

# 'Truth Matters in God's House'

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] I'm not sure what house rules you came up with as you were talking to one another.! I saw a list of house rules online. Here's the big list, but let me zoom in. No hitting! or pushing! No kicking! No shouting! And I went down to number 11. We don't light people on fire, not even pretend! It kind of made me wonder what kind of kids these poor parents have. But today we're coming, as Sharon said, to a new series in 1 Timothy, which is really, if you like, house rules for God's house. And so let me just do a quick introduction to the whole letter. The purpose of the letter is found in chapter 3, 14 and 15, where Paul says, although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing to you with these instructions so that, here's the purpose, if I'm delayed, you will know, Timothy, how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household. You see, Paul's purpose is writing so that Timothy will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household. In other words, these are house rules for God's house. But notice it's not just for the sake of having rules, it's because of who we are. You see, we may not look very important to the outside world, but did you notice, after that bit in yellow there, Paul describes us as the church of the living

God, which makes this gathering here tonight the most important gathering of your week to come. Do you realise that? What we're doing here tonight is the most important gathering that you will attend all week, because it is God's gathering. This is the church of the living God. And so by way of application, I wonder if we remember that. Do we consider what we're doing tonight, not a waste of time, not coming because we, you know, suppose we should, but actually of vital importance, because this church is the church of the living God. But notice the other reason for these rules in this purpose statement here. It's because the church is the pillar and foundation of the truth, as it ends on the screen. In other words, the church is meant to hold up God's truth in God's word to the world. That's what pillars do, they hold up buildings, don't they? And foundations hold up the whole structure. Well, the church is the pillar and foundation of God's truth. We're to hold up and support God's truth in God's word to our world. Which is why the house rule for today's passage is, in God's house, truth matters. And so with that introduction done, we're at point one in your outlines, and we'll skip to verse three and four in your Bibles. So have a look in verse three and four. Paul writes, I urged you when I was in Macedonia, stay there 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. See what Paul says here?

Timothy is to command certain people not to teach false doctrine, which implies they were, right? And it included, it seems to be, it included things like myths and genealogies. Some of those things, genealogies, for example, are found in the first five books of the Bible. Genesis, what comes next? Exodus, Exodus, well done, the enthusiasm is overwhelming. Yeah, and so for example, in the book of Genesis, there's the genealogy of Enoch, and you notice Enoch in verse 24, he walked faith with God, then he was no more, because God took him away. He didn't even have to taste death. And so perhaps some of this false doctrine included things like, hey, if you want to be taken by God, not face death, then you need to be part of Enoch's family. Get adopted, or kind of just change your name to Enoch, unless you're already Enoch. Enoch Chan is here. You're safe. You're in. Or later on in 1 Timothy, they would say things like, forbid people to marry and order them to abstain certain foods. Again, which is what we saw in the Old Testament, particularly the book of Leviticus, where they weren't supposed to eat certain foods back then. Perhaps they were saying, this is how you get closer to God and be saved on the last day by God. Whatever the exact nature of this false teaching was, the problem with it is it doesn't save. They said obeying food lords, following amiss, being part of certain families or genealogies is the way to do it. But Paul says, actually, that's wrong. They're saying that rather than advancing God's work, which is not by law, but by faith.

You see, advancing God's work, that phrase there, really refers to administering God's plan of salvation. In other words, they were supposed to be teaching the gospel. That is, the good news about Jesus and having faith in him, because that's what saves people, isn't it?

[ 5 : 50 ] Yes, they were supposed to teach faith that follows Jesus as king, faith that is meant to be lived out in life, but it's still faith in Jesus nonetheless. But these false teachers taught false doctrines, saying it's obeying food laws or following myths or being part of certain families, all of which was not by faith in Jesus. And so it cannot save. In fact, it will send people to hell instead.

And so do you see how much truth matters in God's house? And so this command is really for the good of people, isn't it? I mean, if you're walking with a friend down Church Road and you're about to cross over Doncaster Road and your friends busy looking at TikToks on their phone or about to step off into traffic, what do you do? Just, oh yeah, see you later. Don't get hit. No, no, you stop! Well, they're good. You try and save them. Well, Timothy is to try and save people by commanding these people to stop. Stop teaching this false doctrine, because it doesn't say.

It's why in verse 1, Paul actually calls God our Saviour and Christ Jesus our hope, which is unique to this letter, because he wants to see people saved, God our Saviour from hell, and have the hope, Jesus our hope, hope of heaven. In fact, future salvation and life eternal are never far from the surface of this letter. And so here's another little application for us, which will come up again, I'm sure, throughout this series. And that is, we here at HTD need to keep sticking to and speaking about the sound doctrine of the gospel, because it's the gospel that saves. Sound doctrine, though, not only saves, it also promotes love. And so verse 5, Paul goes on to say, the goal of this command to stop them teaching false doctrine and start doing the sound doctrine of the gospel, the goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

You see, the false doctrine was promoting controversy. Verse 4 talked about controversial speculations. At chapter 6, we'll talk about quarrels and fights within the church because of these speculations and myths, all part of this false teaching. But aren't we supposed to love each other?

[ 8 : 25 ] And so getting rid of false doctrine will help get rid of the controversy and quarrels. And promoting the sound doctrine of the gospel will promote love instead. The sound doctrine doesn't just save, it drives our behaviour.

And by drive, I don't just mean motivates us, but actually enables us to love one another. Because did you notice in verse 5 where love comes from?

It comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. How do we get those? God gives them to us, doesn't he? It's what we heard in our first reading, where God replaces our heart of stone and gives us a heart of flesh by giving us his spirit.

You see, we are all sinners whose hearts are impure, whose consciences are corrupt, whose faith is insincere. But what happens as we hear the sound doctrine of the gospel, God's spirit works in us to give us that sincere faith, to cleanse our conscience, to purify our hearts, and get rid of that heart of stone, as Ezekiel said.

And that in turn enables us to have sound behaviour like love, loving one another. So that it will help reach Paul's goal of love, you see.

[ 9 : 50 ] And we know this in our lives if we reflect for a moment, I think. I mean, why do we Christians seek to love those who are different to us, even if they sometimes annoy us? Or forgive those who have offended us?

Isn't it because we've heard the gospel, the good news about Jesus, and God's spirit has purified our hearts, cleansed our conscience, given us a sincere faith that seeks to love, that seeks to forgive?

And what is it that helps us to keep loving and forgiving others, even when we don't want to? Even when our sinful nature tells us not to? Isn't it hearing again the sound doctrine of the gospel?

How God so loved us in Christ as we sung in our first song? That as we hear that, it moves us and motivates us to keep trying to love others?

Or hearing how God forgave us all our sins in Christ? That we might be moved to forgive others their very few sins towards us?

[ 10 : 55 ] So will we keep hearing the sound doctrine of the gospel? Whether that's reading it or listening to it or reflecting on it and all the implications about it, whether that's here on Sunday nights or during the week, so that we can keep being enabled by God's spirit to keep living that life of love.

For sound doctrine not only saves, it also drives sound behavior. Well, Paul said in verse 7 that those who want to be teachers of the law, the first five books of the Bible in particular, they don't know what they're talking about by promoting this false teaching.

They try and use the law to save. But as Paul goes on to show, the law cannot save, only grace and faith in Jesus can. So point to verse 8 to 11.

He goes on to say, We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that the law is made not for the righteous, but for the lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, and on he goes.

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

[12:17] So take, for example, the Ten Commandments. Can anyone remember the first commandment? You shall have no other gods but me. So here's a way that helps us to love God, for example.

So it's still worth reading the Old Testament and the first five books of that Old Testament as well. But an improper use is to do what these guys here are trying to do.

That is, use it so that they can earn their way to heaven. Like the false teachers who said you have to follow certain food laws to get to heaven, which is not too far off what some Seventh-day Adventists say, actually.

You know, that you have to abstain from some certain foods is what some of them teach. But verse 9, the law is not for those who have been made righteous by faith.

You know, it might give us ideas about how to live out our faith, you know, love God and our neighbor. But it doesn't get us to heaven. Rather, it's made for sinners to show them that they're sinful and need a Savior.

[13:23] In other words, it's to point us, or those who were once sinners, to Jesus, that they might have faith in him. It's a bit like this law.

You know this law, wet paint don't touch? As soon as you see that law, what do you want to do? You want to touch the paint? There's something inside of you. You can't help it, can you? Like this guy who says down the bottom, no sign can stop me.

And so he touches the wet paint. Whenever we see a law, something in us wants to rebel and break it. In other words, the law shows us that we have sinful natures.

And no matter how hard we try, we cannot always obey and earn our way to heaven. Rather, it points us to a Savior that we need, which is exactly what Paul goes on to talk about, his own testimony.

He goes, Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance.

[14:47] Do you notice all the language Paul uses of grace, mercy, faith, belief?

Love? There's no more myths, genealogies, or law. And in verse 16, Paul says, Here's the sound doctrine from God our Savior and Jesus our hope.

It's received by faith. It's received by faith, not achieved by law or myths or genealogies or indulgences or prayers to Mary. I don't know if you remember last year when Pope Francis died. Thousands upon thousands gathered at St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City for the funeral. Before he died, the Pope asked to pray to Mary for him that he might make it to heaven.

Because the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, and don't get me wrong, there are some Roman Catholics that are much more biblical than some Anglicans and vice versa.

[16:28] But the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church is that grace is necessary but not sufficient. Faith is necessary but not sufficient.

And so you have to also do things to earn your way to heaven too, which left poor Pope Francis without any assurance.

It was really sad to hear about it, actually. But that is the false doctrine that doesn't save. But the sound doctrine of the gospel does.

And it gives us great assurance. That sound doctrine about God who sent his son Jesus into the world to save sinners.

And how he showed mercy to Paul as an example for all who believe and receive eternal life.

[17:26] Guaranteed. Where it doesn't depend on what we do, but on what Christ has done. We have to simply believe in him. And so if you're here tonight, and if you want assurance of going to heaven, then believe in Jesus.

And for us who do believe, then this assurance is so liberating, isn't it? It's so comforting. We don't have to worry like the former Pope did.

We can be certain. Which means we ought to do what Paul did. In verse 17. And praise God. The King eternal, immortal, invisible.

The only God. The honour and glory forever and ever, he says. And so by way of more application then, if we know the same liberating and reassuring gospel as Paul, will we continue to praise God like Paul?

For what he's done for us through Christ. And will we fight well for the truth like Timothy? So point three, verse 18.

[ 18 : 35 ] He goes on to say, Here, the word command comes up again, which reminds us that it's the command to stop false teaching that Paul's referring to.

But it's not going to be easy. No one likes being told they're doing the wrong thing, do they? Hands up if you like being told you're wrong. No one does, right?

And so it's not going to be easy for Timothy to say, Hey, you're teaching the wrong thing. Stop. In fact, Paul calls it a fight. Timothy is to fight well.

Literally to wage the good fight. How? Well, firstly, he's to remember his calling. You see, people recognize and prophesy.

That is not, you know, told, predicted the future, not that kind of prophecy. They just spoke a word and said, Look, we think Timothy's got gifts for ministry. And so we're going to lay our hands on him and set him aside for ministry, which is what Paul talks about in chapter four of the same letter.

[ 19 : 50 ] Where he says, Don't neglect your gift of ministry, which was given through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you. It's kind of like our ordination these days.

And so here, Timothy is to remember his ordination, if you like, that he can do this because God has given him the gifts to do this.

And that will encourage him, even though it's hard. But secondly, he's also to do so by holding faith and a good conscience.

That is, don't compromise your faith, Timothy, by giving in to any false teaching, which he can feel the pressure to do. And we can feel that pressure today, can't we?

You know, when there are things that our society doesn't like in the Christian faith or in the Bible, we can feel pressure to kind of just play them down, can't we? Not talk about them.

[ 20 : 48 ] You know, do you really believe that? I mean, hell, for example. No one likes talking about hell. But it's part of the gospel message. And so as he teaches them and tells them to stop teaching false doctrine, he's not to give in to pressure to change that gospel.

He's to hold the faith, hold the line. But he's also to hold a good conscience too. And not to fight for the truth with bad behavior, in other words. Sometimes in an effort to defend the truth, that people can speak in an unloving or aggressive way.

I have seen it before. And can I say to all the young guys out here in the congregation, it's often a trap that we, I say we, I'm not young anymore. But, you know, it's a trap for young guys in particular. You know, we get all fired up for the truth and we can suddenly talk to one another and particularly our sisters in an unloving way. We're not to do that.

We're to hold both the faith, the truth, but also a good conscience. Our manner is to be loving. And thirdly, Timothy is to uphold this truth, remembering what's at stake.

[ 22 : 05 ] Because false doctrine can shipwreck people's faith as well as the faith. It can kind of lead people, the false teachers, astray, but also as they teach falsely, it can lead other people astray.

People lead them away from heaven towards hell. And so people's eternity is at stake, you see. Which is why Paul, in verse 20, excommunicates, basically, Hymenaeus and Alexander.

Not to be left with Satan, but to kick them out of the church and go, what you're doing is really bad, it's leading people astray, so that they might realise how bad it is and actually repent and come back.

I think that's what verse 20 is getting at. Now, yes, we're not like Timothy. We haven't been ordained, so to speak, but we are still to fight for the truth without compromising our faith or our conscience.

And we can do that inside the church and outside the church. Inside the church, we can check what the preacher says with what God says. It's why we put the verses on the screen, not just for those

online, but so that you have to look and check it for yourselves.

[ 23 : 26 ] Or we can talk to each other about God's truth and seek to fight well for it, but in a loving way. And outside the church, we can fight well for the truth by living it out each day, being a good witness to those around us, holding up the truth with our lives and also in our conversations, making the most of opportunities.

In two weeks' time, Anzac Day is happening again. And so, for example, we can say, yeah, it's right to remember those who have sacrificed their lives to give us freedom in this country, but you might fight well for the truth by adding, yeah, but I reckon Jesus is an even greater sacrifice because his death gives us freedom from judgment for eternal life.

And see what they say. That's another way to fight well for the truth. I don't know what house rules you have, but the one from 1 Timothy tonight is that in God's house, truth matters.

And so does it matter to you, to us? And if it does, then will we keep listening to it, keep praising God because of it, and keep fighting well for it, so that together, as the church of the living God, we might uphold his truth to our world.

Let's pray we would. Let's pray. Our gracious Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your truth which is given to us in your word that has been handed down to us through generations and for which we have good evidence.

[ 25 : 09 ] And so help us, we pray, to uphold your truth by listening well to it, by praising you because of it, and by fighting well for it, so that as a church, we would continue to uphold your truth to our world.

Help us in this, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.