

No Other Doctrine
Holding the line at Ephesus

Introduction: Priming the pump for tonight's discussion.

- Let's begin with our own observations. Was there a moment where God spoke to you, showed you something new, or reminded you of a familiar truth through the message this week?

Exploration: Questions to guide our group discussion.

- Some of Paul's fears for the Ephesian Fellowship had apparently come true. Wolves from the outside and false teachers from within were teaching a legalistic version of the gospel that seemed to have been rooted in Mosaic law keeping. Timothy was instructed to hold the line on true gospel doctrine, to insist that they taught no other doctrines, nor fables, not endless genealogies that resulted in division. Winds of strange doctrines are always blowing in our world, which is why the church needs to be diligent to hold the line on Biblical truth. How can we make sure that we're staying the course and not being led astray by others who would take us by the arm to redirect our walk with God?
- In our lesson, we talked about the difference between the gospel and legalistic rule keeping as approaches to righteousness from two different directions. Paul noted that the gospel approach is internal through faith in Christ and results in a pure heart, a clear conscience, and a sincere faith. On the other hand, legalism is external, trusting in good works and deeds of man for justification before God. One leads to resting while the other leads to striving. Let's discuss this and make sure that we're all comprehending the true gospel. It really was finished at the cross, and Jesus doesn't need your help to redeem you.
- The false teachers at Ephesus wanted to be teachers of the law, but Paul wrote that they did not fully understand the law or the implications of their teachings. Ultimately, their legalistic focus was another gospel, quite different from the actual gospel. How does this idea reinforce the need to be careful about who we're listening to, who we're studying with, to make sure that our teachers are solid? Is everyone who claims to be a teacher to be given access to our hearts and minds?
- Paul wrote that the law is good so long as it is used lawfully. He's speaking of course about God's moral law. The law is really good at showing sinners their sins, but it lacks the power to redeem anyone. Redemption came through the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. What would you say to a person who insisted that Christians should focus on keeping the law in order to be righteous and pleasing to God? Are Christians required to

keep sabbaths, feast days, and other parts of Jewish ceremonial law to be right with God?

Additional Scriptures for Deeper Study:

- 1 Timothy 4:16
- Ephesians 2:8-9
- Galatians 1:7-9

Application: How can I apply this to my life this week?

- Perhaps some of us have been following legalism all of our own. Many of us grew up with “church rules” that restricted us from things like playing cards, going to a movie theater, or other cultural things like these. If you’ve been looking at your list of “do’s” and “don’ts” as your basis of righteousness, what might the Lord say to you through our Timothy study about that?
- Christians should remember to major on the majors. Let’s be careful not to get distracted from gospel centered living because of bad doctrines, fables, endless genealogies, or any of the modern tricks of Satan.