

Truth Matters in God's House

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[0 : 00] You might like to grab a Bible, although I'll put the verses on the screen as well, and in your bulletins there should be an outline that you can follow along. But let me begin by asking, I wonder if you have any house rules at your place?

You know, shoes off at the door, no phones at the table, the dinner table. People have some of these kind of rules? No? Yes? Some? I saw one set of rules which look quite extensive. That's a lot of house rules. It started off by saying no hitting or pushing, no kicking, no shouting. And then it went on to include number 11, we don't light people on fire, not even pretend. What kind of kids live there? Seriously. Number 12, no fighting before mum has coffee. So fighting after coffee, is that okay? It seems to be, as long as it's not number 18, no karate, which it looks like it's been a late addition. It's a different crayon or something. Perhaps the boys saw Karate Kid and then they started practicing on each other.

[1 : 03] That certainly happened when I was growing up. But I wonder if you have any house rules for your place. Well, today we start a new series, as Glenn said, looking at Paul's letter to Timothy, which is about rules for God's house.

And we see that in the purpose statement of the letter, which is chapter 3. He says, although I'm hoping to come to you soon, I'm writing to you with these instructions so that is the purpose. If I'm delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household. In other words, what the house rules are for God's house, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

You see, the house rules are not just for the sake of having house rules, but it's because of who we are. We may not look very important to the world. In fact, often we don't.

But we are very important to God because we are the church of the living God. This is God's gathering here this morning, which makes it more important than any other gathering you'll have during the week, even the ones you have to go to for work or something else.

[2 : 20] No, no, this is the church of the living God. It's God's gathering. And by way of application already, I wonder if we remember that. I mean, do we consider what we are doing here this morning as the most important gathering that we'll have all week?

Or do we think it's just, you know, something optional, you know, when we feel like it or something? No, no, this is God's gathering. And it's also important because as God's church, we're meant to uphold God's truth.

And so he says there that the church is the pillar and foundation of the truth. I mean, that's what pillars do, don't they? They hold up buildings, just like the little pillars were holding up blocks there before.

Well, we as the church are the pillars that are meant to hold up God's truth to the world. Which brings us to the house rule for today.

If we're to do that, if we're to be the pillar and foundation of the truth, then as we'll see today, truth matters in God's house. So much so that Timothy is to command those to stop teaching what is false.

[3 : 29] Point one, verse one, this will be our longest point. So he begins by saying, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the command of God our Saviour and of Christ Jesus our hope. To Timothy, my true son in the faith, grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

As I urged you when I went to Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus at the church there. So that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer or devote themselves to myths

and endless genealogy.

Such things promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God's work that is by faith. Now, before we get to the command, notice in verse one, Paul is an apostle by the command of God himself.

Paul doesn't kind of study his letters very often talking in this language, like the command of God. And I suspect one of the reasons he does this is to make Timothy's job easier.

You see, this letter will be read out to the whole church. Even though it's directed to Timothy, it will be read out to the whole church. It's why the last verse of the letter says, And so they will know when Timothy commands false teachers to stop, he's simply doing what Paul said.

[4 : 53] And Paul is simply doing what God said. In other words, Timothy can say that what he's doing is from God, you see. And so they ought to listen.

And as a little side application, I think it's worth us remembering this too, because I still hear people say things like, oh, I like Jesus's word, but, you know, not so much Paul's word.

He's a bit of a chauvinist or something like that. But he's not. And more than that, he's God's apostle by God's command. So he carries God's authority.

This is God's word. And so we need to listen. Yes, he's running to a particular context, and we need to work out if that still applies to our context. But we can't simply ignore his instruction.

And his first one to Timothy is to command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer, which means some were in the church. And these false things included, verse 4, myths and genealogies, some of which were based on the Old Testament law known as the Torah or the first five books of the Bible.

[6 : 00] You know, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. Yes, Deuteronomy.

Because verse 7 says they wanted to be teachers of the law or Torah. And so it seems like they're using this law as part of or misusing the law as part of their false doctrine.

And so perhaps what they would do is look at the book of Genesis, first book of the Bible, first book of the law, and look at a genealogy like Enoch's genealogy. And notice that Enoch walked with God faithfully, and then he was no more.

That is, he didn't even suffer death. God just took him away. And perhaps they'd say, well, look, if you want to be certain of God taking you to heaven, then you need to be part of Enoch's genealogy. And if you're not already part of it, then the way you become part of it is changing your name to Enoch.

Any Enochs here? But something like that. Or later on in 1 Timothy, chapter 4, they forbid people to marry and ordered them to abstain from certain foods, kind of building off the food laws in Leviticus, the third book of the Bible, Torah.

And perhaps they would say, this is how you get closer to God and saved on the last day. But the problem with all this false doctrine is that it doesn't save, because it's not by faith in Jesus.

[7 : 19] It's based on obeying food laws or following myths or being in certain families like Enoch's family, rather than what Paul says in verse 4, advancing God's work, which is by faith.

The phrase advancing God's work really refers to administering God's plan of salvation, that is by faith. In other words, the gospel, the good news of Jesus.

And we know this because Paul says this later on in verse 11. He talks about the sound doctrine, verse 11, that conforms to the what? The gospel.

The good news of Jesus. You see, the truth they're supposed to teach in God's house is faith in Jesus. A faith that follows Jesus as king, yes.

Faith that is lived out in service to Jesus, yes. But it's still faith in Jesus nonetheless. Yet they taught false doctrine that said it's about obeying food laws or following myths or being in certain families, none of which is by faith.

[8 : 35] And none of which is about Jesus. So it cannot say. In fact, it will send people to hell. You see, you command kids who are about to cross a busy road saying, stop, to lovingly save them from the cars, don't you?

Well, Timothy is to command these false teachers to stop, to lovingly save all from hell or heaven. You see, the truth matters in God's house because only sound doctrine that conforms with the gospel saves.

It's why in verse 1, Paul called God our saviour and Jesus our hope, which is unique to this letter because he wants to see people saved from hell or heaven.

In fact, salvation and eternal life are never far from the surface of this letter. And so here's another little side application for us, which will come up again in other weeks.

We here at HCD, Holy Trinity, Don't Casta, need to make sure that we keep sticking with the gospel. We need to make sure that we keep teaching sound doctrine that points people to faith in Jesus.

[9 : 52] And not just from the front here on Sunday mornings like I'm doing now, but in all the various ministries that many of you are part of. We need to keep pointing people to faith in Jesus or help people to live out their faith in Jesus because only sound doctrine saves.

But also, only sound doctrine loves. Verse 5. Paul says the goal of this command to tell them to stop is love, which comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.

See, Paul's goal in getting rid of false doctrine and promoting sound doctrine is love. That's what he wants to see, love. And he wants to see it, but he knows doctrine drives behavior.

And by drive, I don't just mean teach us about love, but actually enable us to love. Because did you notice in verse 5 where this love comes from?

It says it comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. But how do we get those? Well, God gives them to us, as we heard in our first reading.

[11 : 07] God replaces our heart of stone with a heart of flesh. He gives us his spirit to move and work in us. You see, we actually have sinful natures, don't we?

I mean, as I've said before, if you want any proof, just look at little kids. Do they naturally say, yes, Mom, yes, Dad? Do they naturally go, nah?

We've all got sinful natures. And so as those who are natural-born sinners, we have hearts that are impure. We have consciences that are corrupt.

We have faith that is insincere. But as we hear the sound doctrine of the gospel, God's spirit works in us and gives us a sincere faith, purifies our heart, cleanses our conscience, and enables us to live a life of love.

It's a bit like this flowchart here. You know, sound doctrine of the gospel, and God's spirit works through that, gives us pure heart, conscience, faith, and that leads to sound behaviour like love.

[12 : 15] See, why is it that we Christians seek to love those who are different to us when the world often just kind of loves those who are similar?

Why is it that we Christians seek to forgive those who offend us when the world would just cut them off? Isn't it because we've heard the gospel and God's spirit has worked in our hearts, cleansed our conscience, given us a genuine faith that seeks to love and forgive like him?

I mean, that's why, isn't it? Of course, our sinful nature is still with us and working against us, and so sometimes we're not that loving, and sometimes we're not that forgiving, and so we need to keep hearing sound doctrine.

We need to keep reading it or listening to it or reflecting on it during the week or being taught it here on Sundays so that we can keep being enabled by God's spirit to keep living a life of love.

The sound doctrine drives sound behaviour. And so if you're finding it hard to love or forgive, then listen again to that sound doctrine that conforms to the gospel.

[13 : 25] Like how much God forgave you in Jesus, that you might be moved to forgive others who've offended you. Hear afresh of God's deep love for you in Jesus, that you might be moved to love others, even those different from us.

Let that sound doctrine of the gospel enable you, move you, to live a life of love. And so the application again is, will we keep listening to sound doctrine, keep making time to hear it, even if we already know it?

Does sound doctrine drive sound behaviour? Well, Paul says in verse 7 that these false teachers want to be teachers of the law, but they don't have a clue about what they're talking about.

Because they try and use the law to save, like those food laws. And so Paul goes on to show now that the law cannot save, only grace and faith in Jesus can.

So point to verse 8. He goes on to say, look, we know that the law is good if one uses it properly. But we also know that the law is made not for the righteous, but for the lawbreakers and rebels.

[14 : 36] And the list goes on. Down to verse 11, or verse 10, and for whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God which he entrusted to me.

Notice in verse 8, Paul says the law is good, and there are still proper uses for it, like showing us God's character, giving us ideas about how to love our neighbour.

So it's still worth reading the Old Testament and the first five books, the Torah. But an improper use is to try and use it to earn your way to heaven, like the false teachers seem to have done with following those food laws.

But verse 9, the law is not for those who have been made righteous by faith. It might give us ideas about how to live out our faith, but it doesn't get us to heaven.

But rather, it is made for sinners, all those people in that list, which we are a part of. In part, it's made to limit sin, but in the end, to simply show that we are sinners who need a saviour, because we cannot keep the law.

[15:50] It's kind of like that law, wet paint don't touch. You've seen those signs before. As soon as you see that sign, what's the next thing you want to do? Touch the paint.

Yeah, that's right. Like this guy says, no sign can stop me. And so he's touching the wet paint on the wall. You see, as soon as we see a law like that one, our sinful nature arcs up and makes us want to break it and sometimes actually break it.

You see, the law actually shows we have a sinful nature. It shows we are sinners who need a saviour. And so it points us to God's mercy and grace through Jesus and our need to have faith in Jesus, which is exactly what Paul goes on to talk about in verse 12.

He says, I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service. 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.

The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance.

[17:02] Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I'm the worst. 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, have faith in him and receive eternal life.

And verse 17, he then praises God for it. Do you notice the language of grace, mercy, faith, belief, Jesus?

Nothing about the law, is there? And verse 16, Paul is an example for all who would believe or have faith in Jesus and receive eternal life.

Sharing the glory of our blessed God. Here is the sound doctrine from God our Saviour and Jesus our hope. And it's received by faith, not achieved by law or myths or genealogy or indulgences or prayers to Mary.

Yesterday, thousands gathered for the Pope's funeral at St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City. And before he died, he asked to be buried at St. Mary's.

[18:24] So the funeral was at St. Peter's and then his body will be moved to St. Mary's and he asked for people to pray to Mary for him that he might make it to heaven.

Because for Pope Francis, who did a lot of great things, like he worked hard to get child-safe ministry practice happening in the Catholic Church, he did lots of good things, yet for him, he wasn't sure he'd get to heaven.

For Pope Francis and the official teaching of Rome, you see, grace is necessary but not sufficient. Faith is necessary and they talk about faith, but they say it's not sufficient.

You have to do good works and have indulgences and do penance and things like that as well, which left the Pope without certainty.

It's why he asked people to pray to Mary for him, that Mary might put in a good word about him. It's all terribly sad. I mean, the guy worked so hard for the church and yet he had no certainty of heaven.

[19:32] That's what false doctrine does. It doesn't save but robs us of assurance. It's genuinely sad. But the sound doctrine of the gospel in the Bible is that because of God's grace and mercy, he gave his son Jesus who came into the world to save us so that all who believe in him like Paul will receive eternal life.

Guaranteed. It doesn't depend on what we do but what Jesus has already done at the cross. And so we can be sure which is liberating, isn't it?

We'd have to worry like the Pope did that will make it to heaven. We can be certain we will. But Jesus has done everything needed to get us there. We need to keep living by faith in him. That's it. And God's spirit, God's grace will even help us, enable us to do that. So no wonder Paul ends his testimony in verse 17 by praising the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, the glory and honor forever and ever.

Amen. And so again, by way of application, if we know the same liberating and reassuring gospel of grace as Paul did, then will we respond like Paul did by continuing to praise God for it?

[21 : 01] And will we lastly fight well for the truth as Timothy was to do? Point three, verse 18.

Timothy, my son, I am giving you this command about stopping false teachers in keeping with the prophecies once made about you so that by recalling them you may fight the battle well, holding on to the faith and a good conscience which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith.

Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander whom I've handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme. Here the word, again, command comes up again and so God commanded Paul who commanded Timothy who is to command false teachers to stop.

But it won't be easy. I mean, no one likes being told they're wrong, do they? I don't. Do you like being told? No one does. And so it's going to be hard for Timothy to do this. So hard that Paul calls it a fight.

That is to fight well. Literally wage the good fight. How? Well, verse 18, firstly by recalling his calling, if you like. that others said that he could do it.

Later on in chapter 4 of 1 Timothy, Paul says, do not neglect your gift of preaching and teaching from the previous verse which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

[22 : 19] And so back in our passage, he's talking about just the prophecy here. But it's kind of like Ricky's ordination, right? People said, yep, Ricky, you can do this job of preaching and teaching and at his ordination the bishop put his hands on him and prayed for him.

In other words, Timothy, remember your ordination. You can do this. But he's also to do this secondly by holding faith and a good conscience.

That is, don't compromise your faith by giving in to false teaching and this is what can apply to us too. And we can feel pressure to compromise. You know, for example, no one likes talking about hell, do they?

I mean, hands up if you like talking about hell. No one does. And yet, it's part of the truth of the gospel. And so, we can feel the pressure just to get rid of it and compromise the gospel, but we're to hold the line, hold the faith.

Yet, as we do, we're also to hold a good conscience. So, we're not to compromise our behavior either by, you know, holding the truth in an ungodly way. You know, sometimes when people want to defend the truth, they do it in an unloving or aggressive manner.

[23 : 32] Timothy is not to do that. He's to hold a good conscience. He's to do it with patience and gentleness and respect. He's to fight well by holding both faith and a good conscience.

And thirdly, by remembering what's at stake. For false doctrine can shipwreck, verse 19, people's faith as well as the faith. You know, bring the Christian faith into disrepute like Hymenaeus and Alexander have done.

Now, we are not all Timothy who've been ordained, so to speak, but we can still all fight well for the truth, defend the truth without compromising our faith or a good conscience.

We can do that inside the church and outside the church. Inside the church, we can check what the preacher is saying against God's word, which is why I encourage you to have your Bibles open.

I put the verses on the screen just so you can check because in the end, it doesn't matter what I say, it matters what God said. Fighting well also means working hard to listen when the preacher drones on and on like I'm doing now and doing the hard work of checking against the Bible.

[24 : 44] This is how we're to fight well for the truth inside the church and if you think I've got it wrong, then please come and talk to me and we'll have a conversation with gentleness and respect.

And outside the church, we can fight well for the truth by living it out each day, holding up the truth in our lives all the time and by our conversations with others from time to time as opportunities arise.

And so, for example, last week, we had two big events. We had Anzac Day and the Pope's passing, which will be topics of conversation potentially. And so if people talk about the Pope, you can defend the truth.

You can say, yeah, he seemed like a really good guy. He did lots of good things like the child safe ministry and things like that. But the Bible's teaching is a bit different to the Pope's teaching. The Bible tells us about Jesus and gives us even more assurance of heaven than, you know, sadly the Pope had.

Or with Anzac Day, which seems to be getting bigger and bigger, the dawn service I was at down the road was the biggest I've seen it. And we can say it's right and it is right to honour those who have sacrificed their lives for our country to give us freedom.

But then we can fight for the truth by adding, you know what, I actually think Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice because he gave his life, he gave us freedom from judgment and life eternal and see where that goes.

[26 : 11] That's what I tried to do with the prayers at the dawn service. Here are some ways that we can fight well for the truth. Don't compromise behaviour for truth. I don't know what house rules you have but the one from 1 Timothy today is that truth matters in God's house.

So much so that it's to matter to us who are members of God's house and so does it. Does it matter to you? If it really matters to us then we'll keep listening to it, keep praising God because of it and even fight well for it that together we might be that pillar that holds up God's truth to the world.

Let's pray we'll do that. Let's pray. Our gracious Father, we thank you for your word which teaches us your truth. Help us as your church to hold up your truth to even fight well for it that together we might hold your truth up to the world.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.