



It May Be
The Only Hope We Have

By

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I often take a step back and look at what I believe, what I'm teaching, where I'm going in my study of God's Word. I don't want to get down the road spiritually and discover that somewhere I got way off the path that Jesus laid out so clearly for me to follow. It can happen to any of us. That's why pastors and teachers MUST watch their lives and teaching carefully.

What we teach as Christian pastors, evangelists and teachers is not up to us to decide. God does not give us a lot of choices and say "choose the ones you'd like to teach." Nothing I teach should be based on "in my opinion." Everybody has an opinion, so why is mine any better than yours? What I need to do is study-study-study and make sure to get it right. Then, I need to teach-teach-teach and show Christians and non-believers that what I'm telling them is what God says – not what I say. God gives us His Blueprint for the building of His Church and says "teach it!"

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is something we should be proud to explain to others. We have no reason to apologize for teaching the truth. We shouldn't feel ashamed because other ministers in our town don't agree with us. Paul told Timothy: "I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day." (2 Timothy 1:12) We shouldn't be timid because of what others may think of us or plan to do to us. We have the Truth! Paul told Timothy: "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord." (2 Timothy 1:7-8)

What should we emphasize in our teaching? We learn much from Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus. Paul mentored each and sent them out to the churches to encourage and instruct God's Children of Grace. Notice how often Paul uses the words "command," "warn" and "remind" in his letters to Timothy and Titus. God wants us to be loving and gentle in the way we teach His children, but He also wants us to be strong, precise and decisive in what we declare. We are not "asking" Christians to obey God's Word. We are "telling" them what God commands. We have no special power in ourselves, but when we preach God's Word we have the "Power" of God behind us! Our preaching and teaching should be in the "Power and Strength" of God. He gave us the responsibility and authority to declare His Word. We do it humbly, but we must do it.

Paul told Timothy in his first letter to stay in Ephesus "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." (1 Timothy 1:3-4) Paul told Timothy that the goal of that command was "love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." (1 Timothy 1:5) Paul told Timothy to "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." (1 Timothy 6:12) He explained the truths of spiritual living and told Timothy "you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed." (1 Timothy 4:6) Paul

emphasized that pastors, evangelists and teachers should “Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales; rather, train yourself to be godly.” (1 Timothy 4:7) He told Timothy “These things command and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” (1 Timothy 4:11-12) Paul told Timothy to “Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.” (1 Timothy 4:13) Paul told Timothy “Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” (1 Timothy 4:15-16) Paul went into great detail about how ministers should treat older men, younger men, older women, younger women, widows, fellow elders, slaves and masters. Then he wrote, “Teach and exhort these things.” (1 Timothy 6:2)

Paul also had strong words for those who taught contrary to what he had preached: “If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.” (1 Timothy 6:3-5) Paul told Timothy to flee from the love of money and “pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.” (1 Timothy 6:11) The Apostle told the young pastor to:

“Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.” 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Paul was very close to his last day on earth when he wrote a second letter to Timothy. When a mentor is close to his last breath, what he says and writes to his student is of utmost importance. Paul was writing from decades of experience as an Apostle of Jesus Christ when he wrote these words – “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 1:13) We learn how and what to teach and preach from the Apostle Paul. He is our example, our pattern, of sound teaching. Paul told Timothy to “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:1-2)

Paul’s pattern of teaching includes mentoring other ministers so that they qualify to teach others. Paul told Timothy to “endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” (2 Timothy 2:3) Paul listed several Truths of the Gospel and told Timothy to “Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.” (2 Timothy 2:14) A minister’s job is

never done. We must return to the same Truths of God's Word regularly. We must "remind" our brothers and sisters about the Truth. We must even charge (warn) them about certain practices that are against God's Will. Anything God says we shouldn't do is something to list as against God's Will. Striving about words that don't profit anyone is to the "ruin" of the hearers. We must not waste our time discussing and debating about things that have no eternal value. Paul explained this further when he wrote, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15) We need to handle the Word of God like skilled surgeons, rightly dividing (cutting straight) the Word of Truth. That's how we are diligent to present ourselves approved of God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed.

The fact is that much of what is called Christian teaching today is not approved to God and those who teach it should be, and will be, ashamed of themselves for wasting their gifts on profane and idle babblings. The result of that kind of teaching is an "increase to more ungodliness." (2 Timothy 2:16) How bad could that be? Look at what follows in Paul's letter.

"And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold

and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.” 2 Timothy 2:17-21

That is sobering – “And their message will spread like cancer.” I’m sorry to say that much of the so-called “Christian” teaching in our country is a message that spreads like cancer. That awful teaching that has gone out under the Name of Jesus Christ has overthrown the faith of many. Many of those who claim to be Christian ministers and teachers are vessels of wood and clay whose ministries are determined for dishonor. As Paul wrote, “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

Knowing God’s Will includes what we should and shouldn’t do. Paul told Timothy to “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” (2 Timothy 2:22) He told Timothy “But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.” (2 Timothy 2:23-26)

Paul reminded Timothy about his teaching, personal suffering and the kind of life he had lived as an Apostle. He told Timothy “But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of,

knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 3:14-15)

Paul reminded Timothy how precious God’s Word is and what it will do for the man of God: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Paul knew that Timothy and other Christian ministers in the years to follow would face difficult times when people would not put up with sound doctrine. Paul knew those people, to suit their own desires, would gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears wanted to hear. So, he told Timothy this:

“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” 2 Timothy 4:1-5

Paul also wrote an important letter to another one of his students – a young pastor named Titus. Paul had left Titus in Crete so he might “set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you.” (Titus 1:5) As in his letters to Timothy, Paul was very specific with Titus about what kind of Christians he should appoint as elders in local churches. Paul wrote that an elder must be “blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.” (Titus 1:7-9)

Opposition is a big part of what Christian ministers have faced since the first century. We are often opposed by other teachers who claim to know God’s Word. How did Paul tell Titus to handle the opposition? “... whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.” That’s pretty strong talk! “whose mouths must be stopped.” It shows how serious God is about Bible teachers who aren’t really teaching the Bible. They are teaching things they shouldn’t for the purpose of dishonest gain. It’s sad to see how much of that goes on today in the Name of Christ.

God wants His teachers to “speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine.” (Titus 2:1) As in his letters to Timothy, Paul detailed how Titus should teach older men, older women, younger women,

young men, slaves and masters to do what is right in the sight of God. And, Paul wrote, a teacher should also be an example of how to live the Christian life – “in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.” (Titus 2:7-8) Being a Bible teacher is challenging, but not complicated. The rules of engagement are simple – Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.” (Titus 2:15) Why would people “despise” a Bible teacher? Look at what a teacher is required to teach and you’ll understand why many people don’t want to listen to us.

“Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in

God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men. But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.” Titus 3:1-11

What we teach is VITAL to the life of the Church. It is because of false teaching, sloppy Bible study, and selfish, greedy leaders that the Church in America is in big trouble. So, is that it? No hope? We’re doomed?

I think we have a **great** future as Christians in America **IF** we start listening to God and doing what He says. I believe that our **ONLY** way back to spiritual vitality as the people of God is to return with vigor to the study and teaching of His Absolute Word. It’s time to get it right before we can’t get it at all.

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