

2 Timothy 2:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.

Analysis

Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. Paul specifies Hymenaeus and Philetus's error: "concerning the truth have erred" (hoitines peri tēn alētheian ēstochēsan, οἵτινες περὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἡστόχησαν). The verb astocheō (ἀστοχέω) means miss the mark, deviate from, go astray—used of archers missing targets. In matters of ultimate truth, close isn't sufficient; missing the mark is fatal.

Their specific error: "saying that the resurrection is past already" (legontes anastāsin ēdē gegonenai, λέγοντες ἀνάστασιν ἤδη γεγονέναι). They taught that believers' resurrection had already occurred in some spiritual or metaphorical sense—perhaps at conversion or baptism. This denies future bodily resurrection, a core Christian doctrine (1 Corinthians 15:12-19). Such teaching likely blended with Greek philosophy's disdain for physical bodies and proto-Gnostic spiritualizing of biblical promises.

The devastating result: they "overthrow the faith of some" (kai tēn tinōn pistin anatrep ousin, καὶ τὴν τινῶν πίστιν ἀνατρέπουσιν). The verb anatrepō (ἀνατρέπω) means overturn, upset, destroy—like capsizing a boat. Some believers, hearing this error, shipwrecked their faith. Paul doesn't say they lost salvation but that their faith was seriously damaged. This shows that even genuine believers can be harmed by false teaching, underscoring the need for vigilance.

Historical Context

Denying bodily resurrection was common in Greek thought. Platonism taught that souls were imprisoned in bodies; salvation meant escaping physicality. Many Greeks found resurrection absurd (Acts 17:32). Some false teachers apparently "spiritualized" resurrection promises, teaching that believers experienced spiritual resurrection at conversion but no future bodily resurrection awaited. This contradicted Paul's clear teaching (1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) and undermined Christian hope. The error persists today in various forms—those who deny literal resurrection or reduce it to mere metaphor.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How firmly do you believe in future bodily resurrection, or have you reduced it to mere spiritual or metaphorical concepts?
2. What contemporary false teachings pose similar threats to biblical truth and believer's faith?
3. How can you help establish new or weak believers in core doctrines so they won't be 'overthrown' by error?

Interlinear Text

οἵτινες	περὶ	τὴν	ἀλήθειαν	ἡστόχησαν	λέγοντες	τὴν
Who	concerning	G3588	the truth	have erred	saying	G3588
G3748	G4012		G225	G795	G3004	
ἀνάστασιν	ἤδη	γεγονέναι	καὶ	ἀνατρέπουσιν	τὴν	
that the resurrection	already	is past	and	overthrow	G3588	
G386	G2235	G1096	G2532	G396		
τινῶν	πίστιν					
of some	the faith					
G5100	G4102					

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 15:12 (Resurrection): Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

1 Timothy 1:19 (Faith): Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: