

2 Timothy 2:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

Analysis

But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. Contrasting with verse 15's faithful handling of truth, Paul warns against "profane and vain babblings" (*tas de bebelous kenophōnias, τὰς δὲ βεβήλους κενοφωνίας*). *Bebēlos* (*βέβηλος*) means profane, godless, secular—opposite of sacred. *Kenophōnia* (*κενοφωνία*) combines *kenos* (empty) and *phōnē* (sound)—empty noise, meaningless chatter. These are worthless speculations masquerading as deep theology.

The command "shun" (*periistaso, περιιστασο*) means stand around, avoid, turn away from. Don't engage, don't debate—simply avoid. Some errors aren't worth refuting; engagement only spreads poison. The reason: "they will increase unto more ungodliness" (*epi pleion gar prokopsousin asebeias, ἐπὶ πλεῖον γὰρ προκόψουσιν ἀσεβείας*). The verb *prokoptō* (*προκόπτω*) means progress, advance, move forward—ironically, these teachings "progress" deeper into ungodliness (*asebeia, ἀσέβεια*), not truth.

Heresy has progressive character—one error leads to another, each worse than the last. False teaching doesn't remain static but metastasizes like cancer (v. 17). Therefore, the proper response isn't dialogue but separation. Some ideas are so poisonous that engagement only spreads infection.

Historical Context

The Ephesian church faced false teachers promoting speculative theology devoid of practical godliness (1 Timothy 1:3-7, 4:1-7). These teachers loved controversial questions, endless debates, and novel ideas. Greek culture prized rhetorical skill and philosophical speculation, making such teaching attractive. However, this pseudo-intellectual discourse produced pride, division, and moral laxity—not Christ like character. Paul's counsel to avoid engagement frustrated Greek converts accustomed to public debates and philosophical dialogues. Yet experience proved Paul correct: heresy spreads through discussion.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What theological speculations or controversies should you simply avoid rather than engaging in fruitless debate?
2. How can you distinguish between important doctrinal discussions that build up the church and empty babbling that only produces division?
3. In what ways might you be drawn to intellectual novelty and rhetorical cleverness rather than sound doctrine that produces godliness?

Interlinear Text

τὰς δὲ βεβήλους κενοφωνίας περιῆστασο· ἐπὶ πλεῖον

G3588 **But** G1161 **profane** G952 **and vain babblings** G2757 **shun** G4026 **unto** G1909 **more** G4119

γὰρ προκόψουσιν ἀσεβείας

G1063 **for** G4298 **they will increase** G763 **ungodliness**

Additional Cross-References

Titus 3:9 (Parallel theme): But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.

1 Timothy 6:20 (Parallel theme): O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:

Hosea 12:1 (Parallel theme): Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt.

Ezra 10:10 (Parallel theme): And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel.

Revelation 13:3 (Parallel theme): And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.

Hebrews 12:15 (References God): Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

2 Peter 2:18 (Parallel theme): For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

2 Peter 2:2 (Parallel theme): And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

1 Corinthians 15:33 (Parallel theme): Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

1 Corinthians 5:6 (Parallel theme): Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?