

“Upholding the Truth”
1 Timothy 6:20-21
(Preached at Trinity, November 21, 2021)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Verses 20-21** provide a perfect conclusion and summary of this epistle.
Paul had written this letter to Timothy from the city of Laodicea. Timothy had been sent to Ephesus to serve in a pastoral role to address certain false teachers who had risen to prominence.
 - A. Paul was concerned about heresies which were alive and at work at Ephesus.
This has been the primary subject in 1 Timothy
1 Timothy 1:3-4 NAU - "As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, ⁴ nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than *furthering* the administration of God which is by faith."
1 Timothy 6:3-5 NAU - "If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, ⁴ he is conceited *and* understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, ⁵ and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain."
 - B. Timothy was sent to defend the faith. The doctrines handed down to him.
1 Timothy 4:6 NAU - "In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, *constantly* nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following."
1 Timothy 4:11 NAU - "Prescribe and teach these things."
 - C. You can imagine the difficulty of the early church - they did not yet have the completed canon. They didn't have all of the Scriptures in a single volume. There was no printing press and possessing all of the Scriptures was a treasure not yet available.
 - D. While they did not have the completed NT they did have the apostles
They spoke with Divine authority
Acts 2:42 NAU - "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."
1 Corinthians 14:37 NAU - "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment."
2. This system of doctrine had been entrusted to Timothy.
This system of doctrine has been entrusted to us.
The church is the "Pillar and support of the truth"

3. Doctrine can never be separated from our faith, and it must always focus upon Christ.
 - a. Some people love to argue and debate doctrine, but they miss Christ. Paul calls it "worldly *and* empty chatter *and* the opposing arguments of what is falsely called "knowledge"
 - b. Sound doctrine always begins and ends with Christ. In the church of Ephesus there were some who were occupied with issues of debate instead of being occupied with Christ.
Jesus is the epitome of truth.
John 14:6 NAU - "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."
4. The primary source of false doctrine is Satan.

John 8:44 NAU - "You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

 - A. Satan has been a liar from the beginning calling into question and denying the Word of God.
Genesis 3:1-4 NAU - "Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden '?" ² The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; ³ but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" ⁴ The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!"
 - B. Satan has persistently attacked the church with false doctrine. It has gone on from the beginning. Jesus warned of the danger of false teachers
Matthew 7:15 NAU - "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves."
Matthew 24:24-25 NAU - "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ "Behold, I have told you in advance."
 - C. The Apostles also warned
2 Peter 2:1-2 NAU - "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. ² Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;"
1 John 4:1 NAU - "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world."
5. In this letter to Timothy Paul has warned that false doctrine will shipwreck our faith. Paul tells Timothy that some at Ephesus had departed from the faith and that this condition would be present throughout the church age.
1 Timothy 4:1 NAU - "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,"
1 Timothy 6:21 NAU - "which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith. "

6. As I've pointed out, the exact nature of the particular false doctrine plaguing Ephesus is elusive. But one thing is consistent with all false doctrine. All false doctrine involves substituting the doctrines of God with the doctrines of men.
- A. All of the religions of the world fall into one of two categories:
Religions of imagination (inventions of men and Satan – “doctrines of demons” or religion of revelation – (what God has revealed in His Word.)
1. Human accomplishment - man seeking to gain salvation through their own efforts and ceremony.
 2. Divine accomplishment – What God has accomplished through Christ apart from human works
- B. Any gospel that doesn't lead men straight to Christ is a false gospel.
1. The gospel message is simple - but it is also precise
 2. The Christian gospel is not a feeling or experience – It demands transformation and it must be founded upon truth
7. There are two things Paul has made clear throughout this letter.
1. False doctrine is dangerous and must be dealt with firmly
 2. True doctrine must be adhered to and protected.
 3. Paul closes this letter with the same instruction he used at the beginning
1 Timothy 1:3-5 NAU - "As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines
- I. False doctrine is dangerous and must be dealt with firmly – False doctrine and false teachers must be rejected – **Verses 20-21**
- A. Paul is telling Timothy to separate himself from false teaching
1. The word for “avoiding” is ἐκτρέπω - turn away from, avoid – it was also used medically to describe the dislocation of limbs
 2. It is to be avoided at all costs. There must be a complete break from false doctrine.
 3. To love truth is to hate falsehood
Psalm 119:104 NAU - "From Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way."
Psalm 119:128 NAU - "Therefore I esteem right all *Your* precepts concerning everything, I hate every false way."
 4. No amount of false doctrine is to be tolerated - False teachers must never be allowed to progress and gather followers
- C. Unity is a marvelous gift. It is highly pleasing to God.
Psalm 133:1-3 NAU - "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity! ² It is like the precious oil upon the head, Coming down upon the beard, *Even* Aaron's beard, Coming down upon the edge of his robes. ³ It is like the dew of Hermon Coming down upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing-- life forever."
1. Unity is precious, but truth must never be sacrificed for the sake of unity. Unity must not hold a higher priority than truth.

2. Again, the communion of the saints (communio sanctorum) has been a universal article of the historic Christian faith. But our unity is based upon objective truth.
Ephesians 4:3-6 NAU - "being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ *There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;* ⁵ *one Lord, one faith, one baptism,* ⁶ *one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."*
3. We believe that God has saved men from every tribe, nation and tongue. We are united together as one.
*"Elect from every nation, Yet one o'er all the earth
Her charter of salvation, One Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy name she blesses, Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses, With every grace endued."*
4. Jesus prayed that we might have unity
John 17:20-21 NAU - "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; ²¹ that they may all be one; even as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.
5. We also know that not everyone who calls themselves Christians are Christian and that not every institution that calls itself a church is a true Christian church.
6. There are churches that deny the basic truths of Christianity
 - a. The Mormons claim to be a Christian church
They elevate Christ to a place of honor
They speak of the need for a personal relationship with Him
Yet, they deny His deity
 - b. Unitarians and Jehovah's Witnesses deny the Trinity
 - c. The Reformers declared Sola Fide (justification by faith alone) as an essential truth of biblical Christianity. Although Rome maintained many of the essential truths of Christianity, they denied this essential truth that would make it a legitimate church; In fact, Rome condemned "sola fide"
Martin Luther – "Sola Fide is the article upon which the church stands or falls."
7. As much as we would desire all Christians and all Churches to be one, we must never forsake truth. The early church enjoyed a season of unity and fellowship, but they were united upon doctrine
Acts 2:42 NAU - "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." διδασχί - doctrine.
8. But this unity would prove very elusive as truth fell by the wayside.

II. True doctrine must be adhered to, guarded and protected

1 Timothy 6:20 NAU - "O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you"

A. The church today has received a legacy from Christians who have gone before us, many of whom paid the ultimate price to protect the truth.

1. This truth has been entrusted to us

Deuteronomy 4:2 NAU - "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."

2. We must earnestly contend for the faith

Jude 1:3 NAU - "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints."

3. Paul told Timothy that the Christian life is warfare – a good fight to be fought.

1 Timothy 1:18-19 NAU - "This command I entrust to you, Timothy, *my son*, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, ¹⁹ keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith."

B. Scripture is the only authoritative rule of faith and practice

We must not preach, teach, command, or practice anything contrary.

1. Sola Scriptura – Scripture alone is our basis of Christian truth.

It is Necessary, Authoritative, Sufficient

2. Modern Christianity has lost its way with the matter of Sola Scriptura

a. Experience now has final authority

b. Pragmatism is the way of the day

c. Culture is molding the church rather than God's Word.

3. The most important measure of a church is how it handles the Word of God – not size, facility, programs, pastor

4. When a church mishandles the Word of God it portrays a false image of God to the world – a great crime.

C. True doctrine edifies the body of Christ - this is the work of the ministry. It is the life of our church.

1. It is the source of our growth and edification

1 Peter 2:2 NAU - "like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,"

2. False doctrine can only tear down and destroy

Conclusion:

1. One of the distinctives of our church is "Sound Doctrine." We must never compromise on this. The pressures may be great in the future.
2. Our only authority is the Word of God. The future of our church rests on three pillars: Evangelism, Prayer, and the teaching and preaching of God's Word.
3. Paul then closes this letter with his typical benediction of grace, although it is Paul's shortest benediction. Paul ended all of his letters with this benediction of grace—not just a formality, but Paul's confirmation that everything God gives is an expression of His grace. The word for "you" is plural. Paul sends his benediction to the entire church.