

Truth? Can You Handle It?

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[0 : 00] As Dave reminded you, there is a survey instruction sheets are found.

So if you are new here and you plan to be staying with us for a couple of months, would appreciate your opinions. If you've been here for a while, I still want your opinions.

But it's a great service to me. So you can either sign up and what it's going to do, it's an electronic survey. If you do not have the ability to do it online, just please leave a note.

Kathy's going to be taking care of the information and we can find other means to help you out. But all you need to do is provide us with an email address and then the survey will be sent to you.

So there's a sheet of instructions back there. So I'd appreciate the more people that are involved, the more of a blessing it is to my project.

[1 : 01] All right, let's take a look at 1 Timothy chapter 3. 1 Timothy chapter 3. Paul includes this incredible...

I don't know how to say it. It is a... Paul is so excited about something here in this passage that he actually...

Scholars believe he is writing out stanzas of a song of praise. 1 Timothy 3.

We'll be starting in verse 14. He simply writes...

And this is a letter written to the people at the Church of Ephesus upon which we have been studying. He just says, I hope to come to you soon. But I am writing these things to you so that if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

[2 : 27] Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness. He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up.

in glory. Most of you don't know me, but my name is Polycarp.

I had a mentor. His name was the Apostle John, the one who traveled with this man named Jesus.

They are looking for me now.

I am old. I am tired of running. Before me, they took my mentor, John, and threw him all on an island, left him alone to die.

My friends who love me dearly and who are greatly panicked want me to run as well. I will appease them and withdraw to a friend's estate outside of town.

[3 : 54] But I have little hope that this will fool the authorities. My thoughts are with my old friend Ignatius. I so enjoyed my letter writing to him and writing to him about the greatness and glories of Jesus Christ.

I miss the times being disciplined by John along with my friend Papias. What a blessing. We were all together when we gave our lives to Jesus.

It's now been 47 years since they captured my friend, the Emperor Trajan. And his words are still fresh on my mind.

As he was being delivered to Rome to make his defense, Ignatius simply wrote from Syria even to Rome, I fight wild beasts by night and by day being bound amongst ten leopards, even a company of soldiers who only grow worse when they are kindly treated.

It was in Rome that the Emperor demanded that my friend Ignatius make a public sacrifice to the Roman gods. They simply says, deny Jesus.

[5 : 18] Some believe that it would be an acceptable thing to do as long as he did not deny Jesus in his heart. If he did, perhaps my friend would be with me now as I wait for this same persecution.

However, I knew all along that my friend would not do it. He would never compromise the truth that was in him. And well, we know Trajan simply threw him in the stadium, watched on by a Roman

mob to be attacked by a wild beast for the amusement of others.

I, Polycarp, believe I await the same fate, although under a different emperor. This Marcus Aurelius has really made it his mission to seek out Christian leaders.

They're at the door. It was just a matter of time before they would find me.

I'm 86 years of age. I can only move so fast and so far. Although my friends want me to resist, resist, I can only say, God's will be done.

[6 : 46] When the soldiers come in the door, I will offer them a good supper and I will pray before him, before them, Lord, give me strength to resist and be strong for you.

I am now being dragged before the local pro-council. I will be interrogated about some of my other brothers and sisters of the faith, but that won't be their main goal.

One of the soldiers that arrested me stated that he had never seen such devotion and wants to follow this man named Jesus. I will pray for him.

I am now before the local pro-council. He commands me to curse my Jesus and swear allegiance to Caesar or else be thrown to the wild beasts as was my friend or burned at the stake.

He screamed at me, swear and I will set you free. I have no time for this. 80 and 6 years have lived most of it as a follower of Jesus Christ and Jesus has never done me the least wrong.

[8 : 07] How can I blaspheme my King and my Savior? You threaten me with a fire that burns for a season and after a little while is quenched, but you are ignorant of the fire of everlasting punishment that is prepared for the wicked.

The historian Eusebius tells us that Polycarp, upon refusing to deny, was immediately taken out, placed in before a stake, and when they went to tie him up, he says, no reason to bother.

I will not run. So they lit the bonfire on fire, but for some reason he did not burn.

So a Roman soldier walked up to him and stabbed him so he died there that day. Let me ask you a question.

Do you believe that truth is worth dying for? Do you believe that truth is worth dying for?

[9 : 33] We live in a society now that has done quick work of the meaning of what is truth, as if there could ever be such a thing as truth.

You know, an objective truth that we could all know together. I remember when I was in university some short 25 years ago, we were told that we couldn't talk God, but we could talk truth, but now if you read a university curriculum, you can talk about God, but you can't admit to truth.

You're all okay with whatever you believe. Writing on this subject, the Christian author David Wells writes, the idea of truth is something that can be known that does not change, seems altogether too objective, too rational, too distant, too remote, too relational, and too perfect for our disillusioned time.

When it is much more important to be honest about ourselves than to be parading abstract truths. He concludes, sadly, this is the truth this culture seems to embrace rather than reject.

See, the thing is, if we are able to determine our own truth, we determine our own gods. There's one author reasons.

[11 : 21] In fact, the matter is, personal gods pose no threats to ourselves, do they. They do not challenge our sinful self-will because they suit each sinner's personal preferences anyway.

And they tend to make no demands on anyone. John, who died on that island of Patmos, who disciplined Polycarp, simply wrote, the light came into the world and people love the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

Sadly, many of the believers and pastors who have embraced this form of truth do so because since all cannot be known, none of it cannot be known. I knew a man.

I sat down with him for many hours. There was a couple of verses that baffled him. He couldn't figure it out, so he just threw out his whole Bible just because there was a few verses he could not understand.

He believed that since there is no clarity in God's words, there can be no clarity in the church of God. And thus is the reason why we find a lot of churches acting more like food kitchens, justice centers, and social country clubs.

[12 : 49] clubs. Let me ask you this question. Would you die for a truth that you're not clear about? Of course not.

That is the greatest deception the world is pulling on, the greatest deception that Satan is pulling on the world. There is no truth.

The reality is the nature of ministry is determined by the nature of the church where we understand that nature from will direct us accordingly.

So this morning I want us to look at God's word says about the church and what it says to us. So as we look at 1 Timothy 3.14 we're going to see what Paul really believes about the church which is the truth which is to drive us as believers believers in Christ.

The context is the church at Ephesus which is the center of our study today. Timothy is now the pastor there trying to sort out many different issues.

[14:00] And his mentor Paul is writing him this advice. Listen, I hope to come to you soon but I'm writing these things so that if I delay you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God which is the church of the living God a pillar and buttress of the truth.

In fact by the time Timothy had returned to Ephesus bad doctrine was now being taught there was no gospel focus unqualified leaders and the truth was being exchanged for a lie.

What Paul deals with here is no different than today. Paul knew and understood that if this church kept going down the road they were going it would become well a social club than a church.

Let's take a look at verse 14. Here we see Paul's heart. Hey I really want to be there but I might be delayed. So he's actually so excited about this message that I'm actually going to send the message that I'm wanting to personally deliver to you.

I'm actually going to write it out and send it to you beforehand. I'm going to send this letter to you in case I get delayed that you may know what the main thing is and how glorious that main thing is.

[15:32] What I'm telling you here is Paul communicates to us in this passage what I have to say is important. In fact it is red alert important. You see if you can't get the truth down really understand it really believe it really practice it you're in trouble.

What truth is Paul talking about that I am talking about? I believe today's passage answers three questions when it comes to the church and what we are to consider when we try to figure out this church thing or what it is.

We're going to see quite clearly who does the church belong to, what is the mission of the church, and what is the message of the church.

So let's answer the first question here. Who does the church belong to? what are we supposed to put our faith in? Verse 15 he says, if I delay, he uses three descriptions for the church.

You may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God.

[16:50] So I want you to pay attention to three very important qualities that he uses here to describe this church. It's called a household of God. It's a church of the living God.

And he notices it is the pillar and buttress of truth. To get a real sense of what Paul is talking about here is we have to understand where this church is located.

As we all know, it's located in Ephesus, which is modern-day Turkey. It's actually where one is located, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

It was the temple of Diana or the temple of Artemis. You had to understand in this pagan culture, this temple was the center of everything.

You would go the whole world over and see nothing ever like this. It is told this temple had over 100 iconic columns.

[17:52] Every single one of them was a gift from a different king made of marble and studded with jewels and overlaid with gold. And each pillar acted as a tribute to the one who donated it.

It was kind of, look at me as I give to this goddess Diana. And they held up this magnificent roof, which was made of shiny marble.

How beautiful was this temple? Antipur of Sidon, who compiled the list of the seven wonders, describes the finished temples as such. He says, I have set my eyes on the wall of lofty Babylon, on which is a road for chariots, and the statue of Zeus by the Alpheus.

I've been to the hanging gardens, I've been to the colossus of the sun, I've seen the huge labor of the high pyramids, and the vast tomb of Masalus.

But when I saw the house of Artemis that mounted to the clouds, those other marvels lost their brilliancy. And I said, lo, apart from Olympus, the sun never looked on anything so grand.

[19:14] Paul's message is centered around this temple. Everybody knows it, everybody sees it, the whole economy is driven by this.

So there is in this building which dominates the entire city with its influence, both physically, Paul needs to teach them something else here. One, the household of God. How to behave in the household of God. God. In that temple you would have seen a lot of religious things. They actually ran a bank there for fear that robbers would never attack such a thing. There was temple prostitutes. There was sacrifices. Paul's going to describe something very differently. In fact, he's not describing a building, but a family. he's reminding us, or Timothy, what we've learned from Ephesians 2.19. It tells us that at salvation, we are no longer aliens or strangers to God, but we are actually fellow citizens with the saints and members with one another.

[20 : 33] This means that the barriers of race, social, status, economic means, mean nothing in the eyes of God. Does it matter who you are, where you are from?

God sees us as his children. And because we are his children, we are to act differently. We are called to live in an understanding manner.

We are called to forgive one another. We are called to be compassionate. We are called to be kind. We are called to be humble, to bear one another burdens.

In fact, our love for one another should be so immense that Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 14 that our conduct should draw people to God's glory.

Think about that. He's contrasting that with this temple that the world has called the most beautiful thing that their eyes have ever seen.

[21 : 44] That's how our lives are to equate. That people would call this the most beautiful thing they have ever seen.

Why? And this is where we learn he calls it the church of the living God. This group, this belonging, these people, us, belong to Jesus.

What does that mean? Acts 20, 28 says, which he obtained with his own blood. 1 Peter 2, 9 says, but you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession.

Why? That you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

What else is Paul playing off here? This huge, ornate, beautiful temple, all to a dead God that never exists to useless idols.

[22 : 58] What we represent is a true and living God. These people, they worshipped dead, lifeless idols.

But we are now indwelt by the living God. We are the temple which we don't construct, but God constructs. Amen? He's done the work, not us, him, who wills to work his perfect will within us. You see, the idea of a living God goes all the way back to the first testament. God had always intended to live amongst his people. Exodus 25, 8 says, and let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell in their midst.

Ezekiel 37, 27, the prophet would write, my dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

When God lives within you, this changes everything, doesn't it? How much more today does it mean?

[24 : 22] Paul writes in Ephesians 2, 22, in him, you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

You see, when the same Spirit dwells in people, there is unity, not division, because God dwells in us as his church.

When we come together as the church of the living God, we are to reflect his glory. The reality is we can go home, sit in our car, put on some songs, sing some songs, worship songs, we might cry, we might be moved by them, go on the internet, listen to several sermons, but we're not bound to those other people who sing those songs, we're not bound to those other people who listen to those sermons, but we are bound to one another when we come together to sing these songs together and to listen together to God's word.

This is all shaping all of us now, today, together. And there's a spiritual dynamic and encouragement in this.

Together, our witness is to be bolder and more urgent. Martin Luther stated, in my own house, there is no warmth or vigor for me, but in church, when we multitude is gathered together, a fire is kindled in my heart, and it breaks its way through.

[26 : 02] It's the reason why online and TV church will never work. It is why God is adamant that we as believers meet together. The third element of this truth that he talks about, notice he says the words, the pillar and buttress of truth.

In verse 15, he says, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

Here, in the face of this temple to a dead idol, a make-believe deity, here we see it contrasted. We are not supposed to be about lies, but we are to be about truth, truth that is divine revelation, which includes the gospel. Think of this temple, this incredible foundation, and these pillars laden with gold and jewels, all to bring attention to the kings who paid for and gave these great pillars. What do we do when we worship? We are to lift our heads to the glorious roof, this marvel that is over us, which is Jesus Christ.

[27 : 32] Christ. Our worship isn't about the action of our worshiping, our worship is to be about the one we worship.

You see, it's not the pillars that are important to the church, it's what the pillars hold up that is important.

Think of how each pillar that exists in a church, we do not exist to extol or call attention to ourselves, but we exist to call our attention to Jesus.

We buttress it up, we hold it up, we lean on it, and it is called Jesus, who is ultimate truth.

In fact, the church does not invent truth, the church doesn't alter truth, the church does not find truth, the church does not go looking for truth, the church is made up of truth and holds it up, amen?

[28 : 40] God found us, gave us the truth, it is us to be the pillars and the buttresses, those who hold up that truth, and that truth comes from God's word, the Bible.

It's interesting, where I used to live, there was a church that decided to take the word church out of their name. They said, well, we want to be more community minded, not doctrinally minded.

So I simply said to them, so you kind of like the idea of Jesus, but you really don't like what he says, right? How do you know what informs you about Jesus if it's not what he's given to us in God's word?

word. Now, what's interesting to note here is this foundation, this buttress, which defends the truth, is not done by me.

It's not done by Dave. It's not done by elders. It's done by you. You're the ones to hold up that truth.

[29 : 48] We, as members of the truth, do the same thing. But Paul doesn't give the responsibility just to the church leaders. He gives it to the church body.

It is you who are responsible to make a defense of the truth. It's not enough to believe it.

It's not enough to be excited about it. The question that I have for you is, do you uphold the truth?

First of all, do you believe it? Do you know it? Do you memorize it? Do you meditate on it?

Do you study it? Do you obey it? Defend it? Live it and ultimately proclaim it.

[30 : 59] The greatest way that you and I can proclaim God's truth is to make disciples. The greatest way is to take something that we hold so valuable, so rich that we think this truth is, we don't hide it in our hearts from others.

We want to give it to others. We want to boldly share it. We want to build them up so that they will love what we love.

the fact of the matter is, John 17, 17 states that Jesus stated that we are to be sanctified in this truth.

We are to reflect Jesus through our holiness, how we worship, how we behave, how we pray, how we submit, and how we disciple. how excited of Paul is this?

If you notice grade 16, we turn to look at verse 16, scholars actually believe Paul is writing this, and all of a sudden in the middle of it, he's so excited about writing God's truth, and the word of God, that he actually starts ripping off a few stanzas from worship songs, songs that they lifted up about God, that speak of his truth.

[32 : 32] he sings it out, that's how excited he is about Jesus. What is a sign of Jesus' earthly ministry concluding with a word of triumph and glorification?

The second stanza sings his ongoing ministry through the church. Anybody hear sing when you're thankful?

I do, right? I sing. I might even dance a jig with no one's looking, right? I'm excited about something.

Blue Jays lost, boo-hoo, but they get a great draft pick, right? But there's certain things with us we want to shout, we want to be expressful with something that is so great because it captivates us. Take a look at these words. He said He was manifested in the flesh which means He appeared in the flesh as human. He became a man identical to us in human body.

[33 : 42] He said He was vindicated by the Spirit. It says the Holy Spirit confirmed and proved that Jesus Christ was God's own Son and Savior of the world by raising Him from the dead.

1 Peter 3 18 writes, for Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the Spirit.

The Spirit proved Jesus, formed His baptism through persevering through sin, miracles, and even over powers over demons. It says He was seen by angels.

The angels were there at His birth. They proclaimed Him to the shepherds. They tended to Jesus in the wilderness and in the garden. They were the first witnesses of His resurrection.

Waiting by the empty tomb as His followers came up. It was the glorious news of the angels to say He is risen. He is no longer here.

[34 : 48] And the angels witnessed the ascension of Jesus into heaven. This message, this gospel, this truth is to be proclaimed among the nations.

What did these apostles do? They did it, right? Because we know this gospel today in a foreign land that did not even exist 2,000 years ago.

believed on in all the world this truth about Jesus and ultimately taken up in glory.

My question to you is, my friends, when you meet together with friends and family with thanksgiving, will you give thanks for truth will you give thanks for God's word?

Will you even think about it? Will you give thanks that God has opened your eyes to the spiritual reality and thank the Lord for him giving this message to such faithful men and women that you and I know now hear about it today?

[36 : 16] The reason we're here is because someone was faithful enough to tell us, to grow us. is this a truth that you would die for?

Is this a truth you would sacrifice for? God's not calling you to die right now for this truth.

Maybe at some point some of us will. But he certainly does call all of us to sacrifice.

For some it's a way of life. For some of us it's giving up comfort. For some of us it's giving up relationships. For some of us it's giving up our slavery to things that we know are causing us detrimental impact on our lives.

But ultimately my goal as we come together for this Thanksgiving are we thankful for this church which we are to be the pillars and buttresses of his truth not ours.

[37 : 43] Let me pray. Let pray. Let pray. Let pray.