is leading in his church. Specifically, teachers in the church. And so, strictly speaking, that's the context here.

In fact, if you look back at verses 1 and 2 of the chapter, he writes, You therefore, my son, that's Timothy, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

[2 : 31] And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. So you see the multiplication effect there.

And yet still, the immediate context is teachers, leaders within the church.

And of course, Paul is going to address even false teachers in the church. So that's immediate context. Christian teachers. And yet there is really no reason why these instructions should not also apply to every single believer.

And that's what I want to use them for this morning. Not trying to take it out of context. But the same principles that Paul is applying and giving to Timothy, and through Timothy, the teachers in the church, are the same principles that apply to every single believer.

Every single one of us. They certainly apply to me as a preacher and teacher in the church. They certainly apply to Alan over here, who's a pastor, and my son, who's also a pastor in his church.

[3 : 41] They certainly apply to Anthony, okay, who's going out into the mission field. And they apply to every teacher here. And we have many seated all around the room here who are teachers from the oldest of adults to the youngest of children.

So these principles certainly apply to all of you, but they also apply to every single believer. And what Paul says to Timothy really represents, I think, a call to all of us.

A call to make some fresh commitments for this new year. Now, there are a lot of commitments we need to make, and perhaps you've already been thinking about some of them.

And many of those commitments are unique to each one here. You know, they pertain to your life, your particular life, your family, your work, and whatever it may be. But these fresh commitments that I think we can glean from this passage are very foundational.

Everything else builds upon these two things. In fact, the very first one I'm going to mention this morning, everything builds upon that. And here they are, just three of them, out of this passage.

[4 : 56] The first one is study hard. I'm not just talking to teachers, okay? A lot of you teachers study hard because you have to. You've got to teach.

You have to teach the very next Sunday. And as a preacher, I have to study hard because I have a responsibility to teach and preach. And so I'm very motivated to study hard.

But study hard applies to all of us, even if you don't have a teaching schedule or teaching opportunity. You study hard for yourself. That's the first one.

The second one is shun heresy or false doctrine. And then the third that we can find in this passage is this stand holy.

So those three things. Study hard, shun heresy, and stand holy. So let's take the first one, study hard.

[5 : 51] Look again at verse 15. Be diligent, Paul writes to Timothy. Be diligent to do what? To present yourself approved of God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Now, see, this would be an excellent commitment for the new year, to be diligent students of God's Word.

And that really is the idea here. Now, the word study doesn't appear in the translation I read a moment ago. In fact, the King James is the only one that uses the word study to translate the particular Greek word in the passage.

But the idea of study is there, clearly there. I love the ESV translation on this passage. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved.

So what is Paul talking about? Paul is talking about a person, a believer, the believers in the church, who diligently and with maximum effort seek to know God's Word, God's truth as revealed in the Bible.

[7 : 00] That's the idea here. So it's to read it, to study it, to know it, so that you can then effectively and accurately impart it.

And that's the idea behind this passage. I teach, by the way, I teach this process when I teach my students in China. Teach homiletics. That's just a big \$50 word for principles of preaching and teaching.

Homiletics. And so I can say that this applies to every one of us as believers. It all begins, first of all, with exegesis. There's another big word.

Exegesis of God's Word. And basically it's just simply answering the question, what does it say? So as you read the passage, you study the passage, you wanted to discover, what does it say?

As the author wrote it and intended to say. And it involves studying the words and everything else in the passage. So what does it say? It begins with exegesis. This is what I recommend to you.

[8 : 03] Start, first of all, by reading the passage and trying to understand what it says. What it says. And by the way, what it said back when it was first written is what it says right now.

So nothing has changed. So exegesis to begin with. And from there, you move to interpreting it. Rules of interpretation. Or the big word is hermeneutics of God's Word.

And this is really answering the question, what does it mean? All right, this is what it says. Now what does it mean? What does it mean? And then after that, you move into this whole thing of homiletics.

These principles of teaching. Principles of communicating the truth of the passage, the meaning of the passage, so that people can understand it.

Although in your case, if you are just simply doing this for yourself, and this is the point I'm wanting to make, you're trying to communicate it to yourself so that you can understand what it means.

[9 : 04] What it means to you. And what the author intended for it to mean. This is a process. This is part of studying God's Word. And all that includes application. You must have application.

And that's answering the question, what should it look like in my life? Here's what it says. Now I understand what it means. And putting it all together to communicate it to my mind and to my heart. And then answering the question, all right, what should that look like in my life? How has that worked out in my daily living? The application to my life.

And I'm not talking just to preachers this morning. Hopefully, those of you who are preachers and teachers, you already kind of understand these concepts, even though you may not use the big words.

So you understand that. But I'm talking to every believer. When you approach the Scripture, you read it, you find out what it says, find out what it means, and then you apply it to your life, and then you live it out.

[10:07] You live it out. And that's why Paul is saying, be diligent, because see, this is hard work. Believe me, it is. It is hard work.

Study hard. Paul said, be diligent. And yet, let's be honest. If I might step on some toes. I'm not trying to step on any particular toes, if the shoe fits.

Now, let's just be honest. Most Christians today do well if they merely read a little Scripture every day. I did get one amen.

I did get one amen. It's true, isn't it? Most believers today, if they don't have the responsibility of teaching or preaching or some role similar to that, then they're hard-pressed to find the time or to take the time to just merely read it, read a little bit of Scripture every day.

Now, you know, like getting a read-through-the-Bible-in-one-year type of program, and I have mentioned this before, I'm not the greatest fan of that approach, but it's of value, certainly, to read through the Bible in a year.

[11:18] But reading through the Bible is not the same as studying the Bible. We need to study it. Well, we need to read it. We need to pray through it.

We need to meditate over it. Start thinking deeply about it and spiritually about it. We need to study it. Get a good Bible dictionary so that you can understand the meaning of the words in the passage.

Get a good Bible concordance so you can find those words other places in Scripture and study those Scriptures as well. Get a good Bible handbook or Bible encyclopedia.

You can even get those in one volume these days so that you can understand a little bit of the background of that particular passage, the author who wrote it, the people who he wrote to, and some of the historical context, and understanding the culture of the day, and all of that.

That's all good to use in studying of God's Word. So get a good handbook or encyclopedia. Get a good Bible commentary, not just one.

[12:23] Don't just rely on one author. But get some help on the meaning of the Scripture. So study it. Study it for yourself.

This is what I'm talking about. Study it just for, you know, public consumption. Your class or your congregation. Study it.

And then apply it to your life. And then I would say lastly, pray through it all over again. This is what we need to do.

This is a fresh commitment that we need to make as believers. You don't have to be a teacher to do this. Study hard. This is for everyone here, not just preachers like me and Alan out here.

Not just teachers like many of you scattered around this congregation. And not just missionaries like Anthony back here. And Shane over here.

[13:21] Not just those people, but every single one of us. And let me recommend a helpful book to you. And it's not a new book. I'm not sure when it was written. I have a copy of it in my library.

I read it years ago. Very helpful. Very basic. And the title of it is How to Study the Bible for Yourself. And it's written by an author that you're probably familiar with, Tim LaHaye.

Wrote all the left behind books, you'll remember. It's just a very simple book. Very small book. All right? Doesn't have pictures. But, you know, you can read it.

And it's very helpful. Very basic. How to Study the Bible for Yourself. Get that title down. You can get it from Amazon for about eight bucks. That's all. And it's a good guide for how to approach the Scripture and just study it for yourself.

For yourself. And so, this is the first thing. Study hard. Fresh commitment for this year that I highly recommend to you. Study hard.

[14:25] Study diligently. And then Paul gives us three reasons why we should do that. First of all, to present yourself approved of God. To present yourself approved before God.

That word in the Greek text, translated by three English words, is a very picturesque word. It's a picture word. And the picture is like this.

To stand before God, to present yourself for His inspection. Can you imagine doing this? Stand before God Himself.

I mean, right before God. And to present yourself, open yourself up for His inspection in order to be approved by Him. Not approved for salvation.

The idea, the point here is not salvation. That's not the idea here. But for service. Actually, as a worthy servant. To be approved as a worthy servant.

[15 : 25] Now, let me ask you something. Are you ready to do that right now? I mean, are you? Well, let's go. Let's go do that right now. Are you ready? But we should be.

See, I'm saying that this is a fresh commitment for 2017, but it really ought to be our commitment from the very beginning. That we would study, be very diligent students of God's Word.

Not just because we're teachers, some of you, but for ourselves. To be diligent, to study God's Word. To study it hard.

In fact, Paul says that we should do that. In 1 Thessalonians 2, verse 4, Paul wrote, But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, and that's a pretty big thing when you think about it, even so we speak, he says, like in the sense of teaching, proclaiming, we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.

We can even look a little bit later in this second letter to Timothy in chapter 4 where Paul says to Timothy, Be ready. Be ready.

[16 : 41] In season and out of season. We need to be ready to stand before God at any moment, present ourselves for his scrutiny, his inspection, for his approval.

That's why we should study hard. And then he gives us another reason why we should do this. As if approval from God was somehow not enough, there's something else here.

A worker who does not need to be ashamed. No shame. That should be our condition before God unashamed.

because we are hard study, we're good students of God's word. And in the end we can leave this life unashamed and we can expect to hear from Jesus what he said in Matthew 25, 21, well done, good and faithful servant.

That's God's approval. Study hard. And then finally he says, rightly dividing the word of truth. See, there are three reasons why we should study God's word.

[17 : 46] study it hard. Why we should be diligent students of God's word for ourselves so that we can rightly divide the word of truth. Now, that word is interesting.

It literally means to cut straight. And it's a word that was very common in Paul's day. Describe a mason placing his bricks in a straight line.

Describe the farmer plowing his furrows in a straight line. It applies to a road crew building a straight highway or road. It applies to a tent maker which Paul was.

Perhaps he was thinking about this when he used the term. Making straight cuts in the fabric so that when they're sewn together you have a tent that is functional and works.

See, this Greek word is used to describe all of these things in this very common sense. But the word has taken on not a new meaning but metaphorically Paul is using the word to refer to how one communicates the truth of God's word.

[18 : 58] How we share that. How we communicate. We're studying God's word for ourselves so that when we have opportunity to convey, to teach, to share with others what we have learned from God's word we can do so accurately.

That's the idea here. In fact, some versions of the Bible use the word accurate. But it really conveys two ideas behind this to cut straight.

Not only accuracy but also clarity. Clarity. Plain. Understandable. We, by the way, have an example of the opposite of this later on in the passage that I read earlier when we were commissioning Anthony.

This passage in Acts chapter 13 where they are laying hands upon Paul and Barnabas and they're sending them out and they did go out and right out of the barrel they come face to face with this sorcerer of a sense Elimus the sorcerer and he is subverting people with false doctrine and in that passage Paul said O fool of all deceit and all fraud you son of the devil you enemy of all righteousness will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord.

The straight ways. He's not cutting a straight path. He was subverting it and though you know we may think that there's no danger of that happening with me well it can if you're not a diligent student of God's word you can actually subvert the truth through your own ignorance so don't be like Elimus there.

[20 : 56] So study hard study hard to be approved by God to be unashamed before God and before man and study hard for accuracy to be accurate and plain and clear in your communication

of the word of God God's truth and there's only again only one way to accomplish these things and that is to study hard study hard and there's a second commitment or fresh commitment see I I want us to understand these are fresh commitments re-commitments perhaps not first time commitments because as believers these these things should be true of our lives from the very beginning but a fresh commitment in 2017 not only study hard but shun heresy shun heresy that is false doctrine verse 16 but shun profane and idle babblings that's how Paul describes heresy profane and idle babbling shun these things void them completely for they will increase to more ungodliness so Paul is talking about heresy here he's talking about false doctrine a teacher in a

Christian school once asked her students what is false doctrine and one little boy who thought she said doctoring gave the wrong answer and yet it really turned out to be the right answer and he said false doctrine is when the doc gives the wrong stuff to people who are sick and that's exactly right he's more right than he knew in fact Paul goes on to say in the very next verse and their message will spread like cancer some versions use the term gangrene spread like gangrene Paul even named some names doesn't he Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort he said so he named some specific names there in the church that Timothy was pastoring and and then what was their heresy even names that in verse 18 who have strayed concerning the truth as they didn't cut straight saying that the resurrection is already past and they overthrow the faith of some this was a major heresy of the day discouraging people

Christians because they thought they had missed it they thought they had missed the resurrection and so this was heresy and and this is a warning actually that Paul is giving to Timothy and through Timothy the people of the church and he repeats the warning by the way in verse 14 strive not about words to no profit to the ruin of the hearers to the ruin to the overthrow of the faith of some to the ruin of the hearers and today we have false doctrines all around us I'm not talking about out there as part of some cult but even within those who claim to be orthodox Christian churches false doctrines heresies of every kind they're all around us concerning the origin of all things concerning the nature of God's word concerning the very nature of God's son still those things are out there today concerning and this is a big one concerning the importance of the

Old Testament law in relation to grace in relation to salvation big problem within many churches today and also concerning spiritual gifts and miracles and tongues and prophecies and we could go on and on with the heresies that are all around us we're inundated by them everywhere we go this year make a fresh commitment to shun these things and we are exposed to them perhaps more in our generation than ever before through the internet and through certain cable networks and books galore and popular preachers of this day if I could use the term preachers and what does Paul say we should do avoid them shun heresy avoid them completely in fact don't even entertain a conversation about them don't involve yourself in this idle babbling profane and idle babbling don't even get into the discussion of it avoid it completely and how by the way are we going to know whether or not a certain teaching is heresy well we go back to the first one don't we study hard it all depends upon that see how important it is that we know

God's word not just read it from time to time or in some kind of regimen of reading and never really looking any deeper than the words on the page but actually going deeply into the word of God and studying God's word and understanding the meaning of it and applying it study hard so that we can shun heresy see truth is the most effective weapon against error the devil has many ways to tell a lie I mean that's why we have so many cults in our world today and so many different kinds of so-called truth and false doctrine many of them don't even agree so the devil has many ways to tell a lie almost an infinite number of ways to tell a lie but there's only one truth and it is the truth of the Bible it is God's truth know it so that you can shun heresy so fresh commitments for 2017 study hard shun heresy and then there's one more this morning stand holy stand holy verse 19 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 do what depart from iniquity depart from iniquity now this solid foundation of God what is that well in the context it refers to the church and not the building but the people the redeemed of the

[27 : 44] Lord and so this solid foundation foundation of God does what it stands and based upon the context based on what has just been said it stands upon the truth the very word of God it stands on the truth of God of God's word it's not weak then if it if we're standing on his truth we're not weak we're strong we stand strong and you will remain strong when you first of all know you're his our parents used to say that back in the day you know we're leaving the house they say don't forget

who you belong to you know we don't really say that very much anymore maybe that's some old outdated thing that parents used to say but it's still the truth of it still applies today and it applies here in scripture more so here in our relationship with God we need to know who we belong to in every situation everywhere we go who do you belong to you don't belong to yourself you've been bought with a price precious blood of Jesus

Christ without blemish without sin pure we belong to him and so everywhere we go we remember that know who you belong to know that you are his that's how you stay strong and then part and parcel to that when you depart we're strong when we depart that is keep turning away from iniquity from sin some versions use the word wickedness very strong word strong word for sin iniquity wickedness we're to keep on turning away I mean this is a this is what we should commit to every single day hopefully hopefully that's what you've committed to in your life before today and before the first day of this new year but let's make a fresh commitment this year because we have many opportunities to to go the direction of iniquity

I mean we have them all around us we have temptations at every every turn on every hand temptations to sin let's stand holy stand holy before God and here again is the importance of diligent study of God's word much of it depends upon that dear people that we be diligent students of God's word so that we know what God has said about how we're to live so that we can identify the temptation to sin we can identify the sin even before the temptation comes we can make resolute commitments and decisions that we're not going this way or that way or over here we're not going to go in the direction of the world and the philosophies of the world and the sin of the world we're making a fresh commitment about that and understanding and knowing the word of God is what gives us not only knowledge about these things but the strength to stand holy against them wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way by heeding thereto to the word of God to the word of God it has been wisely said these hath

God married and no man shall part dust on the Bible and drought in the heart maybe you can remember that this year but but you Thank you.