

## 1 Tim 6:3,20,21      BASIC CHRISTIAN ORTHODOXY

PRELIMS. Paul is concerned about **orthodox teaching** and has **already warned** Tim about false teaching. In fact that is **why** Paul wrote this letter “*As I urged you...remain at Ephesus that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine”[1:3]. Now **again** he uses the word “*urge*” to convey to Tim the dangers of false teaching![2c]*

### The ANCIENT CULTURE

The ancient world was full of opportunities for **charlatans** to exploit the public. Even in the Church there were opportunities for wandering prophets and teachers to present their message. If you had the ‘**gift of the gab**’ and had **humour**, you could gather a crowd very easily and convince them of what you were teaching. If they could not answer the questions, they would ‘make-up’ an answer, as they had to save their ‘**reputations**’!

There would be **competitions** between the speakers and great arguments –one trying to ‘outdo’ the other in argument! 1,000s would turn up to their lectures and discussions. When Adrian, a popular philosopher would speak at the Athenaeum, the **senate** would **empty** and all go along and hear him! Crowds like ‘**T-in the Park**’! ‘Public speaking’ was **entertainment**!

These public speakers would ‘play to the gallery’. They loved **applause** and the hand-clapping! The important thing was to **get** a **big** crowd and to **please** the crowd. If a man could speak in public, his fortune was made. Now that was the **background** against which Paul spoke! The public of course, **knew** there were **false** prophets. It could be difficult to persuade the crowds that you were **genuine** and **honest**. People were **sceptical** of **travelling** teachers! Paul of course was a **travelling** preacher! **Mars Hill** was a **special** ‘theatre’ for people with **new** doctrine! The intellectuals gathered there **laughed** at Paul! “*We will hear you again*”, ie, ‘when we are **really stuck** for a speaker’! The

Truth is two-fold – it is “*the sound words of the Lord Jesus Christ*” and also “*the teaching that **accords with godliness***”!

So the world, then, as now – needed, “*not **peddlers of God’s Word***” but **solid, reliable, sound**, “*men of sincerity*”[2 Cor 2:17] like the Apostle Paul who “*did not shrink from declaring the **whole counsel of God***”[Ac20:27] That was ancient culture!

## **POSTMODERN CULTURE**

Our culture has a **problem** with **absolutes**! Postmodernism **discredits** absolutes saying it is **intolerant**! That, of course, is just the world going through another phase in its search for truth while **neglecting/despising God’s Truth**! To claim that belief in One God is **arrogant** and **intolerant** of all other religions, denies the distinction between **discrimination** and ‘**alternate choice**’. Discrimination = making an **unfair** and **unjust** distinction in the **treatment** of different people or categories. Alternative choice refers to choosing between two options, without necessary condemnation. Apple/orange!

Our culture is looking for an ideology that does **not condemn**. Our culture **hates** condemnation – **even of evil**! The world wants ‘freedom to live as you please’! People today want to be ‘free’ to choose what they **desire** without feeling condemned! We hate the idea of a Judge over us who has the ‘right’ to stipulate what is morally right and what is morally wrong!

Well, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ **did** condemn people. “*Woe... scribes and Pharisees...outwardly appear beautiful... but **within** you are **full of hypocrisy and lawlessness***”[Mat 23] + “*whoever does not believe is **condemned** already*”[John 3:18] And the words of the **godliest man** – there was **none greater** John Baptist, yet he said “*brood of **vipers***”[Mat 3:7] There **are** moral absolutes with God. There are things which are **unchangeably** right or wrong in themselves, per se! And yet God **is** a God of **love, mercy, justice**!

## The ORTHODOX TEACHING of the CHURCH

Christ has given to the Church **authority** “*the keys of the kingdom of heaven*” and the “*key of knowledge*” to determine what is the right teaching re the fundamentals of the faith!

Orthodox comes from two Greek words: ‘ortho’= straight or right; and the word ‘doxa’= opinion, thus ‘right **opinion**’. It means ‘**right belief**’. It is the **opposite** of **heterodoxy** from which we get **heresy**. And that’s the very word Paul uses here “*if anyone teaches otherwise*”[3] ‘other/different’! If he “*does not agree with the sound words*”[3] ie, to “*the doctrine*” he is a heretic! Again and again the Bible talks of “*the faith*” and “*the doctrine*”. It is **necessary** to have **creeds** to **fully explain** what our **understanding** and belief of Scripture is.

A **creedless** Church is no church at all since it has **nothing** to **distinguish** it from the rest of what the **world** may interpret the Bible to say. Eg, re Jesus, was He God or just a very good man. The **Nicene** Creed “very God of very God”! Not enough. **Apollinaris** agreed, yes, Jesus is God - but **denied** that He was man! So Council of **Constantinople** in 381 decreed He was Divine **and** human. But that was not enough either for the **Nestorians** agreed but said He was **two** persons! So Council of **Ephesus** in 431 decreed that He was **not** two persons! The **Eutychians** agreed He was divine and human, but only **one** nature! So **finally** in 451 the Council of **Chalcedon** decreed Jesus had ‘**two natures in one person**’. That is the **orthodox belief** re Jesus! You are not orthodox if you deny **all** that! So **to be orthodox** is to believe in the **teachings** of our Jesus Christ! “*whoever is ashamed of Me and of My words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in his glory*”[L 9:26]

## The BIG PROBLEM

We can believe His teaching and even be **zealous** about it and yet not belong to X! Story of new minister and elder ‘I only

know him in one dimension – preaching – I do not know how he **lives** yet!’ We can believe everything that is orthodox, but fail to **follow** the Lord. Bible says “*faith **without** works...**dead**”*

People can talk but not **walk!** When Jesus ‘saves’ us, He gives us **power** - “*the **gospel** is the **power** of God for **salvation** to **every one** who believes*”[R1:16]+ “*our **gospel** came to you **not only** in word, but **also** in **power** and in the Holy Spirit*”[1Th1:5]

What is the real nature of that power? For miracles? Yes – but not for everyone, for that is a **gift** to **some** believers only. But the power that is in the gospel is the power to **conquer sin** for every Xn has made a breach with sin! “*those who are Christ’s **have crucified** the flesh with its **passions** and **desires**”*[Gal 5:]

Every Xn makes a break with sin. They are **new creatures** after being born again. They do **not** carry on as they were before.

The gospel power is a power that **changes lives** - to live in “***accord** with **godliness**”!* “*His **divine power** has granted us **all** things that pertain to life and **godliness**”*[2Pe1:3]

Godliness means **different** and **separate** – not separate as in **isolationism!** The Xn must not be isolated from people but be the salt that seasons the earth! The salt that makes a difference!

Jesus **complained** about some of His disciples “*Why do you call Me Lord, Lord and **do not** the things that I say?*”[Luke 6:46]. Today you can hardly tell a Xn from a non-Xn – their lifestyles are almost identical. Just as greedy, jealous, angry, deceitful, dishonest, untruthful, cheating. Notice how Paul puts it to Titus: “*For the **grace** of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, **training** us to **renounce ungodliness** and **worldly passions**, and to live **self-controlled**, **upright**, and **godly** lives in the **present** age*”[Titus 2:11,12]

God gives **grace** in abundance – to those who **want** it, who **desire** it! God specializes in grace – the Bible is full of it!