

- [Home |](#)
- [About |](#)
- [Archives |](#)
- [Links |](#)
- [Contact](#)

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[The Truth which Accords with Godliness](#)

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“Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness.” Titus 1:1

Sunday July 6, 2008
Morning Worship at Williams Camp
Lakeville, Massachusetts
www.lcfbaptist.org

Daniel J. Casieri and William Kujanpaa, Elders
Russell Protentis, Deacon
Sermon by Daniel J. Casieri

Titus 1:1-2:8

The Truth which accords with Godliness

v.1.1. “Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness.” There is a direct connection between knowing the truth and walking in godliness. And as we approach the subject that we began with last week, regarding a new, post-modern approach to Christ and the Church, we should note that it is Paul’s position that any attempt to blur the line between what the Spirit of God proclaims to be true and what we may concretely accept as truth is at the very least a claim that we ought to approach with great suspicion, and at most a direct assault on the gates of heaven by nothing other than a thinly veiled attack of satanic influences masquerading as angels of light.

Moral and doctrinal relativism has entered the church through the gate of cultural relevance and has once again put numerical attendance over biblical and doctrinal purity. As though the purpose of evangelism is to gather together in one place a doctrinally diverse group of neo-pagans and malcontents from other churches, all holding differing and highly personalized opinions on the nature of God, the purpose of the cross of Christ, and the cultural mission of the church of God among this wicked and perverse generation. The very situation that the apostle bemoans in his letter to Philippi, where he writes: “For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus (Phil.2.20,21).”

These post-modernists have grown out of the heroes from the era they despise and taking the nihilistic bait as post-modernism’s Nietzschean offspring they claim with him that “There are no facts only interpretations,” and that “Convictions are more dangerous enemies of truth than lies.” And perhaps unknowingly they proclaim with Francis Bacon three centuries earlier that ‘truth is the daughter of time and not of authority.’ With this apologetic they cater to the very worst instincts of a perverse and dying culture by trying to become them in order to win them. The question then becomes: ‘Win them to what?’

What we are seeing in the so-called 'emergent church movement' is the tendency to let a pluralistic, culturally diverse, morally corrupt society lead the church into a doctrinal melting pot by a not so subtle teaching that the compassion of our Savior is in direct conflict with the absolute authority of our Savior. They are declaring a truce in the spiritual battle for the moral superiority of Christ as the model for those who claim to love Him. Jesus again is relegated to the place of being one wise man among many who Himself is portrayed as one who has much yet to learn from human societies, and so has developed the much heralded virtue of being a 'Good Listener'.

A loophole in contemporary evangelism was made decades ago by the dissection of His Savior role from His role as Lord, as though those who love the Lord Jesus Christ of the Bible may love Him for His compassion to sinners, yet discard Him and His apostles when He claims moral authority over our lives. This philosophy of religion becomes the new evangelism - evangelism, of course, has changed from salvaging lost souls for the Christ to the drive to increase participants in the programs of the 'church'. Popular consensus becomes the new canon that all participants must abide by or risk being labeled judgmental and intolerant, or worse, Reformed or Fundamentalist.

The discussion begins with the idea that truth cannot finally be known by finite beings, so we therefore may not rely on our interpretations of revealed truth. (A side note to this idea has to be that Christianity has only begun with this new understanding and that the centuries of reliance upon the sacred absolutes have been a waste of time. The true new Christianity has been discovered in our time by the post-modernist). This fact not only relegates revelational knowledge to an obscure place of irrelevance in the marketplace of ideas, but it builds for us a shrine for our God that is little more than one shrine among the many other shrines to the many other gods, who are all legitimized simply because some other flawed and finite group of individuals proclaim their legitimacy. Mystery and imagination have been put on a par with revelation in regards to how "truth" is discussed, and internalized, and acted out in our moral lives and our personal walk with God, or with our personalized idea of God.

Now, I must return to some old ground in order that we may place this phenomenon in a proper light. Rampant Arminian thought is certainly a culprit in this matter. A calvinistic thinker is less disposed to entertaining the radical line of presuppositions that must be accepted in order to be overthrown into moral and apologetic relativism that invades the professing church in our day. Note the emphasis that the Holy Spirit puts upon the salutation of His apostle. There is a revelational beginning and that beginning is a work of God. There is a middle which is a personal intellectual recognition - a gift of God. And there is an end, which is practical godliness on the part of the hearer of truth, not a mere hearer, but a hearer who has spiritual 'ears to hear' what the 'Spirit says to the churches'.

Paul writes to those who are elect of God knowing that if God has not already acted upon the spirit of a man, then truth will have no final home within the man. He writes: "According to the faith of God's elect.." Faith is not for man to arrive at. It is a place to which he is brought by his Creator. We are all born as Adam was born, molded of dirt (perhaps moistened by the same divine saliva that Jesus moistened the earth with to make a healing salve for the eyes of a blind man). And so this new man, this clay statue, this insentient effigy of God's own image, lay there before his creator insensible of His presence or even of his own existence. And then the Lord breathed, not mere life, but His own life, into the man. And as his seeing eyes opened the very first image that he was sensible of was the face of God receding away from his own face and looking adoringly into the face of His own son, his own image, His beloved offspring.

Adam had no part in his creation, but lay there stiff and lifeless until he was given an intimate communion with the Creator. Sadly, that life of God was on loan. The life of God is always reserved for the godly. And it flitted away with his first act of betrayal. The man put another in place of God, and the fruit of his adultery was his disobedience to his former love and a new obedience to a new love. And so the apostle goes on to say: "according to the faith of the elect and the acknowledgment of the truth..." So, a new life of faith is the gift of God to God's elect, and acknowledgment of truth is the fruit of this new life. So, when

Adam acknowledged another 'truth' which is not truth, the life of God moved out of him. Now please resist the inclination of most calvinists which is to doctrinally parse every assertion I have made and each example

I am using to illustrate the meaning of Paul, and try to see the overall movement of the apostle's salutation. Today, I am casting we calvinists in a good light, don't make me regret not using this space also to delineate our shortcomings as minutia addicted Pharisees lying in wait for the next doctrinal misstep of every other person.

Suffice it to say, God creates, God selects, and God saves whom He will. He then blesses His elect with the power of God, which is nothing less than the indwelling of His very Spirit, the life of God within us, enabling our minds to accept that He indeed is the way and the truth and the life. And then we are miraculously empowered to walk in the truth, or as he writes here "the truth which accords with godliness." The calvinist sees clearly the work of God on a human soul as solely the work of God apart from human suggestion or cooperation. Indeed 'apart from Him, we can do nothing.'

If we, however, are antagonistic to the premise of our election, or if we do not understand that we are wholly creatures of divine favor, then we are prey intellectually to every sort of relativism that may present itself to us. Others have argued, and to my satisfaction proven, that to believe in a god that is not sovereign over his creation, to believe in a god who does not have final control of outcomes, is to abandon, not the first premises of Christianity, but the first premises of theism. God is the God of the Bible or He is no god at all. As Yul Brenner's Pharaoh proclaims of Moses in the film 'The Ten Commandments', "His God, is God". And it is this God of the Bible that does the creating. He does the planning. He does the saving. And He does the electing. So to say with the arminian that we have chosen God, that we have 'made Him God over our lives', that we have 'let Him be our Savior', that we have 'made Him our Lord' we presume too much in our case and far to less in God's case. This is no less than practical atheism, for we may claim to believe in whatever we like. But no matter in whom or in what we believe there is only one true and living God. To be ignorant of His existence, or of His nature, is to believe in something other than God. To believe in our personal impressions of God, or to fashion Him after our feelings of what He should be or what He might be, is to make Him after our own image. And the proverb of one theologian is proven again, that, 'the human heart is an idol factory.'

I saw a marquis on a local church which said (and I suppose this makes me a picky calvinist) 'Come worship here. Where Jesus is Lord.' My only reaction was to wag my head and say to my children, 'Jesus is Lord everywhere.' And I for one am very pleased that my God is not only the Lord in that little white church building, but of the whole universe, whether or not it is understood by its inhabitants.

It has been suggested of late that we who hold to the doctrinal truths about our God belittle His true greatness. 'I still believe that God does miracles' one contender proudly stated. My answer to this is, "That's good, because if you don't believe that God does miracles you have become like the Sadducees of Scripture who denied the miraculous, denied angelic beings, denied the resurrection of the dead, and resisted the claims of Christ". If, however, you translate this belief into believing that genuine miracles are performed on cue by every televangelist performing for the camera and catering to a miracle hungry crowd of potential financial contributors, you have lost your sense of balance and scriptural integrity. Even the apostles did not perform as today's showmen do. When we desire such powers uncritically we become no less than Simon Magus who said, "Give me this power also..." and to whom Peter said, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity (Acts 8:19-22)." Note this stern rebuke is given to one who professed love of God when truly all he had was a love of miracles and a love of personal power.

If the truths of Scripture were really up for grabs, if they are really debatable premises that are culturally derived at and may be diversely applied from culture to culture, and from trendy sub-culture to trendy sub-culture, then we are at a great loss to have any profitable approach to the passage of Scripture we have before us where the apostle takes great pains not only to order the church in the light of revealed truth, which is a specific roster of authorities, and gender appropriate roles, and personal character traits, but what can we do with such imperatives as “convict those who contradict,” “For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers” “whose mouths must be stopped” “who subvert whole households,” “teaching things which they ought not”, “rebuke them sharply” ?

v.1.16. “They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.” Friends, there are certainly cultural adaptations to the biblical methods of evangelism. But adherence to absolutes is never sacrificed in the exchange, whether they be doctrinal absolutes or moral absolutes. When speaking to the unbelieving Jews, Peter, and Stephen, and others spoke from Scripture of the time of Moses and their connection to Abraham, and of Jesus being located in the prophets and fulfilling all messianic prophecies. When speaking to pagan hearers Paul spoke of creation, and of his God being the only God, he spoke explicitly of the futility of idols, the resurrection of Christ, and that He requires men everywhere to repent and to worship Him.

So we see that his evangelism begins at the level of understanding of a particular audience. However, the cultural climate may not dictate the content of the message, nor may it dictate morality to the church, and the church may never concede moral negligence because of the moral negligence that is rampant in a given society. The emergent church is drunk on being accepted and seems to have forgotten the price Paul and others paid for being politically incorrect for their times. Genuine love does not seek its own, it does not crave reciprocity. But acceptance has become the new love, and persecution for the truth has become the new justice.

Consider the apostle’s assessment of these Cretans. He tells Pastor Titus that he agrees with the assessment of a local prophet who said: “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’ This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.” This is hardly a cry for an oozy cultural conformity by the church in order to foster acceptance and good will. And it is even further from the kind of cultural contortion-ism that the emergents are calling for. The emergent church’s approach to the Cretans of our day must be: ‘Become liars, become evil beasts, and lazy gluttons, so as not to allow these poor sinners to presume that we suppose ourselves culturally elite and intellectually superior to them.’ Unless we become base sinners, or accept base sin as morally neutral, as complementary to Christ’s love, as unimportant to God, as a non-essential for the gospel of salvation, how shall any see the love of Christ in us?’ Friends, I wish this was an exaggeration of the position of the emergent movement today. But it is not.

So, back to verse sixteen. What may we suppose the apostle is referring to when he says, ‘in works they deny Him.’ Well, we have no need to suppose because the beloved apostle goes on to list the works in an orderly and specific format. And he begins with proper teaching, saying.....

v.2:1. “But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine.” And what is proper for the pastor to speak? He speaks of moral character and lays out specific and time honored virtues that must be cultivated among the members of Christ’s true church even though this Cretan congregation must live and worship and train up their children, and evangelize in a climate of moral relativism that is reprehensible in the sight of God.

So, evangelism is still warfare and not surrender as the emergent has supposed. Evangelism is still done by proclaiming truth to a sick and dying world. It is not extinguished by the verbal and physical attacks of the hearers. It is not null and void because it rests on claims of absolute authority. And the church that is gathered from the efforts of her voices crying in this wilderness is not amorphous group of radical individualists, it is not fluid like and hard to define, but rather the church of Christ is like a house built upon a rock and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it did not fall, for it was

founded on the rock. accords with godliness

[« Previous Page](#) — [Next Page »](#)

About the Site:

-

Links

Pages

- [A Pastor's Prayer](#)
- [Building Project](#)
- [Mission Statement](#)
- [Worship Schedule](#)

Categories:

- [Uncategorized](#) (105)
- [Election](#) (11)
- [Sanctification](#) (28)
- [Grace](#) (8)
- [Faith](#) (11)
- [Old Testament](#) (2)
- [New Testament](#) (3)
 - [Matthew](#) (6)
 - [John](#) (44)
- [Salvation](#) (5)
- [Diety of Christ](#) (25)
- [Holiness](#) (1)
- [Hebrews](#) (4)
- [The Holy Spirit](#) (2)
- [I John](#) (2)
- [II Thessalonians](#) (2)
- [Discipleship](#) (3)
- [Ephesians](#) (5)
- [Fatherhood](#) (9)
- [Psalms](#) (2)
- [I Kings](#) (1)
- [Luke](#) (7)
- [Deuteronomy](#) (1)
- [Genesis](#) (2)
- [II Timothy](#) (2)
- [I Timothy](#) (1)
- [Romans](#) (1)
- [II Corinthians](#) (2)
- [Philemon](#) (1)

- [Galatians](#) (2)
- [Acts](#) (5)
- [Pentecost](#) (1)
- [Malachi](#) (1)
- [Worship](#) (1)
- [Philippians](#) (1)
- [Thanksgiving](#) (1)
- [The Church](#) (13)
- [Christmas](#) (1)
- [1 Corinthians](#) (2)
- [1 Thessalonians](#) (2)
- [The Gospel](#) (6)
- [The Sabbath](#) (1)
- [Colossians](#) (1)
- [Paganism](#) (2)
- [Jeremiah](#) (2)
- [Zephaniah](#) (1)
- [Emergent Church](#) (3)
- [Titus](#) (2)

Search:

•

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Monthly:

- [July 2008](#) (2)
- [June 2008](#) (5)
- [May 2008](#) (3)
- [April 2008](#) (4)
- [March 2008](#) (5)
- [February 2008](#) (3)
- [January 2008](#) (4)
- [December 2007](#) (3)
- [November 2007](#) (6)
- [October 2007](#) (4)
- [September 2007](#) (5)
- [August 2007](#) (4)
- [July 2007](#) (5)
- [June 2007](#) (4)
- [May 2007](#) (5)
- [April 2007](#) (5)
- [March 2007](#) (2)
- [February 2007](#) (3)
- [January 2007](#) (5)
- [December 2006](#) (5)
- [November 2006](#) (3)
- [October 2006](#) (3)

- [September 2006](#) (5)
- [August 2006](#) (4)
- [July 2006](#) (4)
- [June 2006](#) (2)
- [May 2006](#) (2)
- [January 2006](#) (1)

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