

THE GENTLE SERVANT

2 Timothy 2:24-26 ... “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...”

Discussions about religion among believers can become heated and out of control. The Apostle Paul warns his assistant Timothy to not quarrel or argue with other believers. This warning applies to all of us who serve God.

It is easy to be dragged into arguments about theology and the Bible because many people love to argue and debate. It is their nature. The body of Christ is a mix of people with different personalities, beliefs, interpretations of the Bible, and ideas. I have firm convictions about what I believe. But through my continuing study of God’s Word, I sometimes make adjustments to my opinions when the Holy Spirit or a good teacher points out something I previously overlooked. So, if I make a spectacle of myself by loudly and fervently arguing a certain subject, I may have to eat my words later when I find I was wrong.

A gentle servant, as we see in today’s passage, earns the respect of his audience which allows for a peaceful and Christ-honoring discussion. I have learned much from such discussions and, perhaps, others have learned from me. This is possible when we discuss rather than fight for our own positions. The Holy Spirit not only communicates with us directly, but sometimes he communicates to us through other believers. That makes it very important that we respect one another and listen carefully and humbly.

One part of today’s passage reads: “...in humility correcting those who are in opposition.” This instructs us to help other believers who may be misled or going down the wrong path; to gently escort them back to a God-fearing direction. Let me be clear. The word “opposition” in this passage does not mean slight differences of opinion between Christian denominations. Nor does it mean differences of opinion regarding worship styles, baptism techniques, diet, the version of the Bible one uses, or other matters which only represent slight, non-critical differences between brothers. Opposition in this context is direct opposition to God and the teachings of Christ.

Many believers go astray by following their own instincts or the whispers of satan, rather than the Word of God. We can have a hand in guiding them back to the family of God if we approach them gently and lovingly. But if you try to win an argument with them by forcing your opinions, they can be lost forever. Most importantly, always submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit when counseling or correcting another believer. If you act on your own without the Spirit’s leading, you might find yourself in more trouble than the person you are speaking to.

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