

Healthy Church – False Teaching... False Teachers... & How to Respond to Both – 1 Timothy 6:2b-6, 11-16, 20-21

I remember when 9/11 happened, there were headlines about pastors/churches & their varied responses to why these events took place...

How is someone in the pew to determine if what they are hearing is true?
And how can they know whether to trust the person with the microphone?

Why are you here... in this church... this denomination... listening to this pastor?

- There are 350,000-400,000 churches/congregations in the US...
- 30 different churches in Brunswick alone...
- There are roughly 45,000 different Christian denominations,
- 17 different denominations represented in our city...

So why BRC... why the RCA... why listen to me? And maybe it has nothing to do with these things... Maybe you're here for other reasons...

But at some point, if it hasn't happened already, you will hear something said from this pulpit that you will say, "I don't know if that is true..." "I don't know if I can trust this guy anymore..." "I may need to consider another church..."

How should you/we respond in those moments... How do we determine if a teaching is true or false... How do we decide if it is a debatable doctrine, or an indication of a false teacher? How do we know when to stay or go?

These words from the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 6 are incredibly helpful when wrestling with such things... because false ideas & false teachers were already infiltrating the church... even at this early stage of its existence!

Paul wanted to establish "healthy churches", so he warned against such false teaching... against false teachers... & he challenged Timothy to do the same!

He says in 1 Timothy 6:2 – "Teach and urge these things." What things?
Vs. 3 - "The sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ... and the teaching that accords with godliness..."

A healthy church is a church where the pastor(s) proclaim and teach the very words of Jesus Christ... declaring that His Words alone are Truth!

It's not about the pastor's degrees, his knowledge, his views, his popularity, his oratory skills... It's about proclaiming the very words of life that come from the Word of Life! Preaching Christ & the gospel is what is of urgency!

Paul also adds, to teach that which "accords with godliness"... Meaning,

that which makes us more like Jesus! The false teaching that Paul is warning about here, is that which distorts or denies the teachings of Jesus, or takes away from us becoming more like Him through the sanctification process!

There will always be disagreements over doctrine... we live in a fallen world... we are all sinners capable of error... we battle against real enemies...

False teaching is inevitable... That's not an excuse; it's just reality... But how do we combat it? Through the teaching & the learning of the Word! This is why Sunday worship, daily Bible reading, & Growth groups are so important!

We also combat it by not following "false teachers"! But how do we identify such teachers when we ourselves are not exempt from believing falsehood?

We go back to Paul's words here... If what is being taught or embraced goes against "the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness" then don't lend your ear & don't follow them!

But what if we still just don't know... What if we don't have the answers... What if we are unsure of who to follow because all the arguments seem valid?

Paul's words again are incredibly helpful... vs. 4-5 Consider the source!

Paul gives us a long list of ways to identify a false teacher, so that if we recognize the existence of these qualities in a person, we can know to stay clear of them!

- "He is puffed up with conceit & understands nothing."
- "He has an unhealthy craving for controversy & for quarrels about words"
- If the fruit is "envy, dissensions, slander, evil suspicions"
- If there is "constant friction among people who are depraved in mind & deprived of the truth"
- If they imagine that "godliness is a means of gain" (selfish gain).

False teachers can be identified and known by the preoccupation of self!

- He/she is trying to elevate their own status rather than Christ's...
- He/she must be right even if it means not doing right by others!
- He/she brings about division rather than striving towards unity in Christ!
- He/she is not content until there is a winner and a loser!

False teachers can be identified even when they're right, by the wrong they do!

Vs. 6 - "But godliness with contentment is great gain..." We will address contentment in the monetary & materialistic sense next week, but is there application that can be made here in the theological & doctrinal sense?

If we truly pursue godliness together, & we learn contentment with what joins us together (namely Christ & the gospel)... wouldn't that be great gain?

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