

Portraits of the Church (3) - Pillar and Buttress of Truth

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Date: 31 July 2022

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] Well, a very warm welcome to you all to our service this morning. We're particularly glad to see visitors with us as well, and we want to give thanks to you for joining us for this time of worship.

We trust that together we will know God's blessing as we come to worship Him here together. I want to mention a few things from the bulletin sheet today, and the bulletin sheet is available for visitors as well.

Please take a copy with you. Everyone is welcome to the hall for tea and fellowship after the service just now. That includes, of course, visitors as well. You'll see the details for the meetings and services throughout the week on the first page of the bulletin there.

The meeting with prayer link with Muriel in Cambodia on Tuesday, prayer meeting on Wednesday, and Thursday the Gaelic prayer meeting, Saturday the English prayer meeting in the seminary. Lots of prayer meetings, and prayer is essential to the well-being of any congregation, and all of these prayer meetings themselves are an indication, I trust, of our concern to pray for the Lord's blessing week by week.

There's also an indication of the services next Lord's Day. The Holiday Club meets this week from Monday to Friday. We're seeking God's blessing on the Holiday Club as the children will learn about the Lord Jesus Christ.

[1 : 22] And next Sunday, 7th of August, everyone is welcome to the morning service. As a family service, it will be taken by Reverend Calumuro Smith, and then enjoy some fellowship in the hall afterwards as well, God willing.

There's a change to the ladies' walking group. You can just read the change for yourselves. They're a slight change from the usual. There's a thanks from the Elan Shear Food Bank. And they're asking also for donations of these items, pasta, curry sauces, etc.

You can just read these items through for yourselves. We all understand how the cost of living has increased so much in the last wee while. And the food banks themselves are providing a very valuable service to our community and many other communities as well.

And we're thankful for the provision that they make, and we're happy to support them that way and also as we can financially. You'll see the thanks there for the free breakfast that took place last week.

And there are a number of very encouraging responses and reports from those who attended the prayer breakfast and have indicated, God willing, they'd be very happy to come back next time.

[2 : 35] And we had some who came to the service as well following the breakfast, and all of that was most encouraging. We thank God for the opportunity to reach out with the gospel to visitors like that to the island.

You notice a congratulations there to Cara Hanlon. It's very appropriate. She is a young person brought up in the congregation here and still very much part of the congregation through her family particularly.

And her achieving, getting to the swimming final of the 50 metre breaststroke at the Commonwealth Games was really an amazing achievement in itself.

And it's worthy of note. And we give Cara and her family her best wishes, but also seek God's blessing for them. Now please also read the details there about the use of the car park, just to maximise the use of the car park.

If you can please just read these three points that are set out there for you, it's so that we can actually, as I say, maximise the availability of space in the car park. A few things also not mentioned

on the information sheet.

[3 : 40] Firstly, we regret to hear about the passing of Margaret Rose MacLeod. Margaret was a valued member of the congregation, lived in a trust housing on Madison Road, and she passed away.

But her funeral is not going to be here. It will be in Tain. She lived in Tain for some time. Her late husband is buried in Tain. But there is a memorial service, and that will be tomorrow at 2pm. And that will be in the seminary at 2pm. And all friends and others are warmly invited to that memorial service tomorrow. I'm also informed that little Jessica, Torkel and Jessie's granddaughter, for whom you've been praying and we've been praying since she was born, she's actually here today.

She'll be outside with Torkel and Jessie. So I'm sure anyone who wishes to see her and to see Torkel and Jessie with her as well would be welcome to go outside.

It's such a nice day, but I'm told that she'll be outside, round in the hall area after the service today. And we're really thankful to God for Jessica's continued upholding by God and improvement in her health as well.

[4 : 55] Now there's a slight change in the order of service today, just at the beginning of the service. We're going to have the main prayer later on in the service, just so the tweenies can actually not be in too long in the service, and they'll go through after the preliminaries.

There'll be the singing, a short prayer for the tweenies and Sunday school, then the address and the Lord's Prayer, then a psalm and then the prayer after that. So it's just a slight change. We're singing then to God's praise. We begin our worship singing to God's praise in Psalm 57. This is in the Scottish Psalter on page 288. And we're singing from verse 5 through to the end of the psalm.

Be thou exalted very high above the heavens, O God. Let thou thy glory be advanced over all the earth abroad. My souls bowed down, for they and yet have laid my steps to snare into the pit which they have digged for me.

They fallen are. This psalm is crying out to God for help, but also with thankfulness for his upholding of him. Let's sing these verses 5 to 11 to God's praise.

[6 : 08] Amen. Be thou exalted very high above the heavens, O God.

Let thou thy glory be advanced over all the earth abroad.

My souls bowed down, for they and yet have laid my steps to snare into the pit which they have for me.

For me they fall in awe. My heart is raised, my heart is raised, O God, thou sing the praise.

My glory with my soundry heart, my self by every way. My glory with my soundry heart, my self by every way.

[8 : 00] I'll praise thee, my heart, my heart. My heart is raised, my heart. I'll praise thee, my heart. The people, Lord, what nations she will lie.

For me, my heart is raised, my heart. For me to heaven, thy mercy is. Thy truth into the sky. O Lord, exalted be thy name.

O Lord, exalted be thy name. O Lord, exalted be thy name. O Lord, exalted be thy name.

Above the heavens to stand. To the glory of God Let's now pray for the Twinnies and for the Sunday School and for the children of the congregation.

Almighty God, we give thanks that we are gathered here today in Your presence and that all ages are welcome in Your presence as we come together to worship You.

[9 : 37] We thank You for these words that You have given us to sing, words that express our praise to God. We thank You today, Lord, for our children, for our young people, for those who belong to the congregation even at this early age, we pray today for Your blessing for them.

And we pray that as they receive the teaching of Your Word, we ask, Lord, that You would enable them, even at their youngest age, to receive these things into their heart, to plant them, Lord, in their minds, and so to develop under the instruction of Your own truth in a way that will be to their own life's fulfillment and to the glory of Your great name.

Receive us now, we pray, and pardon our sin in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Okay, children, you'll know that this week the Commonwealth Games are being held in Birmingham.

Commonwealth Games have all kinds of sports, competitions, and medals given out at the end of each of those to those who have won gold, silver, and bronze.

And really taking part, especially the Commonwealth Games, we're told that taking part is just as important in many ways as receiving medals. But, you know, that reminds us of two things about being Christians or the Christian life.

[11 : 00] Because all of those people competing in the Commonwealth Games have really trained hard for this event. They've spent years training for this event and dedicating themselves to preparing for the Commonwealth Games.

And the Bible tells us that that's also important for us as human beings, as Christians. Because dedication is one of the things that Jesus emphasizes and stresses for His people. To be dedicated to Jesus. To be dedicated to following Him. That's important for adults as well as children. But many times you'll read in the Gospels that Jesus spoke about how important it was to put Him first.

To be dedicated to following Him. To be His disciples. So today I want you to think about being dedicated to Jesus. Not dedicated to the church as such, though it's important you're here in church, you belong to the church.

But most important to be dedicated to Jesus. To be committed to Jesus. To love Jesus more than anyone else. And the second thing, along with being dedicated or committed to Jesus, or loving Jesus, is that all of these people in the Commonwealth Games are always saying to us how important it is to listen to what their trainer, what their coach has said to them.

[12 : 30] They follow the instructions of their coach. Now their coach is somebody who trains them. Somebody who actually tells them how to go about doing what they're doing.

Whether it's in swimming, or in running on the track, whatever activity it is, they have a coach that tells them this is how you do it so that you can do the best and be the best you can be.

And hopefully get a medal. And very often, the trainer that gives his time or her time to training the athletes have themselves been athletes before.

Somebody was asked the other day, one of the commentators was asked, what does it take to be a good coach? And the answer was, well, one thing, most of these coaches have already been through the experiences that these athletes are now experiencing.

So they can take from their experience and pass that on to those who are now competing in the likes of the Commonwealth Games. And you know, the Bible tells us that's one very important thing about Jesus.

[13 : 33] He is the coach of our lives. And he has been through the life that you and I are living as human beings. He came into this world.

He lived in this world. He died. He rose from the dead. He's gone back to heaven. And that tells us that every single thing we will experience, Jesus has already experienced.

And he is able to help us as nobody else can in our experiences as well. Even for you children today, Jesus was a little boy.

Jesus came into the world as a baby. He was nursed by his mom. He was looked after in a family. He grew up as a boy, just as you little boys and girls are growing up today.

And so he knows what it's like to be brought up as a youngster, as a child, and then growing up to be an adult. And he's able to give from the experience he's had, as well as being the son of God, everything that we need to help us in our life as well.

[14 : 38] So remember these two things. Remember, first of all, to be dedicated to Jesus. And remember, secondly, to listen to Jesus' instructions.

And he has given us these instructions. He is the spiritual coach of our lives. And the instructions are set out in the Bible. One of the things we're doing here today, as we do every Sunday, is to listen to Jesus' voice speaking to us from the Bible and saying, this is how your life is to be lived. This is what I've done for you. And this is what I now need from you in order to follow me as my disciples. Dedication and listening to his instructions.

Now let's say the Lord's Prayer together. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

[15 : 49] For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. We're going to sing to God's praise again. And while we're singing, the Twinnies will go through to the hall.

We're singing from Psalm 25. Psalm 25 in the Sing Psalms version. That's from page 29. verses 4 to 9. And this is just really as we've been saying to the children, a prayer for God to lead us and for us to listen to the way that he leads us in his ways.

O Lord, reveal to me your ways and all your paths. Help me to know. Direct and guide me in your truth. Instruct me in the way to go. These verses 4 to 9.

And we stand to sing. O Lord, reveal to me your ways and all your paths.

Help me to know. Direct and guide me in your truth.

[17 : 10] Enstruct me in the way to go. You are my Savior and my God.

I'll give my hope in you alone. Remember, Lord, your love and grace, which of my sins you have shown.

Do not recall my sins of you, for my sins you have found.

For my sins you have found. For my sins you have found. For my sins you have found. For my sins you have found. Take and guard me in your ways. Remember me in your grace, Fender me in your great love, for you, O Lord, are good always.

Because the Lord is just and good, He shows His path to all who stay.

[19 : 00] He guides the people in what is right, and teaches them His holy way.

Amen. So let's turn to read God's Word. Our reading today is from 2 Timothy, chapter 2, verses 1 to 26.

That's the second letter of Paul to Timothy, and chapter 2 from the beginning. You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal.

[20 : 35] But the Word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

The saying is trustworthy, for if we have died with him, we will also live with him. If we endure, we will also reign with him. If we deny him, he will also deny us.

If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself. Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words which does no good but only ruins the hearers.

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness.

And their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who having sworn of the truth, saying that the resurrection has happened already, they are upsetting the faith of some.

[21 : 41] But God's firm foundation stands bearing the seal. The Lord knows those who are his, and let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.

Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable.

Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

So flee youthful passions, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who are who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies. You know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome, but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness.

[22 : 42] God may perhaps grant them repentance, leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may escape from the snare of the devil after being captured by him to do his will.

Amen. May the Lord bless to us reading that portion of his precious word. Let's now call upon him once more in prayer. Lord our God, we come before you to bow our minds to your truth.

We thank you that you have given us your truth in the record of your word. We pray today, Lord, for receptive hearts, for hearts that will be freed from our own prejudices, from our own inclination to understand things in the light of our own wisdom.

We pray, O Lord, that your word today will truly deliver us into the freedom with which Christ makes us free. We thank you today, Lord, for the reliability of your word, the way that we can depend upon it, for it has remained unchanged in itself down through the years.

We pray that we may look after it as you have given us charge, O Lord, to be custodians of your truth. And we pray that as we seek to have our lives influenced day by day by your truth, that we may be increasingly dependent upon it.

[24 : 07] Lord, we ask that your Holy Spirit will today open our eyes further, increase our understanding, we pray, and enable us to delve into the deep parts of your word so that we may find our lives develop in a way that will be holy and acceptable to you.

We thank you today, Lord, for this occasion. We thank you for this day which you have set apart and which was set apart even from the creation of the world as a day to be different to the other six, a day on which your people are able to gather as we do here in public worship, a day that we can use to set aside, in the most part, the ordinary things of life, the ordinary course of our employment in the world, and to give ourselves more fully to the study of your truth and the worship of your name and the fellowship of your people.

We ask today your blessing, Lord, for our gatherings and for the gatherings of your own church throughout the world in very different circumstances at times to ours here. And yet we are bound by that common tie of grace and of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And Lord, we pray today for our fellow believers throughout the world that your cause will advance, that your word will be blessed, and that you will, Lord, grant to all who serve you in these various countries of the world and in the varied circumstances of their lives and of your providence for them. Lord, we pray today that your blessing will truly reach them. Bless all today who preach your word. O Lord, we recognize the place you have given to the preaching of your word and the history and experience of your church down to the present day.

[25 : 52] For truly, faith comes by hearing and hearing the word of Christ. You have given us that truth in the context of the preaching of your word by those whom you have called to preach it.

Help us to be faithful to your calling. Help us, Lord, to be faithful in speaking as well as in hearing.

We ask your blessing for us, for this congregation we belong to in these days ahead, O Lord.

We pray that you'll bless all that we seek to do in your name, following on from the services of worship today and during the midweek. We pray for the other activities, O Lord, that have been set up without concern to glorify your name, to extend the teaching of your word by other means, and to also specially instruct our young people.

Remember, we pray the holiday club. We give thanks for those who have set it up and for those who have contributed so much, O Lord, to preparing for their children throughout this week.

We ask your blessing, Lord, to be upon it. We pray that those who will act as leaders in it will indeed find satisfaction in seeing your blessing reaching these young lives.

[27 : 03] We pray for our tweenies, for our children in Sunday school, in Bible class, and in youth fellowship. We ask that you'd bless them. We pray that your blessing will be with all who have dedicated themselves and intend to do so in this year ahead to the teaching of our young people.

O Lord, remember all our Sunday school teachers. We thank you for their commitment, for their way in which they have given of themselves so readily to prepare week by week lessons for the children.

We pray that they may be blessed, that their prayers may be heard by you in the blessing of their young children under their care. We ask too, Lord, that you'd bless all who help with the older age group in the congregation, those who have reached adulthood, those who come to Bible class, those who are coming to the youth fellowship.

We ask that, O Lord, you would bless all our efforts in seeking to bring your truth before young minds. We pray for Marianne, our youth leader, and all who help her.

We ask today that you'd bless her. She recovers from her time at camp. We pray for your blessing to follow the work of camps, O Lord, and give thanks for the number of children and young people that attended, for those who gave up their time, not only as leaders, but as cooks, and in other ways to help with the running of the camps.

[28 : 24] Lord, again, we commend this work to you and ask that you'd be pleased to bless it. And we pray that you would bless those today, Lord, who we know are in difficulties of various kinds.

Remember those facing hardship. We pray for the state of our nation, Lord, in times of financial concern and of the increase in the cost of living.

O Lord, we look to you and ask that you would alleviate the stress of those who find themselves without work and need to provide for their families. We pray for relationships affected by these times of stress and pray, Lord, that you would protect marriages and families from falling apart.

We ask, Lord, for those that have struggles in different ways in dealing with a situation in terms of mental health. Lord, we pray for them and ask that you'd bless them.

We pray for those who administer the food bank locally and other food banks throughout our nation. We thank you for your provision in that. For those who are in need, we pray that they may not be exploited.

[29 : 29] And we ask that you would bless those who are in genuine need through them and ask that your blessing, Lord, will reach the ministry of mercy and of help that is extended to our communities.

And we pray for the Salvation Army as they especially head up the work of the food bank. And we ask, O Lord, that your blessing will follow all their efforts in providing for these needs.

We pray for those who are ill today in different ways. We pray for those with COVID, those recovering from COVID, those, Lord, who have other illnesses to contend with, whether physically or mentally.

We commend them all to you. We pray for any of our young children and toddlers who are ill at this time. Remember them, we pray. And those that we know and other families too.

We give thanks for your continued upholding of young Jessica. We pray for her as she, Lord, as we pray for her and continue that her progress indeed will be blessed by you.

[30 : 31] Remember her parents, grandparents, Lord, grant to her that she may know your own blessing upon her young life from day to day. And so we pray for all others that we know are ill at this time.

And we do commend them to you in our congregational family. We pray too for those who mourn the passing of loved ones. We pray for all of Margaret MacLeod's own relatives and her friends, her many friends.

We give thanks for the bright witness of her life and for the way that she was so unashamed in her proclamation of your truth through her life. And we pray, O Lord, that her witness may continue even though she is now no longer in this world.

So remember us, Lord, we pray now as we turn to your word. Hear us in this, our prayer and cleanse us from all our sin. For Jesus' sake. Amen. Always turn with me, please, now to 1 Timothy, chapter 3 and verse 15.

1 Timothy and chapter 3 and verse 15. We'll read again from verse 14.

[31 : 53] I hope to see you, come to see you soon, but I'm 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 truth.

Now we began a short series on scripture portraits of the church some weeks ago. We're doing it during our morning service whenever I'm here in the morning. As you know, every second week or so I'll be in the Gaelic service, but every week we're together in the English morning service.

We're following this short study. And we looked at this verse twice before, looking at the descriptions or the portraits you find of the church in this verse itself. We looked, first of all, at the church described as the church of the living God.

And we emphasized especially, as the Bible does, that the church is the people of God, the worshipping, witnessing people of God. And that's why they're called here, it's the church of the living God.

Secondly, we looked last time at the household of God and how that description really brings in the whole idea of a family and relationships in a spiritual family as the church is described there as the household of God.

[33 : 09] And some of the aspects of those relationships we covered briefly. And you can just remind yourselves of them if you have time. Just go back to the website and you can just listen to that again if you wish.

Now, tonight or today, we're looking at the third description here in this verse, and that's the pillar and buttress of truth. Now, you all know, I'm sure, what a pillar or buttress is. You've just got to look around you to see pillars. And you can see pillars in terms of buildings. Mostly pillars actually support something that's set or situated above them, just as you find the gallery around this church that's now supported by all of those pillars that you find the length of the building.

They are supporting of the gallery. And that description of the church as the pillar of the truth really shows the support of God's truth by the church.

The church is, as God sets the church in the world, the church is a pillar of the truth. And the word buttress is also very closely related to that.

[34 : 12] A buttress is more particularly in older buildings nowadays. Newer buildings have technology that maybe doesn't require the same amount of support.

But those of you involved in building can correct me afterwards if I'm wrong. But a buttress, you'll see in old buildings, old church buildings, for example. And indeed, I think there's some outside this building itself.

Usually outside the walls, there's a construction of cement blocks or whatever starting down below in a wider dimension and then just going all the way up and narrowing as they reach the top. And that's a buttress that's there to support that wall. You could say it's to prevent that wall just falling out or collapsing outward. It actually helps to keep that wall upright and straight without falling in on itself or outward.

So the buttress is a support as well as the pillar and that's the description that Paul is giving here of the church. That's the portrait we have of the church. This living body of people, this church which is the church of the living God, this household of God, it is the pillar and buttress of the truth.

[35 : 25] Now in our translation, we don't have the word the, but it should be there. A pillar and buttress of truth, but strictly speaking, it should be the truth. A pillar and buttress of the truth.

And that's important because the truth is God's revealed truth, not just any kind of thing that passes for the truth. It is God's revealed truth that Paul has in mind, the gospel, the word of God, what God has revealed as his truth to us human beings.

That is what the church is set by God in the world to support. the church as the pillar and buttress of the truth, of God's truth, of the gospel.

The church itself came into being through the truth. Way down through the centuries from the very beginning of time, you will find that God's church, God's visible church, the people of God in the world, came into being through God's blessing of his truth, of his revealed truth.

And as God's revealed truth was increased gradually down through the ages and now we have a complete Bible, it's through that truth, through that truth being communicated to people like you and I, that the church comes into being, that the church is upheld, that the church is increased.

[36 : 45] So through the truth, God's church came into being. And born from the truth, the church is now charged by God to be the pillar and buttress of that truth of the gospel through which we came to be born as Christians, formed as a church, as the household of God.

Now there are two things that I want to mention just following on from that as to what the church and we as the church must be, or a branch of the church. This is through of every congregation of God's people, that they are themselves as a section of the wider church, the pillar and buttress of the truth where they are.

First thing is that the church is a custodian of the truth. The church exists to guard the truth, a custodian of the truth.

And secondly, the church is a conveyor or communicator of the truth. The church exists to present the truth to the world as well as to itself in its own internal consumption of the truth through the gospel.

So it's a custodian of the truth and it's a conveyor or communicator of the truth as the pillar and buttress of truth. Now first of all, it is a custodian of the truth.

[38 : 10] You'll recall that the first attack on mankind in the Garden of Eden was when the devil in the form of the serpent came to Eve and the attack was on this specific point, on the point of God's truth or God's truthfulness because the first words of the serpent of the devil to human beings was, has God indeed said?

Is it really the truth? Are you sure that this is the truth? Or has he given you the whole truth? Has he kept something back from you that you really ought to have had?

You see, all of that is part of this prong, this attack on human beings and their relationship with God and it's on the basis of God's truth. Has God really said?

And all the way down through history that has taken different forms but it's essentially the same attack in essence. Has God indeed said, is this the word of God really?

Look at chapter 4. No sooner has he said this in chapter 3 than he begins to deal with what Timothy is going to face and what the church is going to face in the time ahead.

[39 : 29] The Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits, teachings of demons through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage, who require abstinence from food that God created to be received with thanksgiving and so on.

That is just the church's custodianship of the truth being attacked. It's going to be under assault, Timothy is told, and that's still the case very much today.

You'll find in Jude's short epistle that he says, I intended to write to you about certain things common to the faith, but instead he was led to focus on this, what he says, that you should contend for the truth once for all delivered to the saints by God.

that's what Jude, led by God, set out in his little epistle because he lived in days when that truth was under severe assault and he was led by God to actually set out this letter to plead with those that were reading it to contend for the truth, to fight the cause of truth, never to give up standing for the truth.

A church contradicting the truth is a tragic sight. Any denomination, any congregation, the church visibly actually not contending for the truth or, on the other hand, compromising the truth, contradicting the truth is really a tragic sight because it's contrary to and directly against the command, the instruction, the privilege that God has given us regarding his truth to be custodians of it.

[41 : 30] And I didn't tell you that today that is actually very commonly found that foundational doctrines are being denied or being distorted or being contradicted or being repackaged, if you like.

You can use lots of words but that's what you find in the present day and I'm not saying this in any way so as to try and elevate ourselves as if we were superior to other denominations or churches is not to give ourselves a pat on the back, it's actually just to take stock of the situation we face in the world that we face in the ecclesiastical world of today where people who confess themselves to be Christians and bishops and ministers and so on will actually have no hesitation in denying the nature of the Bible itself.

We'll have no hesitation in denying what the gospel is about, denying the trinity that God is, denying the resurrection of Jesus, distorting the terms of salvation, clouding the issues of what comes after death, denying the reality of hell and a whole lot of other things I could mention.

That's what's out there in the ecclesiastical world and God is saying to you and to me, you are custodians of my truth. I have given you my truth to look after it, to guard it, to prize it, to love it, to believe it, to embrace it, to show it forth as my truth.

Today here in this locality, we are the custodians of the truth. We're not the only custodians of the truth as a congregation. Thankfully, other congregations are also, other denominations are also.

[43 : 11] But for us ourselves, this is what we're focusing on, how it affects ourselves, how it has a relationship with us. God is saying to us, you are a pillar and buttress of my truth.

Now to do that, you and I personally must believe this truth, must embrace this truth, must see this truth as so significant that we cannot alter its terms unless we're being disobedient to God.

and we have to love this truth and we have to show this truth to the world and not be ashamed of the fact that God has given us this word, this gospel, this truth to be shown out as His will for humanity.

We are custodians of the truth. It's a great privilege. It's a great responsibility. But it's something for which God Himself will furnish us by His Holy Spirit to be true to this calling, to be indeed custodians of His truth.

Secondly, it means as the pillar and buttress of the truth that we are conveyors or communicators of the truth. Not only has God given us the privilege of guarding His truth, looking after it, but also conveying it, presenting it, communicating it to the world in which we live.

[44 : 44] And there are three elements that I want to mention. We could mention others, but three especially I want to mention in relation to this for the rest of our time. First of all, the word preached.

The word preached. And the word preached is both an explanation and an application of God's truth. That's essentially what we go to college, to seminary for, to actually be trained by those who are able to do this, to train us in how to explain the Bible, how to open up the Bible, how to bring out the meaning of the Bible, how to apply the teaching of the Bible to our everyday lives as human beings.

That's what the preaching of the gospel is about. And preaching in the New Testament, as you see, you know very well yourselves this is the case. In the New Testament, preaching has a primary, the primary place in conveying the truth of God.

It doesn't mean we don't communicate by other means, but this is centrally, foundationally, how all the way through the New Testament, the truth of God is disseminated and broadcast and set forth. The preaching of the gospel. And as the preaching of the gospel has down through the years been blessed by the Lord, so, for example, Paul in Acts chapter 20, where he said a very emotional farewell to the elders at Ephesus.

[46 : 11] I remember they came to him and they wept that they were not going to see his face anymore after all the time that they had spent with him and been taught by him. But he said, I did not shirk from preaching to you the whole counsel of God.

That's what he emphasized. The whole counsel of God. In other words, what he was saying is whatever God has revealed in his word, whatever he has revealed in the gospel, it's our business to convey as a church and as a preaching of the gospel.

All the different topics, some more emphasized than others, but all the different topics as they relate together, that is the business of preaching the gospel. That is why you're here today.

Yes, I know you're here to worship the Lord in the whole breadth of the service of worship, worship, but central to that is the preaching of the gospel, the feeding of your minds, the feeding of your souls, the instruction of your hearts.

You know, and we're so, we are so thankful those of us who are called to preach the gospel. One of the things we're profoundly thankful for, and let it never be anything else, that you're praying for us, that you're praying that the preaching of the gospel will be effective, that you're praying that we will deliver the whole counsel of God without compromise, without fear, without contradiction, because that is what God has given you as a privilege and me as a privilege to be conveyors of the truth, to have the word preached to you and by us.

[47 : 51] And that means the truth of God is applicable in the preaching of the gospel to all aspects of life. It's not just for personal salvation, of course it is that, for your personal relationship with God, for your salvation, for your justification, for your hope of eternal life.

But the preaching of the gospel must include all things such as social conditions, moral issues, political issues.

That doesn't mean that the preacher of the gospel must become a politician, that he must start dabbling in politics rather than preaching the gospel. But politics has to come into it because when the government of the day introduces law that are contradictory to the word of God, introduces things which are hateful to God in terms of personal morality or public morality, the church has to, as custodians of the truth, as communicators of the truth, raise its voice.

The preaching of the gospel has to deal with that. And whatever governments might say, whatever people generally might say, well, the church has no business dealing with it, that's a political issue. If the politics of the day or the government of the day introduces legislation that is harmful to unborn children or introduces euthanasia, God forbid, but it's on the horizon, or anything else that has to do with moral issues and ethics in public life or in private life, the preaching of the gospel must set out the will of God against that.

[49 : 35] It's not dabbling in politics. It's not dealing with things which are beyond the reach of the preaching of God's word. It's bringing the light of truth.

It's communicating the truth of God to the current situation, whatever it might be. And it's our pleasure and our responsibility to raise our voices, not just in preaching, but as we'll see in a minute, also in Christian conduct because you have voices along with the preached word that needs to actually hold governments to account if they are contradicting or compromising God's revealed truth.

So that's the first thing in the conveying of truth. There is the word preached, but there's secondly what I'm going to call instructive evangelism. instructive evangelism.

When you go back to the terms of Matthew, Matthew 28, the Great Commission, we usually refer to it as the Great Commission, Matthew 28, and verses 19 to 20 especially.

This is what Jesus said to the disciples just before He left them to go back to heaven. He said, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

[50 : 57] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

You see, there are two things very closely joined together there, making disciples and teaching.

You can't extract the teaching element from the making disciples element.

What Jesus is saying to His church is, I'm sending you forth. I have the authority and you are, on that basis, sent into the world to make disciples.

But you make disciples not just by baptizing them, but by teaching them. You have an instructive evangelism. And that follows through into our evangelism as well.

Because evangelism has to be instructive. It's not that we evangelize, just looking at things practically, and then different or separate from that, we instruct, we teach.

[52 : 02] No, it has to be a teaching or an instructive evangelism. As you seek to bring the gospel to people, as you reach out with the gospel into our communities, you reach out with the truth of God.

You lay out the truth of God as you're seeking to have people give attention to the claims of God upon them. And indeed, that's what we've been seeking to do.

And that's what we're seeking to do this coming week, even, in the holiday club. We are seeking to have a means alongside the formal services of the church, a means by which our young people, our children, can receive the truth of God.

It's not entertainment. There is an attractive element in it. There are certain things involved in it that are, if you like, not exactly lecturing or preaching in its own right.

It's creating an environment that will give pleasure to our children, but will also be a means of bringing the truth to them, of educating them under the truth.

[53 : 12] And the same is true of our Sunday school. Why do we have Sunday school? Why do we have Bible class? It's so that our young people can actually come to have the truth of God communicated to their young minds, to bring them under the shaping effect of God's truth.

Same thing with the free breakfast. You'll notice in the bulletin sheet, the details from that, that free breakfast, which maybe not everybody would agree with, but what we're seeking to do in that is use the opportunity that God has given us in His providence to bring the gospel to people who otherwise wouldn't have it, or most of them at least wouldn't have it, because many, many people left that free breakfast with a free copy of the Bible, which they didn't have.

They asked, some of them, asked for a Bible. We gave them a Bible. We gave them the Word of God. We gave them the truth of God. Some of them came to the service afterwards. They weren't used to coming to church services, certainly not to free church services, but they came, and they came willingly, and they came under the truth of God.

That's the intention. That's the purpose. We are communicators of the truth. That is the church itself. And in all of that instructive evangelism, our concern, of course, our overriding concern, is the glory of God, the praise of God.

Not making a name for ourselves. Nothing like that, but to bring the truth of God to bear upon people's lives. Young ones, middle-aged, old, doesn't matter.

[54 : 47] This is the church as the pillar and buttress of the truth, communicating the truth through the preaching of the gospel, through instructive evangelism, thirdly, through Christian conduct.

Let me come back to the verse itself in 1 Timothy, which says, I hope to see you soon, verse 14, but to come and see you soon, but I'm 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.

A worldly church, a church that's packed with worldliness, and by that I mean things which especially are contradictory to the Word of God, to the truth of God, or have displaced the likes of preaching with something else.

A church that exists just to entertain people or to draw praise to people themselves. A worldly church is a sure way to create more atheists.

It's always been the case. Atheists are not created by the church withstanding assault from those who are in enmity to the gospel. Atheists are created largely through the church abandoning its custodianship of the truth and its communicating of the truth as the truth of God.

[56 : 21] Let me just briefly, before we close, go to Ephesians. So I want to show you a pattern there in Ephesians. That's important. Ephesians 5 and verses 1 to 6.

It starts there, therefore be imitators of God as beloved children, children beloved by God, and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Then he says, but sexual immorality, all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you as is proper among saints. And all the way through then he says, these are the things that ought not to be found in the people of God in the church of God.

Let no one deceive you with empty words. For because of these things, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not associate with them. For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.

You see, there is an antithesis. There are two opposites there. You were darkness, past tense, but now you are light in the Lord.

[57 : 34] You are in the Lord, therefore you are light. You are a contradiction of what you once were as lost sinners. But then he says this, walk as the children of light.

At one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as the children of light. For the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true.

And try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness.

Instead, expose them. How is it to expose them?

By walking as the children of light. By being in their practice what they claim to be in their profession. By being in their way of life.

What their gospel actually sets out for them as they should be. And then, of course, in Ephesians you find a pattern. I mentioned a pattern there.

[58 : 38] There is a pattern. He doesn't leave it at that. He then goes down at verse 22, wives. Verse 25, husbands. Chapter 6, children. Slaves, obey your earthly masters.

That was the world of the day. Masters, do good to those who are your slaves as well. And so on. You see, he's building on layer upon layer of application to what it means to walk as the children of light.

Wives, husbands, children, employees, employers. The credibility of Christ and the gospel and the truth of the gospel is hung upon these hooks of your life and my life because that world out there doesn't read the Bible and sometimes doesn't possess a Bible but it knows how Christians ought to behave.

It knows what kind of people Christians ought to be. It knows what the church ought to be and what the church ought to say and how the church ought to behave. And it is Paul's burden that as a pillar and buttress of the truth so we be a pillar and buttress of the truth not just by the word preached and not just by the word preached along with instructive evangelism but by our own Christian conduct by the biblical morality of our life and of our lifestyle.

the church as we saw in our first study is the people of God the called out called together people of God called out from the world called together to be a distinct people of God in the world.

[60 : 22] And we really want to be all of that as a congregation. We all know there is no perfect church no perfect congregation no perfect Christian in this world and none of what I am setting out today is intended in any way to discourage you or to discourage myself because the more we find the standard of God in his word set out the more we should be determined to actually match up to that and deal with the ways in which we don't match up.

It is not to discourage us it is rather to encourage us to be more Christ-like than we are. But we want to be as we saw in our more recent studies in Philippians.

Philippians 1 verse 27 this is what Paul is saying it doesn't matter he says whether I come and see you or else be absent only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ so that whether I come and see you or I am absent I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel that is God's truth striving side by side that means every individual of the church has a contribution to make to the overall guardianship and

communicating of the truth of God by the church and he says and not frightened anything by your opponents R.C. Sproul the late American theologian and Bible expositor and preacher who left a great legacy to the church and the

Lagonia ministry you can find that online just check it out there's so much good stuff there but in one of his sermons he said this I think the greatest weakness and I'm saying this in relation to both the word preached and the instructive evangelism and the Christian conduct that I've mentioned because it applies to all three he said I think the greatest weakness in the church today is that almost no one believes that God invests his power in the Bible everyone is looking for power in a program in a methodology in a technique in anything and everything but that in which God has placed his word he alone has the power to change lives for eternity and that power is focused on the scriptures the revealed truth of God we are to be custodians of it and communicators of it in the world in which he has placed us let's pray

Lord our God there are so many challenges that we face in the teaching of your word a challenge to convey your truth accurately a challenge to live your truth in our lives consistently a challenge oh Lord as we find these descriptions of your church which involves ourselves help us to be pillar and buttress of your truth Lord help us to love your truth even like the psalmist who could say with a deep appreciation oh how I love your law it is my study all the day it makes me wiser than my foes and we pray that today oh Lord we may continue and rededicate ourselves indeed to God and to his truth help us as a congregation as a denomination and all those denominations and congregations that are true to you help us Lord we pray to truly be a pillar and buttress of your truth give us to delight in being so whatever it may attract to us by way of opposition we know that your spirit is more than able to uphold us hear us we pray for Jesus sake

[64 : 28] Amen now we're going to conclude our worship this morning singing Psalm 111 again we're singing from the Scottish Psalter on page 391 and verses 6 to 10 and the psalmist is here in the psalm dealing with the way that God has made himself known through his works in the world and how he especially has made known his grace and compassion and his covenant love for his people so from verse 6 we'll sing to the end of the psalm he did the power of his works and to his people show when he the heathen's heritage upon them did bestow his handiworks are truth and right all his commands are sure and done in truth and uprightness they evermore endure these verses to the end he did the power of his what unto his people show when he and are through

And God in truth and uprightness Be evermore endure He sent redemption to his soul His heaven and glory He did from an holy is named And reverend is always With John's beginning Is God's fear Good understanding And all that is promised Fulfill his grace endures for him

If you could allow me to get to the main door, please, I'll greet you there on the way out. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always.

Amen. ...