

Romans 16:17 Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.

v. 18 For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.

- (12) Control of the tongue is a sign of maturity and possession of the sophisticated spiritual life which will be developed soon in James 2:1–13.
- (13) Because sins of the tongue can destroy a congregation, it is the duty of the pastor to constantly warn against them.

2 Timothy 2:16 Avoid worldly [ἄπειρος (*ápeiros*): doctrinally ignorant] and empty chatter [κενοφωνία (*kenophōnía*)²: senseless, wicked speech], for it will lead to further ungodliness [ἀσέβεια (*asébeia*): neglect or violation of duty toward God],

v. 17 and their talk [λόγος (*lógos*): word of human rationales] will spread like gangrene [γάγγραινα (*gangraina*)³].

- (14) Paul is signing off with this epistle and in doing so includes a warning to Timothy as a pastor-teacher and to congregations at large that destruction awaits those doctrinally ignorant who speak words void of biblical guidance.
- (15) Such talk, rich with human viewpoint, is likened to decaying bodily tissue that untreated ultimately results in physical death. Such was the ultimate result in the Ephesian churches if not stopped by the city's pastors.

² “Paul designates the godless as those who engage in senseless or wicked discourses, speeches that are devoid of any divine or spiritual character, fruitless as far as the satisfaction of man’s need of salvation and the molding of Christian life and character are concerned” (Spiros Zodhiates, gen. ed., *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. [Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993], 856).

³ “Gangrene or mortification which, unless properly treated, spreads from the place affected and eats away or consumes the neighboring parts of the body and at length destroys the whole body” (Ibid., 352).

- (16) Verse 17 concludes by calling out Hymenaëus: Ὑμέναιος (*Huménaios*) and Philétus: Φιλητός (*Philēτός*) as examples to reference.
- (17) Both of these men were pastors in the Anatolian city of Ephesus. Hymenaëus is also mentioned by Paul in 1 Timothy 1:20 along with Alexander both of whom the apostle turns over to Satan so they might be taught not to blaspheme.
- (18) The doctrinal error that Paul addresses in 2 Timothy 2:17 is denunciation of the resurrection of believers at the Rapture.

They allegorized the resurrection by insisting that it was a past spiritual experience, having occurred when they were raised from ignorance and sin as they came to know the true God. When they believed that the resurrection took place in the lives of believers is not indicated, perhaps at baptism. It was motivated by incipient Gnosticism, which held that matter was evil and that consequently salvation consisted in liberation from the body. The teaching of a future bodily resurrection was deemed illogical and inconceivable (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:12). The development of this heretical teaching in the Ephesian church was a fulfillment of the warning Paul had given the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:29, 30).⁴

- (19) The unguarded tongue that spreads the lie can cause those so influenced to acquire gangrene of the soul.
- (20) When the lie spreads collectively throughout the church body, then that sheepfold of the Lord's flock is defeated by the Dark Side resulting in divine discipline for those responsible.
- (21) Since the sins of the tongue can cause gangrene within congregations, pastors are to warn their flocks to learn doctrine so they can avoid such error.

- 11. We now return to our verse; here is the expanded translation for as far as we have progressed;

⁴ D. E. Hiebert, "Hymenaeus," in *Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, gen. ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 3:234.

James 1:26 If any fearful person holds the subjective opinion that he is religiously devout, and yet does not bridle his own tongue with application of resident doctrine ... (EXT)

1. What proceeds is the conjunction of contrast, **ἀλλά (allá)**: “but,” followed by the present active participle of **ἀπατάω (apatáō)**: to deceive or seduce into error.
2. This is in direct contrast to the “hearer-and-doer” believer of verse 25:

James 1:25 But the one who looks with an earnest desire to absorb in detail the perfect law of freedom, and continues to live in close proximity to it, not having become a forgetful hearer only, but a doer, this man shall become happy by the production of divine good. (EXT)

3. This believer was positive to doctrine that was taught. He then applied what he learned to life and circumstances. The believer in the next verse is religious.
4. His subjectivity is the result of works, indicated by the word “devout.” He functions on human good as a substitute for hearing and applying the Word of God.
5. The King James Version translates the adjective **θρησκος (thrēskos)** with the word “religious.” It refers to devout compliance with overt acts that are assumed to produce good works.
6. This person is ignorant of the spiritual way of life. The production of divine good is only possible when the believer is in fellowship.
7. Such production is never accomplished unless it is executed from an inventory of biblically supported principles through which the good work is to be performed.
8. Because of his ignorance of the process by which good works are accomplished he becomes legalistic. His sophomoric understanding of the Christian way of life causes him to become judgmental.
9. He performs his assumed good deeds and criticizes others who do not do the same. He appoints himself spiritual king of the mountain, but functions from a deep valley.

10. He ignorantly resides in that valley because he has deceived his own *kardía*. His biblical inventory of ideas is flawed. His application is the result of human viewpoint based on ill-conceived standards.
11. The final analysis of all his deeds of the flesh is the adjective **μάταιος (*mátaios*)**: idle, empty, fruitless, useless, powerless, lacking truth.
12. The verse reads like this in its expanded translation:

James 1:26 If any fearful person holds the subjective opinion that he is religiously devout, and yet does not bridle his own tongue with application of resident doctrine but deceives his own *kardía*, this man's devout production is worthless. (EXT)

Summary:

1. This believer has not organized his spiritual life so that he can learn the Word of God through the process of GAP: (1) Objectivity toward the communication of the Word, (2) concentration on the content of doctrine taught under academic understanding, (3) positive response for inculcation in the *kardía*, and (4) application to life and circumstances.
2. This advanced analysis of the spiritual-growth process is simplified through alliteration by Gary Watson for those new to doctrine: (1) Communicate (by the teacher), (2) Capture (under academic understanding), (3) Comprehend (positive response to what is taught), and (4) comply (what is learned applied toward life and circumstances).
3. Failure to learn the Word of God from a qualified pastor-teacher results in scar tissue on the soul and the buildup of erroneous ideas and principles that dominate recall.
4. This opens a vacuum in the soul so that truth is ignored in favor of the lie contained in doctrines from demons:

1 Timothy 4:1 The Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.

5. When a believer's soul is the victim of deceit it inevitably leads him into the throes of reversionism manifested by emotional revolt of the soul.

2 Peter 2:17 These [false teachers] are springs without water [teaching with no reference to Scripture or the teaching of the Holy Spirit] and mists [human viewpoint and evil] driven by a storm [itinerants move around like a squall line and bring a storm of false doctrine to the benighted], for whom the black darkness [darkness of the soul due to negative volition to truth] has been reserved [the soul's environment of darkness as opposed to the light provided by truth].

v. 18 For this reason, these reversionists constantly preach eloquently and bombastically with great swelling words [multisyllabic, esoteric, gobbledygook] from the source of vanity [ματαιότης (*mataiôtēs*): a vacuum that sucks in cosmic concepts], they keep on enticing by appealing to lascivious desires, those scarcely escape from those who live in error,

v. 19 promising them freedom when they themselves are in the permanent status of slavery of corruption [the sin nature]; for by whom anyone is defeated, by the same source, he has been enslaved. (EXT)

6. These passages are graphically illustrated in a way that is well-known to dog lovers. Shannon and Chris have a dog, named Samson, a Labrador retriever who, having ignored instruction in the nuances of haute cuisine, recycles his own food, euphemistically speaking, ergo:

2 Peter 2:22 It has happened to them and keeps on doing so according to the true proverb [**Proverbs 26:11**], "A dog returns to his own vomit," and "A sow, after washing, returns to wallow in the mire." (NASB)

7. In a given society, historical downtrends are detected when its body of believers loses interest in serious Bible study and through emotional revolt enter reversionism.