

**1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1: 3-5; “Good Stewards of God’s Truth”, Sermon # 2 in the series –  
“To Honor God in the church”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on  
January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2014, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

You would see, if you read carefully the book of Acts, that in Acts 19: 21 it says that Paul purposed in the Spirit when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia to go to Jerusalem; so he sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia but he himself stayed in Asia. And he stayed there for a time, it says. Then it relates how he was harassed by Demetrius the silversmith at Ephesus because Demetrius’ trade was falling into disrepute because Paul was preaching that the little metal gods he made were not gods at all. He stirred up a great multitude of people against Paul, and so Paul left for Macedonia. I believe that this was the time that this letter was written. Paul had Timothy return from Macedonia at that time. Timothy was an evangelist, an apostolic helper and emissary from the apostle to the churches. He was a pastor of pastors to the churches, on Paul’s behalf. He was to convey the Apostolic instruction on how people were to conduct themselves in the local church; what the duties of pastor and people were to be. And the first and primary reason that Timothy was to remain in Ephesus was to cause the elders and the people of that local church to understand that they have a solemn responsibility to be good stewards of God’s truth. This is the main thing in Christ’s Church, to preserve the truth and live according to it. And the people at the church at Ephesus were in danger of not making the main thing the main thing. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 4: 1, the apostle Paul says this: “Let a man so consider us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.” “Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.” You and I have been given this solemn responsibility today in this church as well; to be faithful stewards and administrators of God in truth. Well, what will this mean; to be a good steward of truth? To be a good steward of God’s truth, the pastors and people of Christ’s local church must fulfill the following responsibilities: 1<sup>st</sup> – The responsibility of guarding against all false and strange doctrine. (verse 3) 2<sup>nd</sup> – The responsibility of focusing on the truths that will really build and grow the church. (verse 4) and 3<sup>rd</sup> – The responsibility of teaching with the right motives. (verse 5)

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – Guarding against false and strange doctrines.**

Verse 3 says – “As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.” Timothy was to charge certain men that they teach no other doctrine than the apostle’s doctrine. The NAS states – “not to teach strange doctrines”. Timothy was to charge them, (that is he was to instruct them, to command them) not to teach these strange doctrines. You see the importance of having the authority of a pastor in the local church, here in these verses. It is God who raises men up to offices in the church if it is a Biblically constituted church. There are no longer apostles, there are no longer evangelists in the sense that Timothy was; an apostolic helper. But there are pastor-teachers. In the book of Ephesians Chapter 4, verse 11 says: “And He (that is the risen Christ) gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” This is what you called to, dear Christian; to submit to the teaching of the word of God and then, being equipped by the truth of that word, you then go about to minister; to serve others in the body of Christ, in word and deed. The minister is to set forth clearly the doctrines of the Bible. In Titus Chapter 1, verse 9, Paul says to Titus that an elder, a pastor, must be one who is “holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.” It is indeed true that we as believers are to be teaching and admonishing one another, as it says in Romans 15: 14: “Now I myself am

confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able to admonish one another.” “Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ...” Both the pastor, and the believers of the church, have a responsibility in relation to guarding the truth. Believers admonish one another, Paul says here. To admonish is to rebuke gently, to instruct or direct; sometimes even to warn. But at all costs, we must take care that we do not teach strange doctrines. Sound doctrine is going to be that which comes from those appointed by Christ Himself, as apostles. The truth held to and conveyed is the Scriptures which must be handled accurately, and divided rightly. They will not be added to, or taken away from, in the whole compass of the pastor’s teaching. Strange and false doctrines can be described in the following 3 ways.

1<sup>st</sup> – These false and strange doctrines proceed from the mind or the imagination of a man who is not called by God to minister; he will not receive the plain truth from the Word of God as given to us by the Apostles in the Scriptures. You can see an example of this if you turn with me over to Galatians 1: 6-12 . Paul says to the churches of Galatia – “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.” “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.” “As we have said before so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” “For do I now persuade men, or God?” “Or do I seek to please men?” “For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.” “But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.” “For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through revelation of Jesus Christ.” Now, you can see here, the importance of what Paul is saying. The gospel that he received came not through man. It was not of man’s adding to the Scriptures, or twisting the Scriptures, or trying to make something great out of a man’s ability to please God or save himself from his sins. Paul saw the absolute importance of the sound doctrine of the Scriptures and the gospel of Christ. If anyone preached another gospel, let him be accursed, he says. But the Judaizers who were trying to turn the churches of Galatia to believe a false gospel of works righteousness, were actually perverting the gospel of Christ. They were saying that circumcision and the works of the law must be added to faith in Christ in order to be saved. But this was nothing but vain self-righteousness; their boasting in their own fleshly ability to keep the law, and to expect others to do the same. What was really wrong here? It was their failure to be able to submit to the Christ appointed authority of an apostle, even Paul. Let us remember that God does expect us as Christians to obey our elders and submit to them, for they shall give an account to God for their ministry. But let both elders and the members remember that the ultimate authority for all of our faith and practice is in the Scriptures. Our faith is not implicitly being placed in the man who has been raised up to the work, although we should surely give him double honor as one who works hard at preaching and teaching.

2<sup>nd</sup> – False teachers will often try to twist the meaning or sense of the Scriptures, and are devoid of the power of God. Turn with me over to Matthew 22, verse 29. The Sadducees, who say that there is no resurrection, had come to Jesus and had given him a hypothetical story of a woman who had been married to a man with seven brothers; and her husband having died, she married one of the brothers, and then he died, and so on, so that this woman eventually had been married to all of them. Their very strange question was: Whose wife would she be in the resurrection; having been married to them all? And Jesus had to tell them – You are greatly mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.” The Scriptures, even in the Old Testament, speak very clearly of a resurrection of the dead in Psalm 16, verse 10 – “For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.” This was

specifically fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ. But since these Sadducees denied the resurrection of the dead, they would also deny that Jesus rose from the dead, or that the power of God was at work in Him to heal the sick and raise the dead. They were men who had the form of the Jewish religion, but denied the power of God in relation to all the acts of power which come from God when he raises the dead, both physically and spiritually, from their death in trespasses and sins.

3<sup>rd</sup> – False teachers add what is patently false to the Scriptural narrative in order to give more supposed knowledge on a subject. Paul in verse 4 of our text is warning against heeding fables and endless genealogies. Myths and Jewish fable were very troublesome to the apostle and his work of preaching and sharing the gospel. This was because many people of that day thought that if you knew all the fabulous stories made up and spun out by the rabbis, then you were wise. And often these fables were stories which were made up around the true stories of the Bible. Those who were overly concerned about genealogies also were problematic because if you could prove, exactly, your lineage to a certain tribe or man, then, they thought, you should be allowed to minister because of that. In our own day, we have whole large segments of societies and civilizations that have taken their stand on myths instead of sound doctrine; the Mohammedan religion for instance. This false religion which encompasses about a quarter of the world's population, believe the lie that Mohammed received revelation from the angel Gabriel, and that he was the apostle and prophet of a new religion. The Koran has many myths mixed in with the verses of the Bible; falsehoods which pervert the truth of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Similarly, Mormonism, with its false prophet Joseph Smith, added the whole book of Mormon to the Scriptures and has thus perverted the truth of Christ and the gospel of salvation. Even Judaism of today is full of rabbinic myths which are superimposed upon the Scriptures. These myths may fascinate the minds of the Biblically untaught, but they will never deal with the salvation of the soul.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – Good stewards of God's truth have the responsibility of focusing on truths that will really build and grow the church.**

Strange doctrines, false doctrines will always cause disputes and questions. They give rise to speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith. Look over with me at Titus 3: 9. "But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless." And look also over at 1 Timothy 6: 3-5 – "If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain." "From such withdraw yourself." What is it that will really build the local church? It is godly edifying in faith, godly edification which in faith. Turn with me over to Ephesians 4: 11-16. "And Christ Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." It is not by being tossed around by winds of doctrine that saves people or builds the church. It is the sound doctrine of saving faith in Jesus Christ. Once He saves you by the truth of the gospel, you are placed in His body the Church, which if you are serious about your commitment to Christ, will mean your joining a particular local church. A pastor or elders will

equip you for the work of ministry. We will then engage in building each other up in the faith, pursuing godliness, speaking the truth in love; and by this we then grow up in all things providentially ordered by God, to be more Christ-like. Every person in Christ's Church is a part of the one Body composed of all true believers, but in order to function as a member of that body, it is very important that you commit yourself to a local church, to become a member of that church. You see, the body Christ moves, the body works; it teaches and loves and serves itself, and others, because sound doctrine gives it the strength, the ability, to be able to stand, walk, think rightly, and do things for the glory of God and the advancement of Christ's kingdom. A church which doesn't have sound doctrine is like a body without bones—a jellyfish drifting in the sea wherever it is driven by the wind. A church without sound doctrine is like a person with a bone disease. He will have much pain in himself and will not be able to do much work or service that he might truly like to do, and would indeed be able to do, if he was healthy. What doctrines are sound and important to know, and to grow in? You will find them all listed in our 1689 Confession of Faith. What a blessed thing it is to be able to have such a Confession, where many wonderful and important truths have been written down for our instruction. May we never set it aside as cumbersome or useless. It is a very valuable tool in helping us along to the unity of the faith. Unity in the church does not consist of everybody's believing what they personally think is true. Unity is lovingly holding together the truth that we together believe best states the truth of the Scriptures. It is propositional truth which places before a person something that they can either agree with, or disagree with. But looking at these propositions of truth, and agreeing together upon the major doctrines of the faith which are set forth there, it becomes a means to the great end of glorifying God Himself. Conversely we should remember the words of Paul in Romans 16: 17, "Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them." "For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the heart of the simple." "For your obedience has become known to all." "Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil." Let us realize that true unity is established by a strong adherence to commonly held defined truth, as it is in our Confession. The Confession itself is not inspired, but that is not the point of the confession. It is to be a help to many, to help them on to see more clearly what the Bible teaches. Let us look into it, and hold fast the truths delivered to us in the Bible.

**3<sup>rd</sup> – To be good stewards of God's truth, we as a local church must fulfill the responsibility of teaching with right motives.** (verse 5)

"Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from a sincere faith." If we think about these words, we will see that the purpose of the command, the change given to these certain men, is not just to prevent doctrinal error from coming into the church. It is also, and even more so, to promote the good, the true, and the right. It is to exercise love from a pure heart. The heart is purified by faith in Christ; not by myths or genealogical privileges. The believer's heart is changed by the grace of Christ which results in the establishment of a good conscience and a sincere faith. Love is indeed the fulfillment of the law. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this that you shall love your neighbor as yourself. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision or uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love." (Galatians 5: 6) It will be good for us, as Reformed Baptists, if we realize that our teaching is not simply to maintain our denominational interests. It is to teach in such a way that men know that it is God and His truth; His Spirit and His word, which has prevailed over them. It is not just the strength and force of our convictions that changes other people around us, no matter how true and right they are. People in all the places we go must know that the love of Christ controls us, it motivates us, it moves us to look outside

of ourselves, to really consider others. Christ loved us, just in this way. This is being a good steward, not only of God's truth, but also of His grace.