

WORSHIP SERVICE - 2.12.2023

THE GOSPEL IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH - PART 2 - GUARD THE GOSPEL

I. INTRODUCTION

1 Timothy 1:3-7

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, 4 nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. 5 The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. 6 Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, 7 desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

II. WARNING TO FALSE TEACHERS

- Paul's first instructions to Timothy in his letter, is for Timothy to address those who were teaching a different doctrine.
- Paul calls them "certain persons". He doesn't name them but certainly Timothy would have known who he was writing about.
- Later he mentions two individuals who rejected the faith (1:20).

- Several years earlier, Paul predicted the very things that he was having Timothy address in the church at Ephesus.
- Acts 20:28-30 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.
- Savage wolves were coming who would seek to ravage the flock.
- And where would they come from? From within. "*From among your own selves...*"
- The greatest threat to the Church are those within the church who deviate from the truth and lead the disciples away from the true gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Paul is zealous for the truth to be safeguarded in the church.
- Jesus told his disciples to beware of false teachers. He said they would come wearing sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15).
- All of the apostolic writers warn the churches about this.

- Timothy's orders are to take a stand against those teaching error.
- Timothy is to "charge" them. This is military language, "*You are to order them to stop!*"

A DIFFERENT DOCTRINE

- The word used for "different doctrine" is a compound word that Paul seems to have coined.
- Gk. "Heterodidaskaleō" means to teach divergently, to teach other doctrine that is different from the accepted standard.
- They were teaching something different from what Paul had taught the church.
- This is important because in the early church there was an already generally accepted body of apostolic teaching.

- That apostolic teaching is designated in a variety of ways in the Pastoral Epistles.
- It is called 'the faith' (1 Tim. 1:2; 3:9; 4:1; 6:10,12,21; 2 Tim. 3:8; 4:7; Tit. 3:15)
- It is called 'the truth' (1 Tim. 2:4; 3:15; 4:3; 6:5; 2 Tim. 2:18,25; 3:7-8; 4:4; Tit. 1:1,14)
- It is called 'sound doctrine, words, teaching' (1 Tim. 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; 4:3; Tit. 1:9; 2:1)
- It is called 'the deposit, the good deposit' (1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:14)
- This indicates that Paul is referring to the body of doctrine that was already established and by which all teaching could be tested and judged against.

- What is that teaching? It is the teaching of Christ. It is the Gospel.
 - 1 Tim. 6:3-4a If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, 4 he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.
 - Paul says that he was entrusted with that gospel (1 Tim. 1:11).
 - Timothy is to continue to teach in that tradition, following what Paul had taught, which came to him from Christ.
 - 2 Tim. 1:13 Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.
 - There has been and will only ever be, one true gospel!
 - We don't get to teach the church anything that deviates from the true gospel.
 - You need to make sure you know the true gospel because no one is immune to gospel drift.
 - Gal. 1:6-7 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel — 7 not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.
 - Timothy is to address anyone and anything that could pull people away from the gospel.
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- What was the nature of their false teaching?
 - Paul says that they were devoting themselves to teaching myths and endless genealogies.
 - What were these?
 - There were plenty of Jewish myths, allegorical and legendary interpretations of the OT.
 - Certainly it could have involved some gnostic tendencies.
 - We know from ch4 that they were also teaching some ascetic practices, forbidding people to marry and to abstain from certain foods. Paul said they are devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons. (4:3)
 - It's hard to say with certainty but it doesn't really matter what those teachings were.
 - Anything that is promising something other than the sufficiency of Christ for salvation is false teaching.

FALSE TEACHING TODAY

- Examples of false teaching in the Church today.
- JC Ryle, Warnings to the Churches, "Since Satan cannot destroy the gospel, he has too often neutralized its usefulness by addition, subtraction, or substitution."
- He writes, "Inside the Church he is ever laboring to sow heresies, to propagate errors, to foster departures from the faith. If he cannot prevent the waters from the Fountain of Life, he tries to poison them. If he cannot destroy the remedy of the Gospel, he strives to adulterate and corrupt it."
- Thankfully, Satan cannot destroy the Church, Jesus is the Head of His Church and has promised that the gates of hell will never prevail against her (Matt. 16:18).
- Ultimately, Paul says the big problem of these false teachers is their misuse of the law.
- Paul says they desire to be teachers of the law (7).
- They were somehow misusing the law by adding extra-biblical things to God's Word and the gospel.
- They were adding rules and regulations to God's people that are not in God's Word, like the ascetic practices.
- Paul writes that they not only don't know what they're talking about but they arrogantly make confident assertions in their ignorance.
- Arrogance and ignorance are a dangerous combination in a false teacher.
- God's people must always be on the alert for false teaching by knowing the true gospel and knowing God's Word.
- God's shepherds must always be on the lookout for wolves and confront them, in order to guard the gospel, safeguard the doctrine of the Church, and to protect the flock of God.
- Do you know the Gospel? Can you articulate Christ's teaching on salvation?

III. PREVENTING GOSPEL DRIFT

- The effects of false teaching are disastrous.
- First, it promotes speculations and vain discussions.
- Speculations produce confusion and cause people to doubt their faith.
- Vain discussions lead to deception as people begin to embrace these additional things that they think are necessary for their salvation and Christian practice.
- Speculations and controversies are a breeding ground for lack of assurance.
- Second, it brings disunity in the church, it leads to division.
- Paul writes that those teaching a different doctrine are not promoting the stewardship from God that is by faith (4), rather they are promoting

their speculations.

- 1 Tim. 6:3-6 If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, 4 he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, 5 and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.

- God's house is not a place for division but for unity.
- Titus 3:9-11 But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. 10 As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, 11 knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.
- We are unified around our common faith as taught in the true gospel, different doctrines are destructive to the unity of the church, they bring division, quarreling, disorder, and chaos.

- We could sum up the consequences of the false teaching and teachers as an obstruction of faith and love.
- It is an obstruction to the faith, which the church is to steward. False teaching fails to promote the true gospel.
- It is an obstruction to the love of the church because it creates division and quarreling.
- Paul writes that the aim of his charge to have them cease from teaching a different doctrine is love (5).
- Love, he writes, flows from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith (5).
- Love for one another in the church can only spring from the heart that is touched and transformed by the Holy Spirit and the true gospel.
- If the heart is not pure, true Christian love cannot flow from it.
- A good conscience is one that is free from feelings of guilt, free from self-reproach.
- Paul writes that the conscience of the false teachers are seared (1Tim. 4:3) and defiled (Tit. 1:15).
- Sincere faith, this is genuine faith in Christ.
- The false teachers are missing these indispensable qualities.
- They have swerved from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith.
- They have wandered away into silly, vain, and fruitless controversies and discussions.

- We can't afford to be careless because we can easily drift from the gospel.
- It's not immediate. It doesn't happen all at once.
- Undoubtedly, the gospel drift begins with believing that Jesus is not enough.
- Hebrews 2:1 Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.
- You'll be susceptible to gospel drift if you don't "pay much closer attention to what you have heard..."
- What we've heard is the message of Jesus and salvation through him.
- What we've heard is that we're justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.
- Jesus is the anchor of our souls that will keep us from drifting (Heb. 6:19-20).
- Don't move away from the gospel.
- You'll never grow beyond your need for the gospel.
- Charles Hodge, 19th century Princeton theologian, "*The gospel is so simple that small children can understand it, and it so profound that studies by the wisest theologians will never exhaust its riches.*"

- Don't look for extra biblical revelation or get caught up with controversies, it will cause you to drift from the gospel.
- Looking to Christ, believing the gospel, and guarding the gospel, will keep you on the straight course.

- Two practical tests for us to apply to all teaching.
- First, the test of faith:
 - Does the teaching come from God?
 - Is it in agreement with apostolic teaching and doctrine?
 - Does it follow the pattern of the gospel?
 - Or does it seem to come from another source? An extra biblical source?
- Second, the test of love:
 - Does it promote unity in the body of Christ? Or does it cause division?
 - Does it edify and build up the church?
 - Does it breed contention and argumentation?

- The ultimate criteria by which to judge any teaching is whether it promotes the glory of God and the good of the church.
- The doctrine of the false teachers did neither of those things.

- Ephesians 4:1-6 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the

one hope that belongs to your call— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?