

# Swerving

## Introduction

- Jesus said, *“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’ and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* (Matthew 24:45–51, ESV)
- Jesus defines a faithful servant in this picture as one who is constantly ready for the master’s return and caring for his household while he’s away. The greek word for “faithfulness” is πιστός (pistos) means to be trustworthy, dependable, and reliable. When the master returns and finds that his servant has been trustworthy, he will receive great reward from the master, but the wicked servant will face punishment because he was not ready or reliable.
- Unsurprisingly, faith and faithfulness are a constant theme throughout the Bible, and God places paramount importance on His people being dependable in their service to Him. Knowing that we have a tendency to be more like the wicket servant, much discussion is given to unfaithfulness in the Bible. Often words like “wander away” (Jam 5:19), “drift away” (Heb 2:1), “turn away” (2 Tim 4:4), “turn back” (2 Pet 2:21), “carried away” (2 Pet 3:17), and “wavering” (Heb 10:23) are used to describe our propensity for deviating from God’s desired path.
- There’s a related word to these found only three times and used by Paul in his letters to the young evangelist Timothy: ἀστοχέω (astochēō). The word is translated as **“swerve”** in the ESV and means “to abandon the truth, to lose one’s way.” Let’s look together at the three uses of this word to Timothy and expose one of the great dangers to being faithful servants of God today.

## Swerving Starts In The Heart

- A distracted heart: *“As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Certain persons, by **swerving** from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.”* (1 Timothy 1:3–7, ESV)
- **Faith Over Speculation**

- It's no coincidence that Paul uses the language of stewardship here, when talking about how certain people were swerving from the faith. When we begin to deviate from a focus on God's direction either willingly or because of distractions, we are no longer considered good and faithful servants.
- It's so easy to get distracted from what's really important, especially with the rise of so many differing ideas on doctrine these days. We need to make sure that our hearts are focussed on being trustworthy with the truth God has revealed to us, and not become so wrapped up with conversations about false teaching and religious error.
- **Love Over Arrogance**
  - Love, both for God and for our neighbors, is the main goal of a faithful servant. That love is stems from a pure and honest heart, from a clear conscious, and from a sincere and genuine faith. Being reliable servants starts with the heart!
  - Too often though, many want to become "teachers of the law" and to be out in front, trying to make a name for themselves. If your service to the Master is only based on selfish motivations, you will find yourself veering off course and eventually into a ditch!

### **Swerving Proceeds From Our Mouth**

- An uncontrolled tongue: *"O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge," for by professing it some have **swerved** from the faith. Grace be with you."* (1 Timothy 6:20–21, ESV)
- **Guard Your Tongue**
  - James warns us that the tongue is *"... a restless evil, full of deadly poison."* (James 3:8, ESV) Eventually, if we are not steadfast and immovable in the truth, it will come out in our words and our instructions, as Jesus also said in Matt 15:18.
  - Since the main problem lies in our hearts, when we start hearing ourselves questioning God, entertaining contradictions to His will, the alarm bells should be going off that something is seriously wrong. We should also be cautious when we hear these things from those around us, because as we'll talk about shortly, their words can severely throw us off course as well!
- **Trusted With Knowledge**
  - As a faithful servant, the master has entrusted us with the most precious of spiritual possessions: the truth of His word. What does it mean to guard that deposit? Like Timothy, it means to watch our words and avoid "irreverent babble" and "contradictions." Talking about some obscure fact or some wild theory is not where we should be spending our time if we're paying attention to the road ahead.

## Swerving Ruins Others

- An infectious disease: *"Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have **swerved** from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some."* (2 Timothy 2:14–18, ESV)
- **Address It Early**
  - The careless words of a few can quickly and easily infect the rest. With love and concern, we should be willing to stand up when we hear things that are a distraction to the truth and help correct a brother before it spreads too far.
  - Fighting about words and abstract concepts have no place in a healthy and growing church today. That said, we should be willing to talk about what we don't know and what we're still searching for answers on ... but only when motivated by a sincere search for the truth rather than a goal to promote some new idea and garner earthly fame and prestige.
- **Approved And Unashamed**
  - As infectious as upsetting words of doubt can be, we can also positively impact each other with words of true knowledge. That means, though, that we have to get into the word! It cannot be overstated the importance of knowing the Bible and being able to defend it today.
  - This will never happen if you're too distracted by all kinds of other pursuits, however honorable or noble they may be. If you're only carving off a small chunk of your life for God, you're not giving Him everything in your service ... and how do you expect to be called "faithful" when He returns? As a faithful servant, we're always investigating the will of the Master and molding our hearts to obedience.

## Conclusion

- Whether or not you realize it, you're on the road toward eternity. Are you focussed on the path ahead or are you distracted? Is your heart pure and committed to love, purity, and faith?
- The dash cam footage of God will be played back to you, so to speak, at the judgment and you'll see how well you stayed in your lane or how much you veered off course throughout your life. Be ready when He comes, as a reliable and trustworthy servant who obeyed the will of the Master!