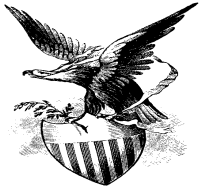


# Light Brings Salt

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## Iron Range Bible Church

*Dedicated to the Systematic Exposition of the Word of God*



### The Church's Focus Must be on Sound Doctrine

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The study and exposition of 1 Timothy along with the other pastoral epistles could be dubbed 'The life of the local church'. For in them we find Paul's instruction in many areas that are crucial to the proper function of the local assembly.

Paul writes at length about local church leadership, the criteria for eligibility for the pastorate, and conduct/ethics of leadership, and how young leaders can ensure that their ministry is accepted, and not despised or rejected on account of their youth.

Other subjects covered include the principles governing the church's social work, that is the church's responsibility towards those in need within the congregation, the remuneration and disciplining of pastors, the superiority of contentment over covetousness, the call to radical holiness, and the dangers and duties of the rich.

But the apostle's overriding preoccupation throughout all three Pastoral Letters is with the truth, doctrine that it may be faithfully guarded and handed on to the next generation.

The pertinence of this theme, at this time in the church age, is evident. For contemporary culture is being overtaken

and submerged by what is called postmodernism.

Post-modernism began as a self-conscious reaction against the modernism of the Enlightenment, and especially against its unbounded confidence in reason, science and progress.

The postmodern mind rightly rejects this naive optimism. But it then goes further and swings the pendulum all the way to the other end of the spectrum and declares that there is no such thing as objective, or absolute truth.

The view is that all so-called 'truth' is purely subjective, being culturally conditioned, and that therefore we all have our own truth, which has as much right to be respected as anybody else's.

Pluralism is an offspring of postmodernism; it affirms the independent validity of every faith and ideology, and demands in often shrill tones that we abandon as impossibly arrogant any attempt to convert somebody to our viewpoint or convictions.

In contrast to this relativization of truth, it is wonderfully refreshing to read Paul's unambiguous commitment to it.

He has himself been appointed, he says, *a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth*. (1 Tim. 2:7); that *the church is 'the pillar and foundation of the truth'* (1 Tim. 3:15); and it is *the truth which 'leads to godliness'* (Titus. 1:1).

He also warns that false teachers, on the *other* hand, 'have wandered away from the truth' and even 'oppose the truth' (1 Tim. 6:21; 2 Tim. 2:18; 3:8; cf. 4:4).

First we must recognize that Paul himself, styles himself at the beginning of all three letters an apostle of Jesus Christ, adding in two of them that his apostleship is by the will or the command of God. And all through these letters his self-conscious apostolic authority is apparent, as he issues commands and expects obedience.

Also, again and again, he refers to what he calls almost indiscriminately 'the truth', 'the faith', 'the sound doctrine', 'the teaching' or 'the deposit'.

The plain implication is that a body of doctrine exists, which, having been revealed and given by God, is objectively true. It is the teaching of the apostles and prophets. That which Paul in Eph. 2:20 says is the foundation that the Church is to build on.

Paul constantly exhorts Timothy and Titus back to it, that is the truth, doctrine, not just directed to Timothy and Titus together with the churches they oversee. But as examples for all churches to follow.

A second thread that also runs throughout, is opposition to Paul and this message of truth and doctrine by those that are false teachers.

Paul refers to them as *heterodidaskaloi* (1 Tim. 1:3; 6:3), that is those engaged in teaching what is *heteros*, (ἕτερος) different from and alien to the teaching of the apostles.

They are essentially deviationists, who have 'wandered' or 'swerved' from the faith (1 Tim. 1:6; 4:1; 2 Tim. 2:18). Paul does not mince his words. What they are spreading in Paul's own words is not an alternative truth, but 'lies', 'godless

chatter', 'myths' and 'meaningless talk'.

Ten times in 1 Timothy and Titus Paul writes 'teach these things', 'command and teach these things', or 'give the people these instructions'.

On each occasion *tauta* ('these things') refers to the teaching which Paul is giving Timothy and Titus. They are not only to hold on to it themselves, guarding the precious deposit of truth (1 Tim. 1:19; 3:9; 6:20), and to fight for it against the false teachers (1 Tim. 1:18; 6:12), but also to pass it on faithfully to those in the church. 2 Tim. 2:2

These pastoral epistles were written to individual men, gifted men given to the church who were to be responsible for the L/C, its direction and function, the how to or how not to do certain things.

Look at 1 Tim. 4:11 - here and in the following verses Paul gives Timothy a series of commands that are very important as one considers the message of the pastoral epistles and their importance in the function of the local assembly, as it seeks to honor God.

Read carefully 1 Tim. 4:16.

This section tells us that Timothy needed to be challenged - and charged related to his responsibilities as a pastor. Therefore we are better informed as to what are the responsibilities of a pastor and therefore what we should expect to find in a properly functioning local church.

Teaching is central - question is teaching what? The word is διδασκαλία = Doctrine. The importance of correct doctrine we find as you work these pastoral epistles cannot be over stated. (διδασκαλία = Biblical teaching on any given subject)

Too many believers today are ashamed or shy away from saying that Doctrine is important. Oh, Its too dry! Its too

academic! Not so!! Most seem to be seeking to be entertained and made to feel good.

Is it not important for us to know, to understand the message God has for us?

What the creator of the Universe has said is it true or false? Is it important or can we just ignore it with no consequences? Don't think so!!!

Some important observations on Doctrine:

1. True Doctrine finds its source only in divine revelation. Jn 7:14-16
2. Doctrine was the message of the early church. Acts 5:27-29

We find this consistency of focus on doctrine throughout the pastorals!

In 1 Tim 4:1 the exhortation is that we need to be on guard since Satan is a great teacher, so also are his operatives demons; counterfeits, false teaching, apostasy found in so many pulpits today. (also 4:6; 4:13; 5:17)

- 6:1 conduct ourselves in harmony with WOG;
- 6:3 defines sound words; 2 Tim 3:10 follow after truth
- 2 Tim. 3:16; 4:3
- Titus 1:9 strong instruction to Titus, all pastors;
- Titus 2:1; 2:7

3. How can we say as a believer, this is the Word of God and never study its message, don't even crack the cover, except at church and you only do that when its not inconvenient for you.

4. This book, the Bible, has the greatest, highest claims of any book ever published, the greatest number sold of all time and its studied the least.

5. True doctrine was to be guarded from error. Jude 3 "contend earnestly for the faith" 1 Tim. 1:3 speaks of strange doctrine; totally different
6. True BD is the basis of right conduct, moral conduct. 1 Tim. 1:10
  - sound healthy doctrine; man's conduct reflects use of or lack of understanding of doctrine.
7. True BD will eventually become intolerable to most. 2 Tim 4:1-4
  - Unfortunately today the focus is need centered preaching; psychologized "me" centered preaching; all designed to make you feel good, not to live righteously before God.
8. True BD is to be the identifying characteristic of the Church and therefore of believers. 1 Tim 3:15

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#### Thoughts about Grace

In the Christian life the reality of grace is foundational.

One author said that Grace is God's love in action. He has a point.

Grace is the term that describes how God relates to us, it really says we do not get the punishment we rightly deserve ever.

It really describes all that God is free to do for us based on the work of Christ on the cross.

Pagan Greeks in their ethical terminology used charis to refer to a favor conferred freely, with no expectation of return, and finding its only motive in the bounty and free heartedness of the giver. Of course this favor was always done for a friend, never an enemy.

Coming into the N.T. charis takes a major change in its use for it refers to the favor that God did for us at Calvary in becoming sin, bearing the penalty for our sin, all when we were His enemy.