

1 Timothy 1:1-11 **Teach No Other Doctrine**

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Many of you will one day move away from here and you'll need to look for a church in your new city. Or you want to recommend that a friend or family member in a different city go to church. With so many out there to choose from, how will you know what to look for?

Most people make the choice based on something like friendliness, the style of music, whether their kids liked it, whether there were other people there like them, how easy it was to find parking, or the way people dressed and acted.

Well, of all the ways that you could judge a church, the most important, the first criteria, should be on their doctrine – what do they believe and teach? Because not all who call themselves Christians hold to the same things. The same holds true with book and authors – not all who bear the name “Christian” believe the same things, and some of the things they believe are wrong.

Paul wrote the letter we call First Timothy to help straighten out a church the city of Ephesus that was teaching the wrong things. And oddly enough, that was the purpose of most of the letters in the New Testament – Paul, or Peter, or Jude, or even Jesus in the Revelation are calling Christians to come back to the truth that they have wandered away from, or encouraging them to stand against people who are trying to lead them astray.

The Christian faith is simple, not complex. But that doesn't mean it is easy. And for that reason, we can often lose sight of the basics because we want something deeper or something more – something intellectually challenging or spiritually moving, but which generally doesn't address the core issues of our heart.

So, let's take a look at what Paul has written to Timothy and see how this was all playing out in Ephesus and what we can learn along the way.

1 Paul,

Who's that? He's a big name in the Bible, but he wasn't one of the 12 disciples. He was a very well educated Jewish man. At one point he was a Pharisee, a group that took their religion very seriously.

In fact, when he heard about these people who believed in someone called Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah he joined in the attack against them. Physically.

Paul was actually on his way to Damascus to hunt down Christians there, as he had done in Jerusalem and put them in jail or put them to death when he was stopped by the risen Jesus who asked him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”

You can find the whole story in Acts chapter 9 and following, but the bottom line is, God transformed him in an instant from being someone who persecuted Christians to an apostle – one sent with a message, like an ambassador today. Look at what he says:

an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope,

Paul would go on to lead several missionary journeys throughout the Mediterranean and would see churches planted all over. The man who once tried to quench Christianity did more than any other man in the New Testament to spread it.

Paul knew what it was like to be very religious... and very wrong. He got that. He lived that. And so for the rest of his life Paul took great concern to make sure no one else missed the point of what God was trying to communicate.

Because, as we'll see this morning, it's very possible, in fact, it's all too easy to start with the truth and slide away over time to something that not only isn't the truth but which is actually fighting against the truth.

2 *To Timothy, a true son in the faith:*

Who's that? Timothy was a man Paul met on one of his missionary journeys. In 2 Timothy, Paul talks about his mother and grandmother who were also Christians, but his dad is never mentioned in Scripture. Most people think he was out of the picture for some reason, and so when Paul came along he kind of took him under his wing. But don't get the wrong idea here, Timothy was already a grown adult when they met – it was more of a mentoring father/son kind of relationship than actually physically raising him. The two of them wound up doing a lot of work together for the Kingdom of God and Timothy remained Paul's closest friend right up until the end of his life. So he greets him -

Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

This was part of a typical greeting, a typical way to open a letter, but it's also a great reminder for us as Christians – to remember that we have received grace, mercy, and peace from God. So if you're running short on one of them, take the time to come back to God and ask Him to fill you up again.

Now we get into the reason for writing this letter:

3 *As I urged you when I went into Macedonia (this is in modern Greece) —remain in Ephesus (down in modern Turkey) that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, 4 nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which*

is in faith. 5 Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, 6 from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, 7 desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

8 But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, 9 knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, 10 for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, 11 according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

So why did Paul send this letter? It was to encourage Timothy to stay where he was and keep “fighting the good fight” by trying to put an end to the false teaching that was going on in Ephesus.

Some of the Christian leaders in town were going off into all kinds of esoteric mystical side issues. They were taking genealogies from the Old Testament and stories that they had either made up or were passing along and they were leading people astray by reading all these hidden meanings into these things. They were trying to tell the Christians, you could have a deeper spiritual experience if you would just do this, or pray like this, or listen to this.

So Paul tells Timothy, “Look, you’ve got to put a stop to these guys. They’re taking stuff, some of which is true, and they’re adding falsehood to it or they’re twisting it in ways it shouldn’t be turned and they’re leading people astray and they’re falling away themselves.” So Paul says, “charge them that they teach no other doctrine.”

What can we learn from all of this? Two things.

1. There *is* an orthodox body of doctrine. Doctrines are lines in the sand of what Christians should believe. They mark the boundaries and give definition to Christian terms. Doctrine answers questions like – what is God like? Who was Jesus? What happens when I die? What is the Bible? And on and on. If you are on one side of Christian doctrine you are safe, if you are on the other, you’re not and it doesn’t matter how you “feel” about it.

This means Christianity is exclusive. This means, according to the Bible, that not all roads lead to God. This means not everyone gets saved in the end.

If doctrine wasn’t really a big deal, if you could really just figure out your own path as long as you’re sincere, if we’re all on the same spiritual journey but just taking different roads, then why does Paul say there are things that Christians should be taught and *things that they should not*?

Was Paul missing something? Was he being too narrow-minded? Maybe he should have taken some more religious studies classes in college or maybe he missed the mandatory training on pluralism....

No. Paul knew from his own experience and from what he was watching unfold in Ephesus, that you can't just believe whatever you want so long as you believe it fervently. Beliefs have consequences. Right doctrine leads to right actions and wrong doctrine leads to wrong actions.

At one point in his life Paul had been extremely zealous about what he believed. So zealous that he was willing to hurt people because he thought it showed how serious he was about God. And now he sees that some of these guys in Ephesus are wandering away from the truth and what's the result? They're causing disputes, they're drifting off into idle talk, and they're sliding away from the greatest command, the one we just spent six weeks studying, the command to love. So Paul is encouraging Timothy to set them straight, to get them back on course.

So, there is this body of orthodox doctrine, some things are on the list, other things aren't, and what you believe about them has an effect on what you do and how you live. As we go through the book of 1st Timothy we'll be talking about this even more.

The next observation we want to make is,

2. Some people wander away from the body of orthodox doctrine. That's sobering, because Paul isn't talking about pagans in Ephesus or members of the cult of Artemis or Diana. They had plenty of problems with those guys, but this time *Paul is talking about people who were in the church!* And more than just being in the church, *they were teachers.* Paul says in verse 6 that they have swayed or swerved from where they started, which was with the truth.

Unfortunately, this is all too common of a problem; it is far too easy to stray from the truth.

Paul wrote to the church in Galatia:

Gal 1:6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, [7](#) which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

And then he went on to ask:

Gal 3:1 [1](#) O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?

He wrote a warning to the Colossians in Chapter two: "(4)lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words." And then went on to write "[8](#) Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. [9](#) For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; [10](#) and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power."

You don't need any other "deep spiritual truths," myths or fanciful stories concocted from genealogies, you are complete in Christ.

Paul was afraid for the church in Corinth so he wrote them in 2 Corinthians 11: “³ But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. ⁴ For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or *if* you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!”

In each of these cases and in several others, Paul is writing to Christians, or at the very least people in the local church, and he is warning them – don’t get sucked in to any false doctrine – all you need is Christ.

And, as he said to the Corinthians, “the simplicity that is in Christ.”

But the message of those who drift, and the message of those who want to pull you away from the simplicity of Jesus and the Bible is, “there’s something more. There’s something more you haven’t discovered or your church isn’t teaching you. So let me help.”

Think about how dangerous this is. We recently finished up the book of Genesis. Think with me back to the first chapters – how did Satan tempt Adam and Eve?

He told them that if they would eat of the fruit from the tree they would get something more than what they had. But remember– they already had everything – God gave them access to and stewardship over everything. **And** they had direct access to Him. But Satan promised there was something more and they took the bait.

This is how cults get started – they aren’t concerned with what you have, they want to offer you something more.

I’ll show you how this works. When I lived down in Lynchburg I had these Jehovah’s witnesses come to my door because I would talk to them – they NEVER once asked me if I knew Jesus. Never asked me if I was saved. They weren’t concerned with my soul, they just wanted me on their team. So they would give me their magazines and invite me to come to the Kingdom Hall with them because you have to go to their “church” to get the truth.

Here’s the difference – I tell people you can go anywhere you want, so long as they love Jesus and the Bible above everything else, so long as they don’t have an agenda bigger than that - you can go to a Presbyterian church, a Baptist church, a community church, whatever, so long as they love Jesus and believe the Bible, you’ll be alright and if you’re not, God will move you along to a different church if you keep seeking Him.

I love our church, I love Calvary Chapel, but we’re not the only show in town. We are part of the greater body of Christ and what is most important is that you get plugged in to a Bible believing, Jesus loving church and that one that keeps Jesus and the Bible at the center of all they do, not just as a decoration over on the side while they pursue their real goal of political change or environmental change or humanitarian causes, or whatever.

So sometimes, like with the cults, people get sucked in because they're offering something different. But there's another reason why we can drift, and it's far more common than someone knocking on your door offering to lead you astray – it's when we lose sight of or appreciation for what we already have.

- You get distracted, something bright and shiny or dark and dismal comes along and vies for your attention and sometimes we take the bait.
- You've been waiting and waiting for a breakthrough in your situation or for God to give you some direction, and since it hasn't happened yet, you go looking for something deeper you can do to get the answer you need.

Here's the problem – in some ways Christianity is just too simple. Remember Jesus said we were to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and love our neighbor as our self. That's not hard to understand. We need to be sure we get our definitions right, but it's not hard. It doesn't take you years of study to grasp.

It's simple, so simple a child can understand it. But that doesn't mean that it's easy. So we go looking for something else. Something that feels like it works. Something that has a ring of truth to it. Something that involves more than reading our Bibles and prayer. Something that we can work on, instead of it working on us.

The promise of the false doctrines and distractions that come our way is that if we work hard to understand or apply them things will work for us – we'll find what we're looking for. So we take something that is simple but difficult, like loving God and loving our neighbor, and we trade it in for something profound and complex but easy because it doesn't really force us to deal with the sin that eats our soul.

So, what are we supposed to do then, to ensure we don't drift away? And what are we supposed to do about those who do? The answer is simple, stick close to Jesus and the Bible - the problems only come when you start to wander.

If you have Jesus, if He has you, and if you have the gift of God's Word – what do you lack? If you feel the desire to go searching for more, stop yourself first and reassess the value of what you already have.

That's an especially important thing for us to consider on a day like today – the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. Are the things you believe worth dying for? Are they worth going to jail for? Are they worth getting beaten for? There are things that I would answer yes, and things I would answer no. The issue is: how do you know what goes in what categories? What is good doctrine and what is not?

We'll explore that question more as we go through 1 Timothy, but let me offer you something worth considering this week; it's called the Apostle's Creed. Since some of the earliest days of the Church it has been accepted as the core of what Christians believe. Some want to add a little

more, some want to emphasize or clarify a particular point, but it's been accepted as a cornerstone of the orthodox Christian faith for centuries.

Here's what it says:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
and born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended into hell.
On the third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen

It's a good place to start – check it out with your Bible and see if it lines up.

Father give us discernment, help us to know the truth, open our eyes and help us to see how wretched we really are but how deeply we are really loved.

Help us to stand for the truth, to teach and to accept no other doctrine, and may our lives be a living illustration of your love, grace, mercy, and peace.