

Title: Love and Truth
Date: 9/20/26
Subject: Christians are to show love as they take a stand for the truth.
Scripture: 1 Timothy 1:1 - 11

A man on a plane found a cockroach in his meal. He was outraged and complained to a stewardess. When he got home, he was still fuming. He fired off a letter to the company and thought that'd be the last he'd hear of it. He was pleasantly surprised when he received a letter from the president of the airline who profusely apologized and expressed deep regret for what happened. The man noticed something else in the envelope ...no, not a cockroach...his original letter with a note written on it: "Send the standard cockroach response."

That's the standard response? What should be the standard response to false teaching?

Please turn to the scripture that was read earlier. The opening words of 1 Timothy serve as a summary for the rest of the book. We'll hear similar things throughout as we focus on our belief in Jesus Christ and the resulting behavior. We'll be called to - fight the good fight, hold on to faith in a good conscience (1 Tim 1:18, 19)...fight the good fight of the faith, take hold of the eternal life to which you were called (6:12)...guard what has been entrusted to your care (6:20).

Timothy's grandma and mom provided a Christian heritage. Paul noticed the high quality of the young man's spiritual life and commitment to Jesus. He was well spoken of by fellow believers. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him on his missionary travels. The two bonded closely. Paul regarded Timothy as his son in the faith (1 Tim 1:2). Eventually Paul instructed Timothy to stay in Ephesus to pastor the church. The book gives instructions to Timothy, the church in Ephesus and all Christians.

Paul's greeting conveys the desire people would continue to experience what God the Father and Christ Jesus have for them, to keep growing in their faith and relationship with God. Paul goes beyond his usual greeting as he inserts a word not found in any other letter. He adds the word *mercy*. It wasn't that Paul was getting tired of writing letters (this was his 11th) so he decided he needed to come up with something new.

Mercy. It means not getting what we deserve. Christians are assured that when they place their trust in Christ they won't get the punishment they deserved as sinners. The continuation of mercy in the life of the believer is that God is present to help them.

Grace is God's unmerited favor. The desire is for God to continually give them his love and a deeper understanding of what Jesus Christ has done for them.

Peace. People had initially experienced peace with God when as they were no longer at war with him. They'd been brought into a right relationship. The desire is they continue to experience harmony and tranquility with God and others and in themselves.

Grace, mercy and peace capture the entirety of what the Lord has done and will do for his people.

I. Love is the goal, motivation and approach. V. 5

This verse is in the center of instruction on how to deal with false teaching. It's kind of surprising that this is the first thing that needed to be addressed, but it was incredibly important because of the danger posed by false teaching. Many other NT books have a similar focus

The command is to take corrective action against false and harmful teaching. The goal of the command is love. Love is to be at the core of all we do including dealing with error. Love fulfills God's law. The commands to love God and love our neighbors are referred to as the greatest laws. Loving our neighbor as ourselves is noted as the royal law (James 2:8). Love is the summation and fulfillment of all laws (Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14).

Love isn't sentimentality or only emotion. It's an act of the will. It's giving of oneself. It's sacrificial. It acts in the best interest of other people.

Without love, we can become proud, selfish, rough, harsh, seek to punish - especially in our dealings with people who need to be corrected. Instead, we need to exercise love and seek to redeem and restore.

The good news is we don't have to manufacture love or feelings toward other people. We're told what produces love. "It comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."

Pure heart. The original Greek means to be cleansed and purged of unwanted material. It's where we get the word *catharsis*. A person can go through a catharsis where their mind is awakened so the old thinking is gone. Their body can go through a catharsis with the purging of the bodily system.

When a person becomes a Christian, God cleans them of the corruption caused by their sin. They've been renewed by God and are to seek to continue to be being renewed (Rom 12:2). God calls us to strive to remain clean in our attitudes, actions and thoughts by running from sin and repenting of it when we commit sin. Paul would write in his second book to Timothy, "Flee from the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Tim 2:22).

A good conscience means one that isn't controlled by sin, isn't guilt ridden. It doesn't harbor sin. It doesn't have divided loyalties. These would lead to a bad conscience.

Sincere faith. Sincere means without pretense or deceit. It isn't hypocritical trying to appear to be devoted to God but in actuality - not so much - because is devoted to self. It's true faith and trust in God, not nominal faith as when a person labels themselves as Christian but their lives give absolutely no supporting evidence they're truly following Jesus Christ.

The bottom line is the person has a solid spiritual foundation. Their lives are shaped by a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith. They're seeking to live godly lives.

II. There is such a thing as sound doctrine. V. 10

V. 10, 11 "this sound doctrine conforms to glorious gospel of the blessed God." Sound means whole and healthy. It can be tested and investigated, poked and prodded and it remains. It promotes a stable foundation and growth.

How do we know what sound doctrine is? It conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God. It aligns with the God who has revealed himself through the Bible. It's the truth.

Link it to v. 4 - "God's work - which is by faith." Salvation only comes through faith which is trust and confidence in God's work of salvation. The main elements of sound doctrine are: There's a God who exists and is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him; the Son of God existed in heaven with God the Father and was sent to earth; he became human and lived a perfect life; he died a substitutionary sacrifice for the payment of peoples' sins which they couldn't pay in and of themselves no matter what they try; Jesus was buried; He rose from the dead; He appeared to people to give evidence he was alive; He ascended to heaven; He'll return; He'll take his followers to heaven where they'll live with him and God the Father forever, as he promised.

All teachings and claims should be measured against sound doctrine, the glorious gospel God has revealed. It is crucial to maintain sound doctrine as protection against teachings that would corrupt it.

III. What isn't sound doctrine is false

One of the things identified by Paul in his second letter to Timothy is that some go as far as denying the resurrection of Jesus (2 Tim 2:18). If that didn't take place we're up a creek without a paddle. Our goose is cooked.

The origin of much false teaching is myths (v. 4). Essentially, people make up their own message, dream up super mystical experiences, secret teachings for only the elite, speculative theories. These feed curiosity with topics like "what does the Bible really say about the connection between the angel guarding the garden of Eden, the Nephilim, George Washington, the Italian mob, the seven bowls of the Antichrist and you?" I made that up.

Dan Brown's *The DaVinci Code* asserts Jesus married Mary Magdalene, they had kids who carried his blood line making them the holy grail instead of the cup Jesus used at the Last Supper which Joseph of Arimathea used at the cross to catch the last drops of Jesus' blood, then he or his descendants took it to England where it became lost and was sought by people because it was the source of divine favor, all things good and eternal life, people like King Arthur and later Indiana Jones. The Bible says nothing about a cup with such importance. It's mythical. Jesus is the source of eternal life and all things good. Gotquestions.org: *"The DaVinci Code is in reality an attack on the Person of Jesus Christ. People do not want to believe that Jesus is God or that He is the Savior, so they make up falsehoods about Him in order to create a false Jesus that they can believe in. That is what The DaVinci Code is all about—presenting a false view of who Jesus Christ truly was and then explaining why this "truth" has been "hidden" for nearly 2000 years"* (gotquestions.org/DaVinci-code-truth).

William Young's *The Shack*, while it has some accurate pieces of doctrine (like many false teachings do to try to get Christians to start agreeing with them) - it misrepresents God the Trinity comprised of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as all three became human and the Father suffered on the cross; The Father is gender fluid changing from a woman to a man; ignores the holiness of God by saying sin isn't offensive to him; God doesn't have any expectations for people and supports the idea everybody will make it to heaven. Gotquestions.org, "All heresies begin with misconstruing the nature of God...why does the author feel the need to change the character of God in this story? In a way, he's saying that the God who reveals Himself to us in the Bible is

insufficient. The author needs to "improve" the image to make it more palatable" (gotquestions.org/The-Shack-review). Christian thinker and pastor Tim Keller said of the book, "The God of *The Shack* has none of the balance and complexity of the Biblical God. Half a God is not God at all" (timothykeller.com/blog/2010/1/27/the-shack-impressions).

V. 4. endless genealogies. The Jews were meticulous about keeping genealogical records to see if they could trace their heritage back to Abraham, to show they had a better pedigree than others. Led to arguments. False teachers took the bare bones of genealogies and created fanciful stories around them. They searched for hidden information and meaning.

V. 6 meaningless talk. They just like to hear the sound of their own voice, will say anything in the hope to attract some followers. It's idle blabbering. It doesn't have the substance of the truth of God's Word.

Some false teaching was regarding the law. During the 1st century church there were people known as Judaizers. They insisted people who placed their trust in Christ, whether Jew or gentile, would need to follow the OT law with its rituals, ceremonies, sacrifices, cleansings, dietary requirements in order to be truly saved.

IV. The problems with unsound doctrine

It strays from God's message. They don't solidly align themselves with God's word and work. It doesn't center on Jesus Christ, lead to right living that pleases God (obedience) or build up the body of believers. They are distracting from the truth of the Gospel. None of it advanced the Gospel.

V. 4 promote controversies.

V. 6 some wander away. They deviate from the truth and miss the mark. They turn away from it.

They no longer have a pure heart but have divided loyalties. The good conscience is replaced by one that tolerates sin and therefore dulled. They don't have a sincere faith but wear a mask and are hypocritical. It doesn't mean they become unsaved. They neglect the essential truths and focus on who knows what.

v. 7. They want to be teachers but don't know what they're talking about. False teachers confidently present and affirm "their truth" as authoritative. Inflated ego. Pride of position. Arrogance. A idea prevalent today is the person who shouts the loudest and is the most passionate is the one who has to be listened to because they have the truth. Often, it's just a lot of hot air that isn't even useful for blowing up a balloon.

Defectors from the faith were inside the church. It's difficult to determine if they were genuinely born again but misguided and uninformed about truth or were full blown heretics - teachers who never truly believed, wolves in sheep's clothing. In Paul's farewell to the church leaders where Timothy was now serving, he said, "I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29, 30).

Attacks from inside were probably more subtle and unexpected since all were supposedly Christians. They'd been exposed to the truth, seemingly taking it in, but wandered away.

False teachers aren't the only ones impacted. They influence other people who can become confused and drift spiritually. I refer again to Paul's second letter to Timothy. "*For the time will come when men will not put up*

with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths” (2 Tim 4:3, 4).

A Presbyterian Church in Texas has rewritten the Bible so it has more inclusive and feminist driven language. It took out references to Jesus being the Son of God. It calls him the first born or the only begotten. They want to get rid of “the stupid stuff.”

This kind of teaching and worship places people as the priority above the character and attributes of God. They view human desires, passions, needs, feelings and emotions as the most important and try to make them feel better. That was the focus of Baal worship in the nations bordering ancient Israel. They made idols in the form of bulls as Baal was viewed as the god of power, storm, rain, strength, virility, and fertility. Their worship inflamed and provided an outlet for their passions and desires.

V. What to do about those who don't teach sound doctrine

The issue would be those inside the church who aren't adhering to sound doctrine in their teaching but going off on all this other stuff. They wouldn't be external wolves who are attacking as Timothy would have little control over what they say.

Corrective action is to be taken. Those who peddle the teachings are to be warned. The word *command* is a military word. It's not a gentle request, please if you don't mind that you wouldn't keep doing this, please. False teachers are to be commanded by spiritual leaders to stop teaching what they're teaching.

Paul wrote about the deed for sound doctrine in another of the pastoral letters. He said there were many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers who must be silenced because they're ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach: “*Rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth*” (Titus 1:13-14). “*Avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; He is self-condemned*” (Titus 3:9-11).

The call is to be vigilant, not a vigilante. Exercise love with the hope that they'll respond, be sound in the faith and stop teaching what hinders other people from being sound in the faith.

From Paul's second book to Timothy: “*Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen... Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will*” (2 Tim 2:14, 23 – 26).

Even when dealing with those engaged in false teaching, the goal is love. This doesn't mean false teaching is tolerated, but is to be stopped. If the correction isn't partnered with love, it will be like trying to throw a lead balloon into the air. It doesn't get very far. We need to love the other person, be concerned for his eternal welfare. Truth and love.