

Message – "Truth and Error" - 1 Timothy 3:14-4:6

Truth is under assault in our society. As a culture, we have abandoned the idea of objective truth for the principles of post-modernism and as a culture, we have come to believe that truth is simply a matter of choice. What is true for me may not be true for you. The narrative of my life is different from yours, so you need to be respectful of my point of view. We need to exercise tolerance. We need to be tolerant of everyone's viewpoint, except, of course, for those who say there is an objective truth.

We shouldn't be surprised by this, because the world is dominated by Satan's system, and Jesus says of him,

"He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it." (John 8:44)

Well gee, that's not very tolerant, Jesus!

I want to remind you this morning, that there is an objective truth. And God defines what is true. We don't get to make truth up. We don't get to change His precepts.

Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar." (Romans 3:4)

Jesus is truth. He is the Way, the Truth and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through Him. (John 14:6) So, we, as Christians, need to be able to discern truth from error. We need to be able to distinguish between the veracity of God and the lies of Satan. And while there is a lot of noise in the world trying to shout the Almighty down, it shouldn't be hard to zero in on truth because our God wrote it down for us.

Part of my job as a pastor is to make sure our church stays faithful to God's pristine truth. It is the job of every pastor. So, as we encounter this next section of Paul's first epistle to Timothy, I need to pay close attention to what he says. But so do you, because we need to be accountable to one another and we all need to contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. (Jude 3)

Let's go to our text now.

These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:14-15)

We've looked briefly at verse 14 before. It clearly states Paul's purpose in writing the letter. There are issues so important, that they simply cannot wait for Paul's expected visit. So, Timothy must deal with them. This letter reinforces instructions Paul gave to this young pastor, and the instructions are for every pastor, so that we know how we ought to conduct ourselves in the church.

And what is the Church? First of all, it belongs to God. It belongs to Jesus. Yes, in a very real sense, this is our church because we belong to her. We belong to Jesus, but we don't own the Church. We don't get to call the shots. Jesus said,

"on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18)

Whose Church? Yes, His Church. We dare not forget it.

Secondly, the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth. In other words, the pillar and foundation of the truth. Do you want to know the truth? Do you want to know real truth

that is free from nuance and spin and the agendas of carnal human beings? This is where you find it, in a Bible-believing, Bible-preaching, Bible-honoring assembly of born-again believers!

And what is the truth? The truth is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. That's what we must preach.

For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! (1 Corinthians 9:16)

And so, we have verse 16:

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory. (1 Timothy 3:16)

God is absolutely holy. He is perfection, perfectly holy, perfectly righteous, perfectly just. You are not. You are a bunch of sinners and I'm just as much of a sinner as every one of you are, because ...

... all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

Because God is perfectly just, every sin has to be judged and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), an eternity of unremitted suffering in the fires of hell.

But God ... Don't you just love those two words when they appear in scripture?

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

And that is exactly what Paul is reminding Timothy of. *God was manifested in the flesh.* That's Jesus!

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. (John 1:18)

And Jesus was justified in the Spirit. Jesus, in taking on human flesh, voluntarily set aside many of the attributes of God-hood. Yet by means of the Holy Spirit, He showed Himself to be exactly who He is. He healed the sick, controlled nature, cast out demons, even raised the dead. And He spoke as no man had ever spoken. He is the incarnate Word!

He was seen by angels. Jesus was crucified for your sins and mine, millions of eternities in hell concentrated on His holy head for those few horrible hours. But no grave on earth could keep the eternal Son of God. He was raised on the third day, manifested to many human witnesses. And yes, the Holy angels witnessed this, and rejoiced.

And then *He was proclaimed among the nations.* Not just to Jews, but to Gentiles and those who were appointed to salvation came to believe. Because that's all He asks in return for His sacrifice, that you just believe! That as an act of your will, you decide you are going to believe that His sacrifice is sufficient to cover all your sins. Because ...

... if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

And every human being that comes to saving faith glorifies our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

He was *received up in glory*. And He sits at the right hand of the Father making intercession for you, making intercession for me. He is our Prophet, High Priest, and King.

And that is the truth! Jesus is the Truth.

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Faith in Jesus plus nothing else ushers you into His eternal kingdom.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

The Church is the pillar and foundation of God's truth and you are the Church. It's not this building God has so graciously given to us to use as a meeting house. The Church is made up of individual believers, each doing his or her share. So, every one of us has an obligation, a duty, a ministry to stand up for God's truth. Why? Well, Paul's going to tell us:

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, (1 Timothy 4:1-2)

How many times and in how many ways does scripture warn us of this?

Jesus said, *"Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold."* (Matthew 24:11-12)

For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. (Mark 13:22)

Peter writes:

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. (2 Peter 2:1-2)

The Apostle John writes:

For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. (2 John 1:7)

And again, from the pen of Paul:

But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. (2 Timothy 3:13)

This is something God wants us to take seriously. There are false teachers out there. They are pretending to be followers of Jesus Christ and they have cauterized consciences. A lot of them even believe the lies they are propagating. They are dangerous!

Paul gives a couple examples of false teaching that was going on in Ephesus.

... forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. (1 Timothy 4:3)

You understand, I hope, that marriage is an institution designed by God. Before the fall!

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:24)

Apparently, there were teachers in Ephesus who said that that marriage was evil. It probably came from a Greek philosophy anything physical or sensuous is contaminating. So, abstinence is to be admired, even between married couples. Oh, and extreme fasting was particularly spiritual! Let's abstain from foods, because you might just enjoy eating. Can't have that!

Paul said that reality is just the opposite: Everything God created is to be received and enjoyed with thanksgiving. God is not a cosmic killjoy! Of course, he has set parameters. He has set limits. But those limits increase the level of enjoyment His people experience.

For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. (1 Timothy 4:4-5)

Foods that were created by God for us to consume are wonderful gifts of grace. We are to enjoy them accompanying thanksgiving. Giving praise, honor and glory to God, who is the giver of all good and precious gifts. And in the next verse, Paul actually takes it to the next level.

for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. (1 Timothy 4:5)

The word translated "sanctified" is *hagiazō (ἀγιάζω)* in the Greek. It means to be set apart for a holy purpose. It is consecrated by God's word and our prayer. Think about that for a second before you enjoy that burger, praise God for it. Eating should be an act of worship!

Just be careful you're not worshipping the food! Some of us might slip into that form of idolatry from time to time.

In Ephesus, there were false teachers who were making stuff up that didn't even make sense. The same thing goes on today. We need to be guardians of God's truth. We need to test every teaching and search the scriptures to see if those things are so. Don't fall victim to the lies of the world.

There's a comedian by the name of Stephen Colbert who coined a word some years ago. "Truthiness." Truthiness is the belief or assertion that a particular statement is true based on the intuition or perceptions of some individual, without regard to evidence, logic, intellectual examination, or facts. In other words, I believe something is true because I want it to be true and I'm not going to be confused by the facts. It's the way the world seems to operate these days.

That's not the way the Gospel operates. The Gospel is based on the veracity of God's word.

It is the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, (Titus 1:1-2)

Brothers and sisters, hang on to that truth.

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. (1 Timothy 1:15)

Will you affirm that truth? Can you believe that truth? Can you say “yes” to Jesus, and let Him welcome you to His eternal kingdom?