



“Fake News”

by Pastor Tim Dodson
at JF Believers Church
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1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope, 2 To Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, [and] peace from God our Father

and Jesus Christ our Lord. 3 As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus 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.

Around the year 1900, an Antarctic explorer who was preparing for a venture to the South Pole ran an ad in a London newspaper that read “Men wanted for hazardous journey, small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful. Honor and recognition in case of success.”

Conventional wisdom would lead us to believe that few if any would step up to such a call, yet in fact thousands of men actually responded. No doubt because that ad was signed by Sir Ernest Shackleton. The man and his street cred made all the difference.

The men of Acts...the early church planters, missionaries and pastors, would have had to of answered similar calls to service. We know that Paul was one of those men, and we are introduced today to another by the name of Timothy. Maybe that “ad” would have read “*Men and women wanted for difficult task of helping to build My church. You will often be misunderstood, even by those working with you. You will face constant attack from an invisible enemy. You may not see the results of your labor, and your full reward will not come till after all your work is completed. It may cost you your home, your ambitions, even your life.*” (Wiersbe) One would have to assume...like that ad in 1900, the reason anyone would respond to such was solely contingent upon who placed the ad...who signed it. In this case, the ad was placed by Jesus Christ and many men have replied to it in the years since, despite the risk and cost. Jesus and His street cred makes all the difference.

1 Tim 3:15 tells us expressly why this letter was written, "...I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

1st and 2nd Timothy and the book of Titus are known commonly as "The Pastoral Epistles" or better, the "Pastor's Letters." We might therefore be apt to shrug them off as not directly applicable to those of us that are not pastors or not seeking the position of Pastor. But that would be an error on our part, because these letters...even if primarily directed to pastors, would therefore expressly affect each local church and how it is operated. Timothy served as pastor in the church at Ephesus, and Titus in the church at Crete. And there were a lot of people in those churches who would have had much at stake when it came to just how their pastors were supposed to lead those communities.

These pastors...as well as all the pastors who would follow after them, would endure intense fires of testing and deep trials of faith. They would need to be broken and then "rebuilt" into the image of their Lord and Master. That which was not learned through verbal instruction would be trained through the experiential. In fact, all of us are in that same boat! We can receive through instruction, or we can "learn it the hard way." But if we are going to be a child of God, and truthfully be used for the kingdom glory (which we are all called as Christians to do) then we ARE going to learn these things, one way or another.

Paul would refer to this young pastor Timothy as "my own son in the faith." It is commonly accepted that Paul had personally led Timothy to salvation early in their relationship, and then was subsequently disciplined, trained, and "sent out" by Paul into the field of ministry. In this letter, Paul writes to young Timothy to instruct him on the priorities and the operation of the local church, as well as the Godly conduct of the individuals who make up that church body.

Paul no doubt knew that his time on earth was limited at this writing. These two letters to young Timothy would be Paul's last letters...his final recorded words to Timothy as well as to us. Thus Paul was intensely involved herein with how things would carry on after he was gone, and in a future that was invested in these men whom he had brought up in the faith and sent out to the ministry of the gospel. The focus of these letters... *as well as the instruction found within them*, are intensely centralized upon prayer and the study of the Word. These must therefore be the foundational building blocks to our own ministries, our personal maturation in the faith, and the priority practices of our churches.

Timothy would herein be instructed as to the abiding centrality of these issues and would be directed to both teach and model this lifestyle to the flock over which he was in authority. However, we must also know that this letter is for all believers who seek to understand their role as both sheep in the church and ministers on the street of their own calling.

Chapter 1, 1:1

"*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ*" ... an "apostle" (gr) means "sent out one." Sent out not from a seminary someplace, but rather from the master Himself. That does not in anyway give license to the spiritual Rambo...the solo flyer without allegiance to anything greater than himself. One who rejects accountability and transparency. Paul was not that kind of man, as we well know from his writings.

Paul didn't just "decide" to be a pastor. He was made one by God. The difference in this is the one that is called is the one who hangs in there when it all gets so very difficult. If you are simply "hired" then you can quit, retire, or move on. But when you are a "bond-slave" ("doulos," Romans 1:1) there is no quitting or retiring, because there is no longer any choice in the matter. A man that throws in the towel in such a manner is

essentially saying that he was in sin and error when he was serving in that position, or he is in sin and error now that he is not. There is no third option.

The true under-shepherd is one who protects the sheep and stands his ground against the enemy, while the “hireling” takes off when trouble comes or when he gets tired. After all, Paul wrote this letter while in prison! It was not a letter of resignation, but an instructional letter full of encouragement!

Paul was a man who had famously and viciously persecuted the church. For Paul, the hunting down and the persecution of Christians was a matter of religious pride. He had embraced this practice as a personal mission in life. He zealously went after Christ believers ...forcing them to blaspheme, imprisoning and even having many killed...and he did it all in the name of Jehovah God! Yet now “by the command of God” this enemy of Christ had been “chosen”...to do something quite different and to be something incredible to himself and all those who knew him.

There is no doubt that Paul was the most unlikely choice in the eyes of man. But God sees things differently than we do! Paul himself remarked in 1 Corinthians 1:27 that “...*God (had) chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, ...God (had) chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty.*” The word we have as “commandment” in verse 1 means “a royal commission.” Both Paul and Timothy were sent by the King of kings!

1:2

Paul’s desire for Timothy was that in the process of his ministry, he would experience God’s grace and mercy which he knew personally would lead to Timothy experiencing God’s peace also. This truth did not manifest itself to Paul via some book, classroom, or historical church teaching. No, Paul came to know the grace of God personally and intimately. He no doubt considered himself the very embodiment of God’s boundless grace! For indeed he was that living example of God’s love and favor upon the undeserving.

Paul’s foray into the city of Lystra in the book of Acts which led up to the establishment of this church, was on the surface far from what we might call a raving success. The whole trip was a typically weird venture into the mission field where anything can happen! In fact, things went from good to bad in a hurry. At first Paul was welcomed to town as a god, and then when that played out the people decided instead to stone him to death. (I believe I have met those folks) Yet despite it all, out of that visit, came his “son in the faith,” this young minister named Timothy...a relationship that would change the world!

We must note that Timothy entered the ministry with no seminary training or Bible Institute diplomas. When it came to preparing this young minister, Timothy was simply ‘homeschooled.’ Discipled and trained by Paul, and then sent out to do the work of an evangelist. (2 Timothy 4:5) What made the difference in this guy Timothy? What “cut him from the pack?” Perhaps the key is found in the acknowledgment that is found at the end of this verse: “Jesus Christ our *Lord...*”

After all, it’s one thing to receive Him as Savior, that part is easy, but quite another to receive Him as Lord of your life. Such a position is mandatory if one seeks to know his or her whole purpose on this earth. The fact is, if Jesus Christ is not Lord of all then He isn’t Lord at all.

1:3-4

Paul begins to speak in some strong terms here. The language seems to suggest that maybe Timothy had other plans at some point. Perhaps he considered taking the easy road and just build a “Jesus lite” church. “Remain” in its original language means to “stay put,” and “charge some” speaks of “taking a strong stand.”

The truth is, to build a strong church the pastor is going to have to take a strong stand at times! Those who reject that attribute in a pastor will certainly find the door, but such does not negate what he has to do. If a pastor is to be obedient, he must at times take a stand for purity of doctrine maintained. “No other doctrine,” speaks of a doctrine of a “different kind” from what he had taught.

There has always been and will no doubt always be folks who will come around and try to mess with your head. They “major in the minors” and seem to always have some weird teaching...always steeped in their arrogance, that inevitably leads people from the pure and simple gospel of Jesus.

It used to be that I would at times hear someone ranting about the Calvinists. I was always coming from the position that the protest was just greater than the danger and people were losing their way by harping on what I saw as a minor fringy aspect of the church. That was until I ran into a full blown 5 point TULIP Calvinist that made it his mission to convert me into one along side him. I didn't want to just throw the guy overboard so I tried to reason with him and his thinking. Yet his positional conversation just went around and around in circles and there was simply no way to pin him down. Talk about slippery! He wanted me to believe that Jesus made some people to simply go to hell...no chance for redemption...no way to get to God whether they want to or not...just damned no matter what, and that some others were “chosen” to come and had no choice and were going to be a Christian whether they wanted to or not. So it didn't really matter if you did missions, shared the gospel, or raised your kids for Christ, or anything. It was all a matter of inexplicable lottery. You are either “IN” or you are “NOT” and nothing can change that position. Through it all there was this thread that he...*they*... had found some secret knowledge. Those that espouse this doctrine of course are God's “chosen” but other people are not. Sound familiar? Ya. Its just Judaism re-invented. We're going to heaven, and you're not because we're special and you're not.

Of course the problem with this doctrine is...*well*, the bible. In the very next chapter of this very letter we read “...God our Savior... desires **all** men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (2:4) John 3:15-16 clearly refutes such nonsense saying “...**whoever** believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever** believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” These are but the tip of the proverbial iceberg as to the refute of this stuff, but one has to actually KNOW and STAND ON the very word of God in order to not be moved by what can at times seem like very legit stuff.

The early heresies attempted to exploit people's fears as well as their pride. They offered alternative gospels, the mingling of different religious philosophies, and the ‘secret knowledge’ that people craved to feel safe from the world and unknown spiritual forces. “If you have all the extra stuff,” they would say, “then you can be secure that you have not missed anything” (Gal 1:7).

The early church pushed back hard against these heresies, knowing that additional scriptures and the dilution of the simplicity of the Gospel would erode one of the most necessary ingredients of salvation: humility (Tit 1:13-14; Gal 1:8-9). As the heretics offered ‘deeper truths’ and ‘clear pathways’ to salvation, they were encouraging people that they were capable of justifying themselves, if they knew the right truth and the magic words. They were simultaneously undercutting the Gospel message of humbling ourselves and letting Christ take care of our justification (2 Pet 2:1).

We read in Revelation concerning the church in Ephesus, that while they were doing pretty well, Jesus said “Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.” We need to remember that only a fire kept fueled and burning remains hot. That “fuel” is the truth of scripture. The only true “doctrine.”

And we must keep adding that same fuel, if we are to keep the fire burning hot. There had come to Ephesus those that had apparently begun to teach a less-than-pure biblical doctrine and Paul was instructing Timothy to “head them off.”

We cannot miss the repeated warnings throughout the New Testament about false teachers and false teaching. Such is a very real and very dangerous enemy.

1:5

Paul told Timothy to “charge those who are teaching incorrect doctrine to stop doing it.” But the point of correct doctrine over incorrect is ultimately the people *receiving* that correct doctrine. The goal isn’t to just win the debate, but to be sure that the people...the church community, is taken care of. We must be sure that people are always the priority!

Jesus made this clear when He said that the two greatest commandments in God’s law were to love God with all our being and to love our neighbor as we do in fact love ourselves (Matt. 22:37-39). A genuine love expression for God and for others in our community is the goal of the Christian life. We can easily focus on knowing the Bible but forget that the goal is to change our lives, not to fill our heads. I run into these guys from time to time that consider themselves scriptural genius’s and want to argue and debate but invariably their beliefs never find the way to their actual living. They inevitably have little to no participation in a community of believers...they don’t serve...participate...tithes...interact with others. They often can’t even attend church on a regular basis, but they can tell you how to do it all.

Paul wanted the believers to grow up and grow strong and mature. So Timothy and Paul had to practice some “tough love” for the sake of the believers’ eternal souls as well as their growth and maturing in the faith. Without such a focus, a lot of folks can sit through years of preaching and teaching but when that first real test arrives, they fabulously go down in flames as if they had not heard a word. God’s word is for you. Hear it, believe it, and practice it! It all doesn’t matter a lick if you aren’t willing to be actually live it...to be obedient when it is all coming down on top of you!

1:6-7

Notice that the language is “strayed.” We can gather from that then that these folks are not newbys or even seekers...but those who held the love and grace of God at some point and then “turned aside.” These folks were not ignorant of the truth. It was not that they had failed to be taught the genuine gospel, but instead they have rather moved away from the truth...they had “strayed.”

Why? Pride. Quite simply...

It comes from the belief that I don’t have to be the student any longer. That I have arrived at the point where I could be...probably *should be*, the teacher! They desired to be in the captain’s chair and be the one directing. Such a desire is motivated by pride and arrogance. The want to be looked up to and wield the power. But rest assured they don’t want to pay the cost to get there or moreover to stay there!

The reality is, most great and influential teachers of the Word were reluctant leaders! They were ‘drafted’ into the position, and faithfully took the position though there was fear and human reluctance. James warns us of this: “Let not many of you desire to be teachers,” James declares, knowing that we who are teachers will be judged by a higher criteria. (see James 3:1).

The obvious pre-requisite to being a teacher is actually understanding what you are talking about. And *saying* you understand something is really worthless. This is a classic “show-me-the-money” scenario. If you truly understand the power and the impact of the gospel and the scriptures as a whole, there will be a lifestyle that reflects such.

Again...I have met all kinds through the years. Those that desire to be or fancy themselves already to be the “king of the hill.” Those that believe they are supposed to be the teacher when they have not even mastered the basics. They want to be a pastor, when they aren’t even a faithful participant in a believing and practicing community. They have never been a committed student but they believe themselves to be able to be a faithful teacher/pastor. They took a class somewhere and can read Greek and Hebrew but have never lived out the words they can now read.

These folks are “armchair pastors,” and I assure you that the world is never in any lack of these folks. They scream at the quarterback and critique the wide receiver but have never actually been on the field.

I promise you that God does not select that way. He doesn’t chose those who are the “bright and shining stars” in the world. Moreover, if you can’t follow, I promise that you will never lead. And even with all of that being said, there is someone out there that is right now saying “we’ll see about that!” I answer “OK...let me see it...” How will you teach what you have failed to ever learn yourself?

There is a deep and expensive cost involved in standing behind the pulpit of a faithful church. There is no way to get there if you have failed to pay the costs involved. You must grasp the difference between knowledge and understanding.

1:8-10

One of the things that these folks want to lay on others is law. Romans 2:19-24 tells it straight:

“You are convinced that you are a guide for the blind and a light for people who are lost in darkness. You think you can instruct the ignorant and teach children the ways of God. For you are certain that God’s law gives you complete knowledge and truth. Well then, if you teach others, why don’t you teach yourself? You tell others not to steal, but do you steal? You say it is wrong to commit adultery, but do you commit adultery? You condemn idolatry, but do you use items stolen from pagan temples? You are so proud of knowing the law, but you dishonor God by breaking it. No wonder the Scriptures say, ‘The Gentiles blaspheme the name of God because of you.’”

Paul wasn’t an enemy of the law. The law had its good purpose ...a purpose that still exists today. Paul says in Romans 7:12 “But still, the law itself is holy, and its commands are holy and right and good.”

But he clarifies in Galatians that law does not save, nor keep us saved. The law is to “serve as a schoolmaster” bringing us to the knowledge and acknowledgement of sin. And in that, it is still in force and is still the holy baseline!

So to whom and for what is the law still here? It is for the sinner to come to realize that they are indeed a sinner! It is the holy level to be in the presence of God Himself...unless you have a ringer to stand as your proxy! I do. His name is Jesus.

Paul gives some examples for who the law is for, just in case we don’t understand what he is referring to! Moreover, just to be sure that he covers all his bases, Paul adds “and any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.”

1:11

All of this, Paul says, is founded upon one principle; **the gospel**. The “good news” of Jesus Christ. “Gospel” (gr) means “good news.” The good news, is that God has provided an answer. It’s not *easy* but it is *simple*. That answer is Jesus Christ, and the principle of our standing upon His righteousness, His love, His sacrifice and payment to cleanse us from sin and to bring us into the presence and good standing with God the Creator.

That’s the gospel. That’s good news! Paul said that it was this “good news” that was “committed to his trust.” It was Paul’s, and now he is handing the ball to Timothy. And it’s ours if we have the heart for it...and yes, the backbone...