

<sup>5</sup>The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. <sup>6</sup>Some have departed from these and have turned to meaningless talk. <sup>7</sup>They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.

<sup>8</sup>We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. <sup>9</sup>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 murderers, <sup>10</sup>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 <sup>11</sup>that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

<sup>12</sup>I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service. <sup>13</sup>Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. <sup>14</sup>The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

<sup>15</sup>Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. <sup>16</sup>But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life. <sup>17</sup>Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

### **The True Doctrine**

The True Doctrine? Really? That's what you're going to go with? Sadly, we often treat doctrine like a four letter word... It's a big and heavy. It's what pastors do when they get together and discuss theology. Some would even claim, "Insistence on true doctrine only divides the church. It causes disagreements and division. Let's not get caught up in doctrine and make a mess of things. Let's not muddy the waters with doctrine. We have more to be concerned about." Or do we?

Paul sees doctrine differently. The word simply means teaching. To young timothy he writes, "*Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching for in doing so you will save both yourself and your hearers*" (1 Timothy 4:16). Since Doctrine a gift of God in which he gives us Jesus. Doctrine is life. In the same way that clean and healthy food builds up the body, clean and healthy doctrine build up the church and keep it strong against infection, false teaching. This is what Timothy is charged with.

Far more than divide, it unites Christians while exposing those who follow false doctrine. True doctrine unapologetically confesses the truth in love. Which is why Paul writes to Timothy encouraging him in Ephesus as he squares off with those who teach falsely (v. 3). That false teaching is not only divisive but it is deadly. It bears no fruit, it does not conform to the gospel. It boasts in the individual. That is what Timothy was up against. Here he stands on the True Doctrine.

But Paul has moved on to Macedonia and it seems he is delayed in his return. Paul writes this letter to inform Timothy of the deal as well as to encourage him in his work. He's the young pastor who Paul has to remind, "*Don't let anyone look down on you because of your youth*" (1 Timothy 4:12). Ephesus was a major city in the area. Paul spent three years there. He set up and established leaders of the congregation. Timothy is left, "*So that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine.*"

Some had taken it upon themselves to teach in the church. The Church struggled against false teachers. They sold their own man-centered teachings, promoting the welfare of the teacher to the detriment of the believers. They may have looked good, promoted moralism, and even sounded godly but they were unhealthy to the saving faith and salvation. They draw people away from the truth and Divide the congregation. The way this was done was by focusing on themselves as godly people, having life together. They're wealthy, affluent, and eloquent. But instead of the truth they bring a lie. And Paul exposes them for who they are.

Paul recognizes the same sinful state. Formerly, he wanted to be the best. "*He was advancing beyond all of his peers and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.*" (Galatians 1:14). Paul put his false doctrine to practice and he

hunted down Christians. He went out of his way. He was not called to do so. He volunteered for it. He was zealous but his zeal was misplaced. He describes *himself as blasphemer, a persecutor, and an arrogant man, the worst of sinners*. The first confession was one of a blasphemer, that's an offense punishable by death. A blasphemer gets his doctrine wrong and he perverts the truth misrepresenting God. And then Paul became a persecutor. This word carries the idea of a slave driver standing in a rock quarry, heaping up law upon law that people are unable to bear. "You want confidence... do this!" but there was no gospel message. There was no hope of salvation for those who didn't strive and struggle. And finally Paul was an "arrogant man." This word is where we get our Hubris, pride is at its essence but pride that doesn't stop with being right but also violent and insolent. But Paul admits... I was acting in ignorance, not to excuse his sin but to connect himself to those who are teaching falsely. Paul understands the mentality and misplaced zeal that can fill those who think they are serving God by upholding traditions with a murderous passion. He is putting himself in their shoes and warning Timothy, "Don't go there." Carefully keep hold of the true doctrine

Is Paul being too rigid and narrow minded? Well let's take a look at some of the major divisions of the Early Christian church. Peter and James stood up at the Jerusalem council and demanded that nothing be added to the gospel such as the Old Testament laws like circumcision and obedience to the Sabbath. Peter refused to compromise the precious and pure Gospel without works of the law. It is loving to demand pure doctrine. It is loving to insist upon pure doctrine. It unites the church together. It's the only thing that builds the church. But it also exposes those who teach false doctrine.

They don't want their deeds brought to light. While society is so certain that we can't know the truth a Christian confesses the faith before all. But sometimes we aren't certain. Sometimes we'll get quite apologetic when it comes to speaking what the bible clearly says. "The Bible says, but we're more accepting now." We become blasphemers, misrepresenting God. Sometimes we'll even try to explain away clear commands in scripture rather than let them stand. 1 Timothy 2 is very clear and yes, we'll get to it.

But so many would rather, for the sake of numbers, for the sake of not offending, not confess the faith. They'll set themselves up as *learned teachers of the law but they don't understand what they are saying or insist upon*. They are not called by the church. They do not act in love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. They are simply blasphemers, persecutors, and arrogant men. They don't build up those entrusted to their care. They tear down, despise, and even insult those God has entrusted to them. Does that sound like anyone you know? Because that is all of us. We reject the authority God has established. 4<sup>th</sup> commandment applies not only to parents but all authority. We reject his Word entrusted to us. His word exposes us for who we are: sinners. We act not only in ignorance but sheer stupidity.

Even if we have not fallen into blatant, easy-to-recognize shame and vice, even if we have lived a fairly respectable life, we still must confess, "I a poor miserable sinner." For God judges not only our outward actions, but also our inner hearts and our secret sins in thought, word, and deed. There is no escaping the label of sinner and to continue as if you were God's gift to humanity or the church only leads to a shipwrecked faith.

How could Paul possibly have any hope? How could we?

The true Christian faith points not to Paul but to Jesus. Paul's confession is that he was a blasphemer, persecutor, and an arrogant man, ignorant and unbelieving. But God sought him in mercy. God first came to Paul while he was still breathing murderous threats. The grace of God pointed the Paul to a pastor who proclaimed doctrine to him. There in that word the *grace of our Lord overflowed, along with the faith and love that are in Jesus Christ*. Paul was united to the church, the body of Christ.

Paul then lays down the first of 5 doctrines that you can bank on. *This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – and I am the worst of them.*" Notice Paul says, "I am," present

tense, not, “I was.” Formerly he was a blasphemer, persecutor, and arrogant man but now the doctrine portion confesses that he is still the worst of sinners. Paul has become more aware of the totality of his sinfulness. Paul recognizes that even now the sinful nature still clings to him. He struggles against the flesh and still fails. And Christ came to save sinners and Paul confesses, “I am a poor miserable sinner.”

So why should we listen to you, Paul? In contrast to the self-proclaimed teachers who say, “We’re the best. Eloquent, good looking,” there is Paul the worst. Paul boasts in his weakness. He doesn’t make himself great but he makes God great. He magnifies the grace and mercy of God and he bears fruit that conforms to the gospel. Mercy in that he does not get what he deserves and Grace in that God does what Paul cannot do. He cannot be holy and right before him but that’s what God gives. Paul points the other direction of these self-proclaimed teachers. “*So that in me the worst of them, Christ Jesus might demonstrate his extraordinary patience as an example to those who would believe in him for eternal life.*” Paul is a living message that no one is beyond the power of God’s mercy.

All other religions think you can get to God, get in touch with God, or become God; only the Gospel of Jesus Christ gives you God in his Son, who made himself nothing to meet sinners, who have made themselves nothing. He meets us not to condemn nor to tell us what we need to do but to save. He meets us in his Word and Sacrament to save.

He comes for that long list just as he did for Paul, “*the lawless and rebellious, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreverent, those who kill their fathers and mothers (To kill the authority God has placed over you was especially heinous), for murders, for the sexually immoral and homosexuals, for slave traders, liars, perjurers, and for whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine.*” He shows up to the worst of sinners and unites them to his church. And certainly God’s law needs to be applied to unrepentant sinners like these, who are proud of their sins. They need to recognize their sin condemns. The law needs to crush their pride and drive them to despair of their own goodness. They need to realize they have no righteousness of their own, but must turn to God for mercy and the righteousness that only Christ can provide.

He has provided. Jesus came in full knowledge and belief. He revered the name of the Lord and proclaimed it to all who would listen. He did not persecute but he was persecuted. In humility he considered others better than himself and he received no mercy. On the cross he was crushed and caused to suffer so that you and I might go free. On the cross our sins were paid in full even for the worst of sinners. And Paul reminds us that he is not dead but alive. He is the “*King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God.*” Immortal – never to die again. Invisible – we cannot see him face to face, yet, we see him with eyes of faith. The only God, there are no others, none that can save.

That’s why doctrine matters. A different doctrine is a different teaching about Jesus. Either they are biblical or man-made. Either they are true or false. Jesus commissioned his disciples with, “*As you are going, make disciples how? baptizing and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*” He didn’t say divide his teachings between what you think is Primary and secondary. Doctrine is life. It is the life that God has entrusted us with. Use it to unite the church, to grow the church, to be the church. It not only brings us together and builds us up it is also how we confess the faith to future generations.

Let’s hold firmly to these truths, “Christ died to save sinners and we are the worst of them.” If there is hope for Paul, if there is hope for me, then there is certain hope for you in Christ. Amen.