

“The Danger of False Doctrine – Part 1”

2 Timothy 2:14-19

(Preached at Trinity, June 5, 2022)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As I've pointed out on numerous occasions, the context of 1 & 2 Timothy has the existence of false teachers that have risen to a place of prominence in the church of Ephesus. The opening verses of 1 Timothy says it well.
1 Timothy 1:3-4 NAU - "As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, ⁴ nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than *furthering* the administration of God which is by faith."
2. Timothy had struggled with the forcefulness of their claims. Paul describes it in **Chap.1:**
" the matters about which they make confident assertions" (1 Tim 1:7).
In other words, the false teachers were bold, confident, forceful, charismatic – they were smooth talkers. They spoke words that were pleasing.
Apparently, some in the church were beginning to listen to them.
2 Timothy 4:3-4 NAU - "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, ⁴ and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths."
3. Paul is writing this letter to encourage Timothy and charge him to press on through the hardships he was facing as he stood against the false teachers.
In **Verses 8-13** Paul gives several motives for continuing faithful to the gospel even in the face of hardship and great personal risk.
 - A. The Resurrected Christ – Christ is alive and reigning as our Lord and King.
 - B. The Unbound Word of God – We might be imprisoned but God's Word is unbound
 - C. The Salvation of the Elect – God is saving those for whom Christ died.
 - D. The Promise of our Reward – If we die with Him we shall also reign with Him.
4. Now in **Verses 14-19** Paul is going to direct Timothy's attention to the great danger of allowing false doctrine to find its way into the church. Timothy's work at Ephesus was of great importance.
 - a. Paul had already told Timothy to hold fast to the truth
2 Timothy 1:13 NAU - "Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus."
 - b. The Book of Acts tells us that Paul had met with the Ephesian elders and warned them about the great danger that threatened their church.
Acts 20:28-30 NAU - "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹ "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them."

- c. We don't know if Paul was speaking prophetically, but we can see clearly in Paul's letters to Timothy that this is precisely what happened.
5. False doctrine is an assault upon the person of God – The Bible teaches that God is truth. Jesus said the Word of God is truth –
John 17:17 NAU - "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth."
 Jesus said of Himself –
John 14:6 NAU - "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."
 In **John 14:17** Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as the "Spirit of Truth"
6. False doctrine, on the other hand, is the epitome of Satan.
John 8:44 NAU - "You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies."
- A. It is Satan's nature to lie and deceive. From the time of Satan's fall he has been in a state of unredeemable enmity with God. He has been in a constant state of conflict with God and the truth of God.
- B. From the beginning of creation Satan has sought to deceive.
1. He deceived Eve and then Adam into distrusting God
 The Bible tells us that Satan is the most cunning creature ever created.
Genesis 3:1 NAU - "Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made."
 2. He influenced false prophets throughout the history of Israel.
 3. False teachers and preachers have always existed in the history of the church—including today.
 They can be very convincing and very dangerous.
Matthew 7:15 NAU - "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves."
2 Corinthians 11:13-14 NAU - "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light."
Ephesians 4:14 NAU - "As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;"
 4. The Bible teaches that the prevalence of false doctrine will increase more and more until Jesus comes back.
Matthew 24:24 NAU - "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect."
2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 NAU - "Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ² that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³ Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,"

2 Timothy 4:3-4 NAU - "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, ⁴ and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths."

1 Timothy 4:1-2 NAU - "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, ² by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,"

2 Peter 2:1-2 NAU - "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. ² Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;"

- C. We can surely see the existence of Satan's work today.
1. Cults and false religions abound today. They deny the central truths of Christianity
They deny the Trinity.
They attack the nature of Christ, they deny His deity. They deny His authority. They deny His substitutionary atonement.
They attack salvation by grace alone.
They attack the nature of the Bible
 2. People in our day know less and less about the Bible and in most cases, it doesn't disturb them. Most people are as comfortable in one church as they are in another. Doctrinal truth ranks low on their list of priorities. Human wisdom justifies every belief and every action.
Every evil has found its way into the church – and speaking against sin is often met with great disdain.
Sin is now called a disease, a mistake, an indiscretion, a choice, a lifestyle.
 3. A pop-culture Christianity has arisen with beliefs and ideas that find little foundation in Scripture.
A recent poll among professing evangelical Christians revealed
60% believe God accepts the worship of many different religions.
40% don't believe the Bible has authority over our lives.
- D. I often hear criticism of pastors who speak against other religions – and I have received such criticism. **BUT WE MUST WARN OF ERROR.**
Truth is not something that is relative or fluid. Everyone does not have the right to believe whatever they want. No man has the right to be wrong.
- E. We need to take this very seriously – False doctrine always ultimately detracts from the glory of Christ.
1. True doctrine always points to Christ
 2. The devil hates Christ - with subtlety he draws men from Christ.
 3. False doctrine is devastating to the church of Christ
It weakens the body of Christ
It serves to confirm the unsaved in their ungodliness

7. The first thing Paul does in this passage is to command Timothy to remind the teachers to hold fast to the truth. It takes us back to **Verse 2**
2 Timothy 2:2 NAU - "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."
 Paul is saying, "Remind these faithful men of these things."
8. Paul then goes on to warn of specific dangers. This morning only serves as an introduction. We'll look more into specifics next week.
 (Read **Verses 14-19**)
2 Timothy 2:14 NAU - "Remind *them* of these things, and solemnly charge *them* in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless *and leads to the ruin of the hearers.*"
 "Remind them" is from a single verb – a present imperative
 Paul is giving a direct command.
 "These things" refers to the "sound words" from **chapter 1:13**.
 It is also the same as that of **chapter 2:2** – The specific truths that must be faithfully taught within the Church.
9. Paul commands Timothy to charge the church, especially the teachers. It is to be done with great seriousness – "in the presence of God." Paul uses the same expression in **Chapter 4** – I'll share more about the significance when we get there.
 Here Paul stresses the foolishness of empty chatter, of endless debate.
Verse 14 - "not to wrangle about words, which is useless"
 A similar charge is given in **Verse 16** – "But avoid worldly *and empty* chatter"
 A. Both of these words have essentially the same meaning – empty, vain, useless words. Its amazing how often the Bible deals with the matter of the tongue.
Most fail to consider how much they talk—endless words.
 B. Paul is not talking about discussions with those who are sincerely seeking to know the truth. We must patiently abide with them and teach them so that they might rightly teach others – **See verse 2**
 We must remember that there will always be some doctrinal points of which sincere men may disagree and they must be discussed with civility and humility.
 C. Paul is talking about the danger of engaging in a war of words with men who have no interest in the doctrinal truths of the Christian faith.
 1. We must always begin with certain presuppositional truths.
 - a. The Bible is the infallible, inerrant Word of God and is our sole authority for knowing the truth
 - b. Jesus Christ is the second person of the Trinity – both human and divine – His sacrifice upon the cross being the only way of salvation. The substitutionary atonement
 - c. Faith alone without works
 2. Our source of truth must always be the Bible
 3. Christianity is a historic faith. There is a system of orthodoxy that has been established and defended. When a person's positions have strayed from the orthodox teachings of the church he is in danger. At some point we cease to wrangle with them.

4. There are some who have no interest in the truth but rather pervert the truth. Paul describes them:
2 Timothy 3:5-8 NAU - "holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. ⁶ For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, ⁷ always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁸ Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these *men* also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith."
5. The methodology of many is to try to convince them of the truth logically; to try to change their minds with the force of our argumentation. This is not the Biblical way. The Biblical way is to avoid a battle of words with those who are uninterested in the truth. The Biblical way is leave them to themselves and avoid them. It is both futile and foolish to debate with them on their level.
2 Timothy 3:5 NAU - "holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these."
2 John 1:10-11 NAU - "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; ¹¹ for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds."
Matthew 7:6 NAU - "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces."
Matthew 10:14 NAU - "Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet."
5. We are not out to win debates but to teach truth. Truth cannot be taught when the two sides argue from different presuppositions. We must not rest upon our power of persuasion but the power of God's Word.
1 Corinthians 2:4-5 NAU - "and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."
10. False teachers are not interested in Biblical presuppositional truth but rather human reason and human wisdom. Satan has blinded their eyes from truth.
 See *Screwtape Letters* pages 9-10
 We must only be interested in Biblical presuppositional truth – true argument.
 We are not interested in personal opinion but in the mind of Christ.
- A. How often do you hear people say, "I don't think" this or that.
 Or, "I believe that . . ."
 Our only response should be "what saith the Scripture? What does the Bible say?"
- B. Satan knows that most people are more apt to be persuaded to accept a lie by human wisdom rather than Biblical truth.
 Even the most educated have been deceived by Satan's devices. In the last several centuries the most unbiblical, humanistic lies have come from institutions of higher learning. And many unsuspecting students have had their beliefs overthrown.

Conclusion:

There are several truths we must glean from this passage:

1. Truth is essential – Paul says, "Remind *them* of these things"
False doctrine must not be tolerated. In an age of hyper-tolerance where every practice and every belief is accepted, Christians must continue to be intolerant of every belief or practice that is unbiblical.
2. We must never argue on the basis of human wisdom alone. We must presuppose that the Bible is our only source of truth.
3. The church is important. It must be protected. Purity must be maintained in both doctrine and practice.
4. All false doctrine will have a detrimental effect upon the church and upon the souls of men. Next week we will look at these dangerous aspects of false doctrine.