

Truth Matters in God's House

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[0 : 0 0] Well, it would be great if you could open your Bibles to 1 Timothy, although the verses will be on the screen for those online as well. It starts off by saying no hitting or pushing, no kicking, no shouting.

And the list went on to include number 11, we don't light people on fire, not even pretend. What kind of kids do they have? I'm a little concerned. Or number 12, no fighting before mum has coffee.

So does that mean after coffee? Coffee is okay? I don't know. It seems to be, except the last one says no karate. And you can tell it's been added because it's a slightly different colour.

And I suspect some boys had just watched Karate Kid and started to practice on each other. But I wonder if you have any house rules for your house. Today we begin a new series, as I said, in 1 Timothy, which is about house rules for God's house, God's household.

And we see this in the purpose statement for the letter. Chapter 3, verse 14 and 15 is Paul's purpose in writing. And we know that because he says, I'm writing these instructions so that.

[1 : 3 1] That's the purpose. If I'm delayed in visiting, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household. Now those people will know the house rules for God's household, how to conduct themselves.

And he's writing this not just because he likes house rules, but because of who this house belongs to. Notice what he says after the yellow, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

You see, this gathering here this morning may not look very important to the world, but it is God's gathering.

And so it makes it very important to him. It is the church of the living God. And so I wonder by way of application already, if we remember that, if we see that, if we consider that this gathering here this morning is actually going to be the most important gathering of our whole week.

Because it is the church of the living God. But it's also important because as God's church, we're to hold up God's truth to be a pillar and foundation.

[2 : 4 8] I mean, that's what pillars do, don't they? They hold up buildings. And so the church is to be a pillar that holds up God's truth, he says. Like foundations support the whole building, we're to support, hold up God's truth.

Which brings us to the house rule for today. In God's house, then truth must matter. So much so that Timothy is almost immediately commanded to teach those who are teaching what's false to stop, which is point one and verse one.

This will be our longest point. So it begins, This is Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God, our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, our hope. To Timothy, my true son in the faith, grace, mercy and peace from God the Father in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus at that church so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer.

Or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. Such things promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God's work, which is by faith. And now notice for a moment back in verse one, Paul is an apostle by the command of God.

[4 : 13] He doesn't use that language anywhere else in his letters as far as I could find. Not right at the start anyway. And I wonder if he deliberately says this to try and make Timothy's job easier.

You see, this letter will be read out to the whole church. Even though it's addressed to Timothy, it will be read out to the whole church. We know that because the NLN ends with grace be with you all. So it's going to be read out to all.

And so they will know when Timothy commands those to stop teaching false doctrine, he's simply doing what Paul said. And Paul is doing simply what God said.

Because he is God's apostle by God's command, carrying God's authority. And so Timothy can actually say what he's doing is ultimately from God.

And again, as a little side application, I wonder if this is worth us remembering too. Because I still hear people say things like, oh, I like Jesus's word, but I don't really like Paul's word. He's a bit of a chauvinist sometimes.

[5 : 15] But he's God's apostle by God's command. And so carries God's authority. And he's not actually a chauvinist when you look deeply. And so we need to listen. Oh, sure, he's writing to a particular context.

And we need to work out if it applies to our context. But we can't simply ignore his instructions. And his first instruction, verse 3, is to Timothy to command people to stop teaching false doctrine.

Which means then some in the church were, right? And it included, verse 4, myths and endless genealogies, which were based, some of which were at least based on the Old Testament law.

The Old Testament law refers to particularly the first five books of the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, called the Torah. And so perhaps they look at the first book of the Bible, Genesis, and they look at a genealogy from Enoch.

Here's Enoch's genealogy, who he was the father of and so on and so on. And they'd say, look, at Enoch, he walked faithfully with God. And then he was no more. He didn't even suffer death.

[6 : 24] God just took him away. And so perhaps they then say, look, if you want to be certain you'll go to heaven, then you need to be in Enoch's family, part of his genealogy. And if you're not already, then, well, change your name to Enoch.

Any Enochs here? I don't know. We've got some at 5 p.m. And then you'll be safe. You'll be guaranteed of going to heaven. Or later on in 1 Timothy chapter 4, they would forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, just like the food laws in Leviticus, the third book of the Bible, part of the Torah.

Perhaps they'd say you'll be closer to God if you do these things and, you know, certain you'll be saved on the last day and so on. But the problem with this false doctrine is it doesn't save because it's not about faith in Jesus.

They said it's by obeying food laws or following myths or being in certain families, which is all speculation anyway, rather than, end of verse 4, advancing God's work, which is by what?

Faith. Thank you, Ro. Got one person with me. By faith, right? Literally, that phrase, advancing God's work, really refers to administering God's plan of salvation, which is by faith.

[7 : 45] In other words, it's talking about the gospel. And we know this because Paul says this later on in chapter 10 and 11. He talks about the sound doctrine that conforms to the, everyone, gospel.

Yeah. You see, the truth they're supposed to teach in God's house is faith in Jesus. Faith that follows Jesus as king. Yes.

Faith that is lived out for Jesus. Yes. But it's still faith in Jesus nonetheless. Yet these false teachers taught false doctrine saying that it's by obeying food laws or following myths or being in families, all of which is not by faith in Jesus.

In fact, it's got nothing to do with Jesus. And so it cannot save. In fact, it will end up sending people to hell instead. I mean, you command kids who are about to cross a busy road without looking to stop, to lovingly save them, don't you?

Well, Timothy is to command these false teachers to stop, to lovingly save all. There's a lot at stake here.

[8 : 58] You see, truth matters in God's house because only sound doctrine saves. It's why in verse one, Paul called God our savior and Jesus our hope, which is unique to this letter.

Because he wants to see people saved from hell for heaven, right? In fact, future salvation and eternal life are never far from the surface of this letter. And so here's another little side application for us.

It will come up again later, but in other weeks. But we here at Hay Shady need to keep sticking to God's truth of the gospel, even if other churches don't.

We need to keep speaking God's truth in the gospel. And for those of us who teach, whether in Bible study groups or ESL or during the week or here on Sundays, me included, we need to keep teaching the sound doctrine that conforms to the gospel.

Because that is the doctrine that saves. Pointing people to faith in Jesus or helping people live out their faith in Jesus. Only sound doctrine saves. But only sound doctrine loves verse five.

[10 : 10] He says the goal of this command to tell them to stop and have sound doctrine instead is love, which comes from pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

See, Paul's goal in getting rid of the false doctrine, promoting sound doctrine is love, he says. Paul wants to see love, but he knows doctrine drives behavior.

And by drive, I don't just mean teaches us, but also enables us. Because did you notice in verse five where this love comes from?

It comes from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith. But how do we get these? Well, God gives them to us.

As we heard in our first reading, God replaces our heart of stone and gives us a heart of flesh, gives us his spirit to move us. You see, we are actually natural born sinners.

[11 : 08] Whose hearts are impure, whose consciences are corrupt, whose faith is insincere. But as we hear the sound doctrine of the gospel, God's spirit works in us and gives us a sincere faith, purifies our hearts, cleanses our conscience, which not only saves us, but enables us to live a life of love and godliness.

That's a bit like this flow chart on the screen. Sound doctrine of the gospel leads to those things that he's talked about, which then lead to sound behavior like love.

Sound doctrine drives sound behavior like love. You see, why do we as Christians seek to love those who are different to us or seek to forgive those who have offended us when other people will just cut them off or write them off?

Isn't it because we've heard the gospel and God's spirit has purified our hearts, worked in our conscience, given us a genuine faith that seeks to love and forgive like him? Of course, our sinful nature is still with us and working against us.

And so sometimes we're not that loving, are we? Or not that forgiving. And so we need to keep hearing the sound doctrine, whether that's listening to it or reading it or reflecting on it during the week or hearing it taught here on Sunday so that we can keep being enabled by God's spirit to keep living a life of love.

[12 : 41] And so if you're finding it hard to love or forgive, then listen again to the sound doctrine in the gospel. Like how much God forgave you in Christ, that you might be moved to forgive others.

Like how much God loves us in Christ, that you might be moved to love others, even when they're hard to love. Listen to that sound doctrine so God's spirit might work through it.

Purify your heart afresh. Move your conscience again. And so enable you to love like him. Will we keep listening to sound doctrine, keeping making time to hear it, even if we know it?

Well, Paul said in verse 7 that those who want to be teachers of the law don't know what they're talking about, for they try to use the law to save, like the food laws.

But as Paul goes on the show, the law cannot save, only grace and faith in Jesus can. So point to verse 8 to 11. He goes, We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.

[13 : 48] We also know that the law is made not for the righteous, but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for the murderers, for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers, and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

Notice in verse 8 that the law is still good and there is a proper use for it, like showing us God's character or giving us ideas about loving our neighbor.

So it's still worth reading the first five books of the Bible. But an improper use is to use it to try and earn your way to heaven with it. I like the false teachers who said you have to follow this law about not eating bacon or whatever.

But verse 9, the law is not made for those who have been made righteous by faith. It might give us ideas about how to live out our faith in Jesus, but it's not for us to get us to heaven.

Rather, it was made for sinners, in part to limit sin, but in the end to simply show we need a saviour. It's kind of like that law, you know, that law, wet paint don't touch.

[15 : 11] As soon as you see that law, what do you want to do? Touch the paint. Yeah, like this kid who says, no sign can stop me, and so he's touching the wet paint. You see, laws like this simply show us our sinful nature, that we want to break it and sometimes do break the law.

In other words, the law shows that we're simply sinners who need a saviour and points us to God's grace and mercy through Jesus and our need to have faith in Jesus, which is exactly what Paul goes on now to talk about.

He says, verse 12, I thank God, I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord rather, who has given me strength that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service, even though I was once a blasphemer and persecutor and a violent man.

I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason, I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display the immense patience as an example for those who would believe, have faith in him and receive eternal life.

[16 : 31] And now to the king, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. I don't know, I read it pretty quickly, but did you notice the kind of repetition of grace and mercy, faith, belief, Jesus?

There wasn't a whole lot of law there, was there? And in verse 16, Paul says, here's an example for all who would believe, have faith in Jesus and receive eternal life, sharing the glory of our blessed God.

Here is the sound doctrine from God, our Savior, and Jesus, our hope. And it's received by faith, not achieved by law or myths or genealogies or indulgences or prayers to Mary.

Yesterday, thousands gathered, it's a bit hard to see, it's a bit of a darker shot, here's a clearer one, I guess, thousands gathered at St Peter's Basilica in Vatican City for the Pope's funeral.

But before he died, this is what I got from someone who works over there, he asked to be buried at St Mary's Church, which is where he's going to be buried, and for people to pray to Mary for him so that he will make it to heaven.

[17 : 52] Because for Pope Francis and the official teaching of Rome, it may not be every Roman Catholic who believes this, but the official teaching of Rome is that grace is necessary but not all.

sufficient. Faith is necessary but not sufficient. And so you have to do good works or have indulgences or do penance or that sort of thing to try and earn your way to heaven as well, which left the Pope without any certainty, which is why he asked people to pray to Mary for him that Mary might put in a good word about him.

And it's quite sad, isn't it? I mean, this guy who's done so much good, like he's tried to get the Catholic Church doing safe ministry, for example, which is a good thing, didn't have any assurance because of this false doctrine.

It's genuinely sad. But the sound doctrine of the gospel in the Bible is that because of God's grace and mercy, he gave his son, Christ Jesus, who came into the world to save us so that we, like poor who believe, will receive eternal life, guaranteed.

It doesn't depend on what we do but what Jesus has already done. We can be certain, which is liberating, isn't it? We don't have to worry like the Pope did that we'll make it to heaven.

[19 : 21] We can be certain we will. Jesus has done everything needed to get us there. We're to keep just living by faith in him, which God's grace will help us and enable us to do.

So no wonder Paul ends his testimony in verse 17 by praising the King Eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God. And so by way of another application then, if we know the same liberating and reassuring gospel as Paul, will we continue to respond like Paul and keep praising our God for his grace in Christ?

And will we fight well for the truth like Timothy at point three verse 18 to 20. He says, Timothy, my son, I'm giving you this command. about stopping false teaching in keeping with the prophecies once made about you so that by recalling them you may fight the battle well, holding on to the faith and a good conscience which some have shipwrecked, rejected and so suffered shipwreck with regard to their faith.

Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme. Here again is the word command. God commanded Paul who is commanding Timothy to command false teachers.

That's the logic. But it won't be easy. I mean, no one likes being told they're wrong, do they? Do you? No one does. And if we say people are wrong today, we'll get shouted down even if we're right.

[20 : 55] And it seems it wasn't much easier in Timothy's day because Paul calls this a fight. But Timothy is to fight the battle well, literally wage the good fight.

How? Well, firstly, verse 18, by recalling his calling, if you like. That the others said he can do this. Later on in chapter 4, Paul also says, do not neglect your gift of preaching and teaching, in the verse before, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

And so this is kind of like Ricky's ordination, right? You know, they recognize Timothy is set apart for ministry, they laid their hands on him and set him apart for that work. Timothy is to recall this, that he might be encouraged to keep being a preacher and carry out this command.

But secondly, he's also to carry out this command, fight the battle well, verse 19, by holding faith and a good conscience. That is, don't compromise your faith by giving in to false teaching, which we ourselves can feel the pressure to do.

For example, no one likes talking about hell, do they? Hands up if you like talking about hell. We don't like it, do we? And so we can feel the pressure to remove it from the message altogether.

[22 : 17] I mean, there's a time and a place to speak about it, don't get me wrong, but it's part of the gospel and we can't remove it altogether, can we? That we feel the pressure to do so.

Or there are some truths in the Bible we personally find difficult, so we can be tempted to reject those. But Paul's saying, hold the line, hold the faith, the truth.

But as you do, hold a good conscience as well. Don't compromise fighting with bad behavior either. Sometimes in an effort to defend the truth, people can speak in unloving or aggressive ways, can't they?

But Timothy is not to do this. He's to speak with patience and gentleness and respect. He's to fight well by holding both faith and a good conscience. And thirdly, by remembering what's at stake.

The false doctrine can shipwreck people's faith and the faith. The Christian faith can be brought into disrepute like Hymenaeus and Alexander have done.

[23 : 21] Now, of course, we're not all like Timothy, who've been ordained, so to speak. But we're still all to fight well for the truth as we can, to defend the truth where we can, without compromising our faith or a good conscience.

And we can do that inside the church and outside. For example, inside the church, we can check what we're being taught, whether at Bible study or here on Sunday, against what God says, which means we'd have our Bibles open either in front of us or on the screen at checking and making sure that it makes sense.

And it means, well, sometimes it can be a fight because it takes a lot of effort, especially when the preacher drones on and on and on, right? It takes effort to listen and to concentrate and to check.

And that's one way we can fight well. And if, you know, there's something that you think I've got wrong, then please come and talk to me about it. God's word is way more important than my word. And outside the church, we can fight well for the truth by living it out each day.

Holding up the truth with our lives all the time and by our conversations with others from time to time as the opportunity arises. For example, last week, we had both Anzac Day and the Pope's funeral, two major events which people talk about.

[24 : 42] And so if people talk about the Pope, you can defend the truth by saying, yep, he did some great things like promoted child safe ministry in the Catholic Church. but his teaching is a bit different to the Bible's teaching.

And the Bible talks about Jesus who gives us much more assurance than the Pope had. That's one way we can defend the truth with gentleness and respect. Or with Anzac Day which seems to be getting bigger and bigger, the dawn service I was at on Friday down the road was the biggest I've ever seen it.

People were spilling out onto Doncaster Road and Leeds Street. And so it's, you know, becoming bigger in Australian life. And so we can say, yeah, it's right to remember those who sacrifice their lives to give us freedom in our country.

But then we can fight well for the truth by adding, yeah, but I think Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice because he gave his life to free us from judgment and give us life eternal, which is pretty good.

I don't know what house rules you have, but the one from 1 Timothy today is truth matters in God's house. And so how much does it matter to you?

[25 : 53] If it really matters to us, then we'll keep listening to it, keep praising God because of it and even fight well for it. That together as his church, we might be a pillar that holds up God's truth to our world.

Let's pray we would do that. Let's pray. Our gracious Father, we do thank you for your word and we thank you that it is your truth.

And so help us, we pray, to hold up that truth in our lives and together as your church by listening to it even if we know it, by praising you because of it and even taking opportunities to fight well for it.

Help us to do this, we pray, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen.