

NOON BIBLE STUDY: 1 TIMOTHY 3 (PT 3) & 4 (PT 1)

HERE'S A REMINDER OF WHAT WE'VE LEARNED FROM PAUL SO FAR. HE HAS TIMOTHY IN EPHESUS TO HELP STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH. HE'S CONCERNED ABOUT FALSE TEACHERS AND THEIR TEACHING AND HOW IT COULD TURN THE CHURCH AWAY FROM THE LOVE AND WAY OF CHRIST. HE OUTLINES IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING THE CHURCH - SPEAK TO GENDER ROLES AND ASSIGNMENTS AND THEN DESCRIBING WHO AND WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN CHURCH LEADERS, SPECIFICALLY ELDERS/OVERSEERS AND DEACONS.

AS HE CONCLUDES CHAPTER 3 HE WILL TELL TIMOTHY (AND US) WHY THE PROPER ORDER AND ACTIVITY OF THE CHURCH IS IMPORTANT, NAMELY, WE'RE NOT REPRESENTING OURSELVES, WE'RE REPRESENTING OUR KING. AS CONTINUES IN WHAT WE CALL CHAPTER 4, HE RETURNS TO POINTING OUT WHAT THREATENS THE UNITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CHURCH.

1 TIMOTHY 3:14-16 - HOUSEHOLD MATTERS

PAUL IS WRITING THIS AS A STANDARD AND GUIDE FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP, WHICH HE REFERENCES AS "THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD (V. 15)". INTERESTINGLY, PAUL HAD HOPED THAT HE COULD HAVE DONE SOME OF THIS WORK IN PERSON ("I HOPE TO COME TO YOU...V. 14), BUT HE WROTE THIS LETTER SO THAT TIMOTHY COULD BEGIN THIS IMPORTANT WORK "IN CASE HE WAS DELAYED (V. 15)." FORTUNATELY FOR US, THE DELAY OF PAUL PRODUCES THIS WRITING FOR US.

IT IS THE CHURCH OF GOD THAT PAUL BELIEVES WILL UPHOLD AND REPRESENT GOD'S TRUTH AND GOD'S RIGHT WAY ON THE EARTH. IT'S IMPORTANT TO HAVE LEADERS THAT MODEL THIS WAY AND THIS TRUTH IN THEIR LIVES. PAUL REMINDS THEM OF THE GREAT UNIFIER OF THIS FAMILY. THE CHURCH IS THE PILLAR AND SUPPORT (FOUNDATION) OF GOD'S TRUTH. THE USE OF "PILLAR" HERE IS SIGNIFICANT. JOHN STOTT SAYS THIS:

"THE WORD *stylos* MEANS "PILLAR" OR "COLUMN". THE PURPOSE OF PILLARS IS NOT ONLY TO HOLD THE ROOF FIRM, BUT TO THRUST IT HIGH SO IT CAN BE CLEARLY SEEN EVEN FROM A DISTANCE. THE INHABITANTS OF EPHESUS HAD A VIVID ILLUSTRATION OF THIS IN THEIR TEMPLE TO DIANA (AKA ARTEMIS). REGARDED AS ONE OF THE SEVEN WONDERS OF THE WORLD, IT BOASTED 100 IONIC COLUMNS, EACH OVER 59FT HIGH, WHICH TOGETHER LIFTED ITS MASSIVE SHINING MARBLE ROOF. JUST SO, THE CHURCH HOLDS THE TRUTH HIGH, SO THAT IT IS SEEN AND ADMIRER BY THE WORLD. INDEED, A PILLARS LIFT A BUILDING HIGH WHILE REMAINING UNSEEN THEMSELVES, SO THE CHURCH'S FUNCTION IS NOT TO ADVERTISE ITSELF BUT TO ADVERTISE AND DISPLAY THE TRUTH." (JOHN R. W. STOTT, "THE MESSAGE OF 1 TIMOTHY & TITUS", PAGE 92)

"COMMON CONFESSION" IS ALL ONE GREEK WORD (*ὁμολογουμένως* *HOMO-LOGOU-MENOS*) WHICH BASICALLY MEANS SAYING THE SAME THING. THE CHURCH OF GOD IS UNITED BECAUSE OF JESUS CHRIST. JEWS AND GENTILES ARE UNITED UNDER CHRIST, (A FACT SUPER RELEVANT TO PAUL'S AUDIENCE), MEN AND WOMEN, AMERICAN, IRANIAN, UKRAINIAN AND RUSSIAN DISCIPLES ALIKE - THE MESSIAH HAS CALLED US AND HE IS OUR LORD AND SAVIOR.

THE PHRASE "MYSTERY OF GODLINESS" (SIMILAR TO THE AFOREMENTIONED "MYSTERY OF THE FAITH" IN 3:9), "IS A REFERENCE TO THE REVEALED TRUTHS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH (NET BIBLE)", REFERRING TO "THE ENTIRE CONTENT OF GOD'S REVEALED PLAN OF SALVATION (ESV STUDY BIBLE)." THIS IDEA OF "THE MYSTERY" IS FREQUENTLY USED BY PAUL TO SPEAK OF GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE PHRASES IN THE ITEMS LISTED IN PAUL'S "COMMON CONFESSION" RELATE TO JESUS CHRIST. SOME HAVE SUGGESTED IT IS AN EARLY CREEDAL STATEMENT WHICH CHRONOLOGICALLY OUTLINES THE MINISTRY AND WORK OF CHRIST. THE MOST COMMONLY HELD VIEW IS THAT

IT WAS AN EARLY POEM OR HYMN WHICH UNITES THE NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL TRUTHS ABOUT OUR KING. COMMENTATORS SUGGEST IT COULD BE BROKEN DOWN INTO THREE COUPLETES, EACH HIGHLIGHTING A SPIRITUAL AND NATURAL TRUTH:

*HE WHO WAS REVEALED IN THE FLESH
WAS VINDICATED IN THE SPIRIT*

*SEEN BY ANGELS
PROCLAIMED AMONG THE NATIONS,*

*BELIEVED ON IN THE WORLD,
TAKEN UP IN GLORY.*

THIS PROCLAMATION IS TRUE BUT IT IS ALSO GREAT. IT IS WHAT THE WORLD HAS BEEN LONGING FOR. IT IS WHAT GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR. AND FOR THE CONTEXT OF TIMOTHY'S CHURCH IN EPHESUS, THE SALVATION PLAN OF GOD IS A **GREAT**, A POWERFUL CONTRAST TO THE CATCHPHRASE OF EPHESUS "GREAT IS DIANA/ARTEMIS OF THE EPHESIANS" (ACTS 19:28, 34).

1 TIMOTHY 4:1-5 - DECEIT & HOW TO COMBAT IT

Q - WHAT DOES THIS SECTION INDICATE PAUL WAS CONCERNED ABOUT?

Q - WHAT WAS PAUL'S RESPONSE TO THE FALSE TEACHING OF FORBIDDING MARRIAGE AND ABSTAINING FROM FOOD?

IT APPEARS THAT SOME WERE TEACHING THAT ABSTAINING FROM THINGS IS WHAT MADE ONE HOLY. NOT BEING MARRIED OR ABSTAINING FROM (SEX) OR NOT EATING CERTAIN FOOD WOULD MAKE ONE GODLY. THAT'S NOT FOUND IN THE TEACHING OF JESUS OR HIS GOSPEL.

IN CONTRAST TO THE UNIFYING TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL, PAUL RETURNS TO POINTING OUT THE CONTENT AND RAMIFICATIONS OF THE FALSE TEACHERS THREATENING THE CHURCH. AT FIRST GLANCE, THE THINGS MENTIONED IN THIS SECTION SEEM PRETTY FAR OUT. FOR EXAMPLE, HOW COULD SOMEONE ARRIVE AT THE PLACE OF TEACHING THAT MARRIAGE, RATHER THAN SOMETHING CREATED BY GOD, WOULD BE FORBIDDEN BY GOD?

THE ANSWER? DECEITFUL SPIRITS AND THEIR DOCTRINES AND THE RESULTS OF THE HYPOCRISY OF LIARS (4:1-2)

I WONDER IF THE EXACT CONTENT OF THE FALSE TEACHINGS AND BELIEFS ARE AS IMPORTANT AS THE *CAUSES* AND *PATHWAYS* WHICH ALLOW FOR ARRIVAL AT THOSE FALSEHOODS.

DECEITFUL SPIRITS AND DOCTRINES OF DEMONS - THE FIRST SOURCE OF THIS FALSEHOOD IS THE DARK AND EVIL FORCES OF THE SPIRITUAL REALM. THE DEVIL HIMSELF IS AT WORK IN THE WORLD DETERMINED TO DECEIVE, CONFUSE, AND ANTAGONIZE EVERY PERSON AND ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN FREED FROM HIS DOMAIN THROUGH THE GOSPEL. SO HOW DO YOU ARRIVE AT SOME DERANGED PLACE LIKE FORBIDDING MARRIAGE OR ABSTAINING FROM FOOD THAT GOD CREATED? THE SAME WAY YOU ARRIVE AT THE PLACE WHERE YOU THINK IT'S OKAY TO EAT FROM THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL. IT SEEMS ABSURD TO US LOOKING IN, BUT IT SPEAKS TO THE POWER OF THE LIES OF THE GREAT LIAR, OUR ADVERSARY. THE EVIL ONE TAKES ADVANTAGE OF THE CULTURAL ATMOSPHERE AND DECEIVES.

HYPOCRISY OF LIARS - WHEN PRESUMED TEACHERS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS ARE LIVING IN SIN - THEY ARE LIVING DECEITFULLY. SUCH A CORRUPTED INTERNAL CHARACTER CAN OFTEN BEGIN TO CORRUPT THEIR TEACHING. THE PHARISEES OF JESUS' DAY ARE OFTEN CALLED HYPOCRITES. THEY PROCLAIMED GOD'S LAW BUT BROKE IT THEMSELVES. MANY CORRUPT TEACHERS WILL TWIST AND BEND SCRIPTURE ATTEMPTING TO VALIDATE

THEIR OWN SINFUL BEHAVIOR. AS A RESULT, OTHERS WILL FOLLOW AND BE DRAWN AWAY FROM GOD'S WAY. PAUL WROTE ELSEWHERE THAT THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD SIN SO MUCH THAT THEY EVENTUALLY LOSE THE ABILITY TO BE CONVICTED OR FEEL THAT WHAT THEY ARE DOING IS WRONG (EPHESIANS 4:19) - HERE HE USES THAT SAME IDEA FOR THE FALSE TEACHERS, SAYING THEIR "CONSCIENCES" ARE "SEARED".

SO IF DEMONIC FORCES ARE AGAINST US AND WORKING HARD TO INFLUENCE US DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY THROUGH HYPOCRITICAL LIARS, HOW DO WE COMBAT THIS? SOME SUGGESTIONS:

1 - THE SPIRIT & THE SCRIPTURE & SIMPLICITY

WE NEED TO PRAY FOR WISDOM AND DISCERNMENT. JESUS SAID THAT THE PROMISED SPIRIT WOULD LEAD US TO THE TRUTH, BRING TO OUR REMEMBRANCE HIS WORDS, AND TEACH AND GUIDE. WE HAVE THE HOLY SCRIPTURE TO READ AND STUDY AND CONSULT. GREATER IS HE THAT IS IN US THAN HE THAT IS IN THE WORLD. AT THE NAME OF JESUS EVERY DEMON WILL BOW. FOR US TODAY WE HAVE ACCESS TO THE BIBLE LIKE NEVER BEFORE! HAVING HABITUAL PRACTICES OF THESE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES WILL PROTECT US FROM THE DEVIL'S SCHEMES. IF THE THREAT IS SPIRITUAL IN NATURE, IT REQUIRES A SPIRITUAL SOLUTION.

ALSO, THINK ABOUT HOW PAUL RESPONDS TO THE ABSTAINING FROM FOOD ISSUE. HE ESSENTIALLY SAYS: "COME ON GUYS, WE KNOW THAT EVERYTHING GOD HAS GIVEN US IS GOOD. GOD ISN'T ABOUT ABSTAINING FROM THE GOOD THINGS HE HAS GIVEN HIS PEOPLE! REMEMBER WHAT THE WORD OF GOD SAYS AND PRAY THAT GOD WILL SANCTIFY WHAT YOU DO AND EAT!" CAN'T YOU JUST IMAGINE ONE OF THE READERS GOING: "OH YEAHH..." I AM NOT TRYING TO MINIMIZE THE SPIRITUAL THREAT AGAINST THE CHURCH, BUT SOMETIMES THE SIMPLICITY OF GOD'S TRUTH IS ALL THAT IS REQUIRED TO COMBAT ERROR AND FALSEHOOD.

2 - THE CHURCH: COMMUNITY & CHARACTER

ISOLATION IS A WONDERFUL WAY TO BE SET UP FOR DECEPTION. SOMEONE SAID RECENTLY: "CONNECTION IS PROTECTION." BEING A PART OF A GODLY CHURCH FAMILY IS IMPORTANT IN DISCERNING TRUTH AND ERROR. HAVING PEOPLE TO PRAY AND STUDY WITH AND WHO OFFER A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE THAN YOUR OWN MIND'S ECHO CHAMBER IS REALLY IMPORTANT. OFTEN THOSE WHO HAVE TROUBLE RECEIVING CORRECTIONS OR DON'T WANT TO CONSULT OR WORK WITH OTHERS WHO DON'T AGREE WITH THEM WILL LEAVE A CHURCH AND POTENTIALLY DO THE DEVIL'S WORK FOR HIM.

ALSO, IT'S SIGNIFICANT THAT THESE WARNINGS COME ON THE HEELS OF THE CHAPTER ON THE CHARACTER OF CHURCH LEADERS. IF ONE IS PRIORITIZING CHARACTER AND CHRIST-LIKENESS IN THE LEADERS AND TEACHERS OF THE CHURCH, A HYPOCRITICAL LIAR WILL HAVE A HARDER TIME BEING A PERSON OF INFLUENCE! SADLY, WE OFTEN PRIORITIZE CHARISMA, PREACHING ABILITY, ACADEMIC TRAINING OR PERSONAL PREFERENCES IN OUR LEADERS AND ARE THEN SUSCEPTIBLE TO TROUBLE AND OUR LEADERS CAN LACK THE ACCOUNTABILITY THAT WILL HELP THEM STAY GROUNDED. IF THE THREAT IS FROM OTHER PEOPLE (FALSE TEACHERS), THEN PEOPLE ARE REQUIRED TO COMBAT THIS.

2 TIMOTHY 4:6-10 - SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE, LABOR AND WORK

PAUL WANTS THE CHURCH TO "POINT THESE THINGS OUT" (V. 6) SO THAT WE DON'T LET ANYTHING DRAW US AWAY FROM THE FAITH. THOUGH PAUL SAYS THESE THINGS WILL HAPPEN IN "LATER TIMES" AS WE KNOW AND HE KNEW, THOSE LATER TIMES HAVE ALREADY BEGUN. HE WANTS US TO "HAVE NOTHING TO DO (REJECT) WORLDLY FABLES" BUT INSTEAD BE DISCIPLINED, AN IMPORTANT VIRTUE OF THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS. THE SPIRITUAL LIFE DOES NOT HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT.

Q - WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE A DISCIPLINED LIFE?

Q - HOW DOES DISCIPLINE CONTRIBUTE TO A HEALTHY LIFE BOTH PHYSICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY?

WE DON'T WORK FOR OUR SALVATION BUT WE DO HAVE WORK AFTER SALVATION. JUST FROM THIS CHAPTER ALONE - THE WORK OF DISCERNMENT, THE WORK OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE, THE WORK OF POINTING OUT ERROR, THE WORK OF REJECTING FALSEHOOD AND THINGS THAT WILL TAKE OUR ATTENTION AWAY FROM GODLY AND ETERNAL MATTERS. THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SAVED AND EXPERIENCED GOD'S GRACE *WANT* TO DO THIS WORK SO AS TO STEWARD WELL THE GIFT THEY HAVE RECEIVED.

PAUL USES WORKS LIKE "LABOR AND STRIVING" AND COMPARES IT TO "BODILY DISCIPLINE" WHICH USES THE WORD (γυμνασία *GUM-NASIA*) FOR EXERCISE AND ATHLETIC TRAINING. THAT'S THE MIND PICTURE HE PAINTS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN THE PRESENT EVIL AGE. WE'LL DISCUSS MORE ABOUT PAUL'S CALL FOR DISCIPLINE AND DISCERNMENT NEXT TIME.

SOME CLOSING THOUGHTS. A LOT OF TALK OF REVIVAL RIGHT NOW. WE'RE LONGING FOR IT, PRAYING FOR IT, LOOKING FOR IT. IF REVIVAL COMES, WILL IT BE PERSONAL? YES. BUT IT WILL ALSO BE WITHIN THE FAMILY AND THE CHURCH. THERE IS NO PLAN SPELLED OUT IN SCRIPTURE WHICH FORESEES PERSONAL SALVATION AND TRANSFORMATION, NOR THE PROCLAMATION AND DEMONSTRATION OF THE GOSPEL, APART FROM THE CHURCH. OF COURSE WE DON'T MEAN THE BUILDING, WE MEAN THE PEOPLE - BUT DON'T FORGET, THAT THE CHURCH, THE FOUNDATION AND PILLAR OF THE TRUTH IS NOT A PERSON - IT'S PEOPLE. *WE ARE THE CHURCH* (NOT "*I AM THE CHURCH*") AS MUCH AS WE ARE A FAMILY (AS OPPOSED TO THE SILLY THOUGHT "*I AM A FAMILY*").

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH COMES FROM THE GOSPEL. YET, WE LIVE IN A WORLD FILLED WITH MANY DENOMINATIONS, MANY DISTINCTIVES AND DIFFERENCES - SOME OF WHICH ARE GOOD, SOME WHICH ARE TRIVIAL, SOME WHICH ARE TROUBLESOME. BUT WE CAN STILL RECOGNIZE THAT THERE IS A LARGE GROUP OF PEOPLE SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, UNDER DIFFERENT HEADINGS AND NAMES WHO ARE BELIEVER'S IN AND FOLLOWERS OF KING JESUS. WE NEED TO CALL OUT ERROR AND POINT OUT WRONG AND FALSE TEACHING. AND WE ALSO NEED TO RECOGNIZE THAT PEOPLE IN OTHER CHURCH BUILDINGS ARE PART OF GOD'S HOUSEHOLD (3:15) AND OUR APPROACH TO SUCH PEOPLE AND MATTERS OUGHT TO REFLECT THAT.

THERE ARE BIBLICAL AND PERSONAL REASONS WHY WE MIGHT FELLOWSHIP WITH ONE GROUP OF CHRISTIANS OVER ANOTHER AND WILL EVEN SEE SOME OF THAT AS WE CONTINUE TO READ PAUL. HOWEVER, MANY OF THE REAL REASONS WE CHOOSE TO DIS-FELLOWSHIP OVER ARE TRIVIAL OR SUPERFICIAL. NEVERTHELESS, OUR HEART AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS OTHER CHRISTIANS WOULD DO WELL TO BE MODELED AFTER THE HEART OF CHRIST AND THE TRUTHS THAT PAUL REMINDS US ALL OF HERE. WE ARE PEOPLE OF THE RISEN CHRIST - WE ARE TASKED WITH PROCLAIMING THE NEWS OF HIS LIFE, DEATH, RESURRECTION AND COMING KINGDOM TO THE ENTIRE WORLD.

HOW WONDERFUL FOR THE FORCES OF EVIL WOULD IT BE IF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD ABANDONED THEIR CALLING OR NEGLECTED THEIR CALLING BECAUSE THEY WERE PREOCCUPIED WITH INTERNAL SQUABBLES AND PREFERENCES. GOD FORBID! MAY GOD'S SPIRIT LEAD US AND EMPOWER US TO BE HIS PEOPLE TODAY. WE SERVE A GREAT GOD, LIVE BECAUSE OF A GREAT KING AND HAVE GREAT NEWS TO SPEAK.