Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Handling Treasure, Part 2
Scripture: 1 Timothy 6:20-21
Code: 54-50

: A Response to the PTL Crisis

Well this morning we come to our final message in this wonderful epistle of 1 Timothy. Will you open your Bible with me and turn to 1 Timothy chapter 6? We're looking at verses 20 and 21, the final words of Paul in his first epistle to his beloved son in the faith, Timothy. Let me read these two verses to you. "O Timothy, guard that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane, vain babblings and oppositions of knowledge falsely so called which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace with you."

The essence of those verses is a call to guard the truthto guard the truth. A fitting way to end this letter. This week I was listening to a Christian radio station locally and a listener called in with a question to the host. The question was: I need a church, I'm searching for a church, I want to know what to look for in a church. The answer came, and this is as close as I can reconstruct it, these are close to the words, "The thing I look for," said the host, "is fellowship, that's the most important thing in choosing a church."

Well that's a nice part of a church...sharing, caring, fellowshipping. But that's not the right answer. That's not the most important thing in choosing a church. You could find sharing, caring, fellowship in a bar, to be honest. And they might not even be condemning and they might even help you drown your troubles and probably wouldn't gossip. You could find fellowship in the Masonic Lodge or the Order of Elks or the Royal Order of the Goats, or whatever other kind of club you might join. You could probably find fellowship in the Mooney cult. You might find it in the Mormon Youth Movement. You might find fellowship a thousand different ways, that can't be the single most important ingredient in finding a church.

Others might say, "No, the most important thing in selecting a church is how interesting the preacher is." Someone else might say how good the music is. Or how easy it is to park, some carnal people might say. Or how comfortable the setting is. I suppose we would be somewhat amazed and perhaps chagrined to find out what people look for in looking for a church.

But there's only one basic essential in a church. There's really only one thing you're looking for and that is how do they handle the truth, that's it. How they handle the truth. That's the essential thing. What do they believe about the Word of God and what do they believe it teaches? That's the

essence. Do they believe that this is the inerrant authoritative determinative Word of the living God? And if they believe that, then what do they say it teaches? That's the bottom line. Do they hold forth the Word of life? Are they committed to living out divine truth? That's the issue. How do they handle the treasure of the truth? Because the church is the guardian of God's Word.

Boy, it's important for us to understand that. When I came here to candidate in November of 1968 to preach on a given Sunday night, they asked me if I would consider coming to preach a sermon and perhaps to be the pastor of this church, I had filled the pulpit a couple of Sundays and then they asked me to come back for another one. And I'll never forget, I came on that Sunday night and I was so loaded and some of you remember I was loaded on Romans chapter 7, I had been studying it about six weeks and I spoke that night and poured out my heart. I don't remember if I had even notes even. I had wanted to get this out for so long that I just unloaded everything. And when I went down to sit by Patricia after I had preached she told me that I would probably be never invited back again because I spoke for an hour and 25 minutes. And you don't normally do that the first time you go to sell yourself to a church. The first person who came to me afterwards was an elder and he said, "If you were here would you teach us the Word of God like that every week?" And I think I said something to the effect of yes but not quite that long.

But this church ever since that time demonstrated to me that they had a desire to know the truth. And that that was the primary issue in the hearts of the people then and since that was the primary concern of my heart, it seemed to be a very workable relationship. And by God's grace it has been far more than we could have expected.

You see, the church is primarily the safe that keeps the truth and the voice that proclaims it. We must guard and propagate the truth. And when you look for a church, you ask what do they believe about the Bible and what do they believe that it affirms, that's what you ask. And all the rest flows out of that.

Now let me bring it down to where we are in our nation right now. We're faced with this great PTL scandal that is in every newspaper every day. The saga goes on like a distorted perverted soap opera. And we are hearing verbiage upon verbiage upon verbiage from everybody from the most secular humanistic editorial writers down to the spokesmen for the PTL themselves. And all kinds of people in between. But it seems to me in all this verbiage the main point has never been articulated. The main issue has never been discussed. No one has ever brought up the real issue. And the real scandal in PTL is not how they handled their bodies and it's not how they handled their money, the real scandal is how they handled the Scripture. That's the scandal. And nobody will say anything about that. The media doesn't say it. The board of the PTL doesn't say it. No spokesman for them says it. And so no one is attacking the heart of the issue. And the real scandal is playing fast and loose with God's truth. That's the real scandal.

It's not sexual, as heinous as those sexual sins are. It's not financial as despicable as the misuse of money is. The great sin, the real scandal is a misuse, misinterpretation, misunderstanding, misapplication, misappropriation of God's holy Word. That's the scandal that scandalizes heaven beyond all else because Christian ministry is suppose to be a depository that guards the truth, that guards it protectively, jealously, purely. And these people have for years dishonored God's Word by their false teachings, by their unbiblical systems of belief and most flagrantly by affirming that they believe something that they don't live. Scandalous.

In Psalm 138 verse 2 the Bible says God has exalted His Word above His name. Scripture is the selfrevelation of God. This is all we know about God. If you pervert this, you pervert God. And if you say you believe it and don't live it then you say God isn't serious, don't take Him seriously, don't take His Word seriously, it really doesn't matter that much. We're the spokesmen for God and this is how we live. So if we don't take God seriously, who know Him most intimately, why in the world should anybody else take His Word seriously? That's the real scandal. And nobody has said a word about that. And I'm appalled at that.

This is the record of who God is. This is the record of what He has done. This is the record of what He will do. This is the record of what He is doing. This is the record of what He requires. And we have to get this right and give it its place. It is a holy Word, it is a pure Word, it is a true Word and the psalmist said in Psalm 119:161 "My heart stands in awe of Thy Word." And Isaiah said in chapter 66, "God wants a man who trembles at His Word." But when you stand up and say you are the spokesman for His Word and you live in continual violation of it, you mock the Word and you mock the authority of God and you mock the power of God by your life. That is the scandal. The scandal of perverting the sacred duty of a ministry which is to guard with sacredness and holiness the pure Word of the living God. That is the worst violation of trust.

This Bible that you hold, that I hold in my hand and you hold in your hand is the most sacred thing your hands will ever touch in this world. This is the ultimate sacred trust. As Paul said to the Thessalonians, he had been given the trust of the gospel to keep, to preserve. And the thing that breaks my heart is the violation of that sacred trust. And I hear spokesman saying, "Well, we want to preserve this ministry," and I'm saying what ministry? The ministry that misuses, misappropriates, misapplies, misunderstands, misinterprets God's Word? The ministry that says that this is the Word of God over here and lives as if it didn't matter? Is that what we want to preserve? What is it we want to preserve? I'm not sure I know what it is. We don't want to preserve some ministry that can't do what all ministry is supposed to do and that is guard the truth and propagate it.

Look at 2 Corinthians chapter 2 for a moment. And verse 17 the Apostle Paul says, this is a personal testimony, "We are not like many others." We're not like other teachers. "Who corrupt the Word of God." Boy, what a strong statement that is. Who adulterate is the essence of it. Who adulterate,

prostitute the Word of God, hucksters, who use the Word of God to line their pockets, to finance their indulgence. We're not like them, he says, we are not corrupters of the Word of the God, we are not hucksters of the Word of God, we are not charlatans using the Bible to manipulate for our own ends. But, he says, we are sincere, that is we have integrity as of God in the sight of God, speak we in Christ. We're true to God. We're true to Christ. We speak the truth. We have integrity. We're not like the rest. We uphold the purity of this holy book. We understand the admonition of Deuteronomy 4:2 not to touch the Scripture, adding or taking away, the warning of Revelation 22:18 and 19 not to add to or take away lest the plagues written in it be added to our destiny. We preserve the Word, Paul says. We hold to the purity of the world...of the Word. We minister with integrity before God and before Christ. We're not like the rest who pervert, adulterate, twist and use the Scripture for their own ends.

Jude verse 3, Jude writes, and this is a call really to vigilance that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. Literally theonceforall deliveredtothesaints faith, means the Bible. And he says you should earnestly contend. The word earnestly contend is epagonizo, and in the middle of it is the word agonfrom which we get agony, you know that. That word originally meant a bowl or a stadium. We talk about bowl games, the Cotton Bowl, the Rose Bowl, the Orange Bowl and all that, that's an ancient Greek term. A stadium was called a bowl because of its obvious shape. And he is saying when we go into the bowl to fight the spiritual warfare, we battle over the purity of the faith.

In other words, our Super Bowl as ministers of the gospel is to fight for the truth, to preserve it. And, boy, that's...that's from my viewpoint, as the French would say, that's my raison d'etre, that's my reason to be, that's the reason I live, that's my daily bread and breath to preserve God's Word, to treat it with the sacredness and holiness and purity that it deserves and make sure it is properly guarded and upheld and handled with extreme caution and extreme care. And if you know me well, you know that I have a very difficult time dealing with people who misuse Scripture. It isn't just a simple error on their part, it is a perversion of the revelation of God and if you pervert the revelation about God then you will come up with a God who is not God and you'll be an idolater. You can't twist the Scripture without twisting God because this is His self revelation. And when you mutilate the Scripture, you come up with a God who is less than God. And if the world believes that the God who is is the God whose been running PTL then God has been massively dishonored. It's mind boggling to realize that the world is saying this is the group that represent God. They're supposed to be living out God's will. Frightening.

Guarding the truth is not only a matter of right interpretation, it's a matter of right living. When you think about the sacredness with which the Scripture came to us and scribes, you know, who thought it was so sacred they'd take out their pen in the Hebrew language when they're writing down the Old Testament manuscripts and they would write one letter and they would take a bath, change their clothes, get a new pen, write the next letter, take a bath, change their clothes, get a new pen, write

the next letter. Go through the whole Old Testament like that because they were so serious about every single letter. The sacredness with which people treated it, who gave their life for it, martyrs who literal blood was poured out in their guarding of God's truth. And then you have people who play fast and loose with that truth, flippantly treating it as if it was nothing more than something you use for your own ends. Irresponsible, illprepared hucksters who use the Scripture to get rich or to gain their own ends, and that's the travesty, that's the scandal. That is the scandal.

Yes the body is a sacred trust. Yes the body is a vessel that is to be used to honor God. Yes and if I am a Christian my body is the sacred temple of the Holy Spirit. And when a professing Christian engages his body in adultery, homosexuality or whatever other area of fleshly indulgence might be imagined, that violates the stewardship of the body and that is sin. And yes money entrusted to one who claims to represent Christ is a sacred trust and when such a professing Christian uses it deliberately in gross selfindulgence to buy houses and cars and jewelry and clothes and furniture and furnishings and drugs and pay prostitutes or whatever might be done, that is an incredible breach of the stewardship of God's gift of money. But those are rather small issues when compared with the major issue which is the breach of trust that comes when you mishandle God's truth because now you're not betraying yourself as a failure, you're betraying God as a failure or as inadequate or as other than He really is. It's frightening. The severest crime against God is to mishandle the revelation of God so that people can't see who He really is. Now you have struck a blow at His nature.

And when you preach that you represent God and you say that you represent God and you say you believe the Bible and you hold it up and wave it around and then you live a life that totally violates everything He teaches, you literally mock God. You say God is not important, I'm important. God is second to me, I know He said it but it doesn't matter, I'll live any way I want to live. You mock God. You drag God down to the level of your sin, that's why Jesus said if you are one with Christ, he that is joined to the Lord being one spirit, and you join yourself to a prostitute, you join the Lord to the prostitute, 1 Corinthians 6. And the thing that breaks my heart is that not that these people have desecrated their bodies in sexual sin, not that they have fouled up the stewardship of money but that they have desecrated the character of the Word of God and therefore they have conveyed and communicated a God who is not the true God. When you demand that other people follow God's truth while you openly violate it, you drag God's truth down and you show yourself to be a manipulator of God's truth for your own ends. What a desecration. What a mockery.

And I keep waiting for someone to say that. So I decided since no one had, I would. When you go a step further twisting (clapping) when you go a step further twisting Scripture so that it appears to teach that God wants everybody healthy, and God wants everybody wealthy, and God wants everybody successful, and if you'll just believe Jesus you can have everything you want, when you pump that kind of perversion out, then God is turned into some kind of celestial Monty Hall waiting to make your big deal, you know, you're going to cash in if you can just pick the right door and have enough faith to believe. God becomes a genie who pops out of a bottle and does whatever you force

him to do. You destroy the nature of God.

The most perfect expression of His will can be through pain. The most perfect expression of His will can be through tragedy. A dear little baby in our family this last week drown in the bathtub, two and half year old grandson of my cousin. I have the service tomorrow. Are we to say, "Well that tragedy happened because you didn't have enough faith?" Do we want to put that load of guilt on a family? The responsibility is to see God's hand in everything.

We did a television program on this Second Look series with a man named Bob Wheland(?). Bob Wheland was headed for a major league baseball career and then he got sent to Vietnam and he stepped on a mortar round while running across a field to rescue a fallen buddy and blew his legs off. That was, of course, the end of his baseball career. And he came back to the United States and decided that he was going to have a strong arms because he had to walk on his hands. He walks because he's only got body half way down, he walks on his hands. And so he decided to strengthen his upper body and he began to lift weights. And before he was done he set the world's record in the bench press. But they took the record away because he didn't have the proper uniform on, namely he didn't wear shoes so that he lost the record. That didn't discourage him. He decided to take up track. And before he was done he decided to walk across America on his hands for World Hunger. It took him three and a half years. He recently ran in the L.A. Marathon, you may have seen him. He loves the Lord.

And when someone asks me the question, was that fair? I said it would have been a gross unfairness to our society if Bob Wheland had ended up another baseball player. We would have lost the inspiration of an incredible man. Who is going to second guess God and why God does what He does? But again, striking blows at the sovereignty of God, the providence of God, the purpose of God with a kind of theology that leaves people who don't get well afraid that they don't have the faith to believe and they're lost in the shame and guilt of their own inability to heal themselves is a frightening misrepresentation of God's purposes. Teaching the lie that if you have enough faith you can force God to make you wealthy, that kind of unbiblical teaching will bring in millions of dollars because people want to buy a miracle but it misrepresents God. Propagating the lie that prosperity equals the blessing of God is nothing more than saying godliness is great gain, and that was a lie of the people in Timothy's environment, chapter 6, advocating that man is sovereign in salvation and in control of his destiny. And if he just wants Jesus badly enough he can reach out and grab Jesus, a cheap gospel, a weak presentation of salvation. So many things. Creating Christian celebrities who are famous for being famous and nothing else who stand up and articulate the faith and don't really know it.

See, all of these things in my judgment have misrepresented Scripture. The PTL for years was a launching pad for every kind of charismatic message and messenger, teaching error as if it were truth. Sure there's truth there, and I won't say there isn't. From time to time the truth is there and

from time to time it may be clear, but put it in the whole context and the whole picture is very muddy and the truth is not guarded with care. And the whole place flaunting pride, flaunting indulgence, wasting God's money, perverting His Word, pushing the Bible to the background only to be used when it needs to be used and showcasing entertainment and celebrities and opinions and whatever else. The misrepresentation of the nature of God, the gospel of Christ, the work of the Spirit, denying holy living, no place for humility, that meek and gentle and quiet spirit of godly women and that wonderful strong humble character of godly men with great integrity, missing.

You see, that's the sacred trust that's violated. That's the issue. No one is a minister of God who mocks, violates, misrepresents, perverts or cheapens the Word of the living God. We live to uphold that truth. And the sin of a PTL or any other ministry like that, quote/unquote ministry, is a sin against the Word of God. That's the issue.

That brings me to 1 Timothy. If anything comes through in 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy and Titus, it is the sacred responsibility of the man of God to live, proclaim and guard the truth. This whole epistle can be summed up very briefly by reminding you of what Paul says over and over and over again to Timothy. The whole deal here is to guard the truth.

Go back to chapter 1 for our last little review of this epistle. After the normal salutation in the first two verses, Paul launches right into his subject and he says, "As I besought you to stay at Ephesus when I went to Macedonia that you might...here's the reason you're there...that you might stay in Ephesus for the purpose of commanding some that they teach no other doctrine." No other teaching. Timothy, you are there to stop this false teaching. You are there to guard the truth. You are there to hold the line against encroaching error. Please, Timothy, verse 4, "Don't listen to fables, don't listen to their endless genealogies, all they do is serve up questions rather than godly edifying which is in the faith." Don't get caught up in all of that false teaching, all of that pseudo intellectualism.

"Those," verse 7, "who desire to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor that about which they affirm are certainly not to be listened to." They have no idea what they're talking about, they just want to be teachers, they assume the role without the truth. "Timothy, I left you there to command people teaching error to stop it and I left you there to be pure and uninfluenced as the source of truth."

Then down in verse 18, "This command," and again very forceful language, "this command I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which pointed to you that you by them through those prophecies might war a good warfare." Timothy, you're a soldier and you've got to fight a war and what is it abouT? Verse 19, "Holding the faith..." holding the faith because some people have put away the faith and made a shipwreck out of their lives. The faith is the content of Christian truth...the truth of God. Hold on to it, Timothy, hold on to it.

Chapter 2 verse 7, "For this, he says, I am ordained a preacher and an Apostle," and then I love this parenthesis, "(I speak the truth in Christ and lie not.)" You know, that ought to be behind the name of every preacher. Instead of saying Reverend Soandso, D.D. or Reverend Soandso, Thd., or Thm(?), or Mdiv(?) or whatever people like to put on their name. It ought to say Reverend Soand so, I preach the truth in Christ and lie not. That's the heart of ministry. That's what it's all about. Don't tell me what your degree is, tell me what you have to say. Don't tell me about your education. I don't want to know what your dissertation was, I want to know, do you speak the truth? That's what I want to know. And what a tragic heartbreaking grief it is to see school after school and seminary after seminary and church after church abandoning the truth. They don't guard the truth, sacred treasure.

No, Paul says I'm a preacher and I'm an Apostle and I'll tell you what that means. That means I speak the truth in Christ and don't lie. Speak the truth, proclaim the truth, live the truth. Look at chapter 3, if it is the sacred trust more than anything else of the man of God, the believer to guard the truth, then is it any wonder that in all of the qualifications for an elder that we saw in chapter 3, only one of them has to do with a skill? It's at the end of verse 3 and it says, "Skilled in teaching, or apt to teach." That's the only qualification for a pastor that's given in this list that's other than a moral or spiritual qualification. It's the only skill required. Why? Because the primary role of the man of God is to guard the truth, to teach the truth, to propagate the truth. That's the sacred trust, beloved. He is to be skilled in teaching. It's the only skilled mentioned because it's the basic skill of ministry.

Ministry is this, ministry is guarding and communicating truth. And those who do not do the guarding cannot communicate the truth and they have therefore prostituted the ministry. That's why my heart just continually continually runs hot over the issue of training men to teach the truth. That's the future. And there's so little seemingly of that.

Look at chapter 4, the issue comes right back again. Verse 1, "But the Spirit is speaking pointedly, directly that in the latter times," and we're in those times, "some shall depart from the faith." There are going to be people moving away from the faith, we've seen it, they're going to depart. The church will fail to guard the way they ought to guard. Men of God will fail to guard the truth. And so people will depart from it and they will be led astray because they listen to seducing spirits teaching doctrines of demons coming through lies, speaking hypocrites whose consciences are seared with a hot iron. Does that sound familiar? Who seem to be able to live a life that has no conscience.

Where do these teachings come from? Demon spirits and they are articulated in the world by liespeaking hypocrites who don't seem to mind doing it, they don't have any conscience. Their conscience has been so scarred by constantly being trampled through their behavior.

So he reminds Timothy then in verse 6 that because of the presence of such people you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ if you are nourished up in the words of the faith and of the good

doctrine. What does he mean? The words of the faith, that's Scripture. The words of the good doctrine, that is what Scripture teaches. So, Timothy, because there are demon spirits teaching demon doctrines through lying hypocrites who seem to have no conscience, who are in it for their own personal gain, you have to be faithful to guard the truth. And that means you've got to be nourished up in the words of the Scripture and the good teaching. And that's the positive. The negative, verse 7, you have to refuse to listen to the profane old wives fables which were sort of a euphemism referring to extant philosophy and you've got to force yourself to stick with the truth.

In fact, in verse 16, "Take heed to yourself and to your teaching and continue in them." So basic...so basic. Verse 13 of chapter 4, "Until I come give your attention to reading the Scripture, applying the Scripture," that's exhortation, "interpreting the Scripture," that's doctrine. Read it, interpret it and apply it. Guard that truth. Propagate that truth.

Chapter 5, what does it say in verse 17? "Let the elders or the pastors that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially if they work hard in the Word and teaching." If they work hard in the Word and teaching, they're worthy of double honor. Why? Because that's their calling. That's what we're all about. We are to guard the truth, to teach the truth. It's a sacred trust.

Chapter 6, the end of verse 2, "These things," and that sweeps back to the epistle, "teach and exhort and if anybody teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the teaching which is according to godliness, he is proud," and he goes on to lambaste those people that teach the false teaching, again saying the same thing. Timothy, teach the truth...teach the truth, and if anybody teaches otherwise, label them. And then he says to them in verse...to him in verse 11, "Fight against them. O man of God, flee these things and follow these things." Then verse 12, "And fight the good fight of the faith." Fight for truth. Fight for truth. And fight, verse 14 says, until the Second Coming. Fight right till Jesus gets here for the truth.

You see, that's the heart and soul of ministry. That's really what it's all about in the church. We are guardians of the truth. Do you remember what the Apostle Paul said when he was discussing the privilege of Israel's identity? In chapter 3 of Romans he says, "What advantage then has the Jew?" What is the advantage that the Jews have over the Gentiles? "Chiefly because unto them were committed the oracles of God." That was God's primary gift to Israel, His Word. And the church, His new people by the new covenant are in the same position, the primary entrusting given to us is in reference to His truth. We are to pass that truth on. We are to guard that truth. And those ministries, they may talk Jesus talk all the time, they may do all of the peripheral stuff but if they don't guard that truth by a right interpretation of the Scripture and a godly life that says the Scripture means what it says and God is serious and we love Him and honor Him, they are not doing the very single thing God designed them to do.

And when somebody says we've got to preserve this ministry, I say what ministry? What ministry? You want to preserve this confusion? For what reason?

Now Paul isn't finished because when he writes 2 Timothy you'd think he hadn't written 1 Timothy. Because he goes back over the same thing. Look at 2 Timothy the second epistle which came a little later to Timothy, and we'll get into this one starting next week. But look at chapter 1 verse 13, "Timothy, hold fast the form of sound words which you heard from me." Hold the truth, Timothy. Don't let go of it. Verse 14, "That good thing which was committed to you," what's that? The truth that Paul taught him by the Spirit, that doctrinal content given to you, keep it, guard it through the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. And don't be like the rest who all have turned away from me. Hold the truth.

Chapter 2 verse 2, "Not only hold it, the things you heard from me among many witnesses," that is it wasn't just my teaching it was confirmed by others to be the Word of God, "the same commit to faithful men." You want faithful men because they have to guard it also and they'll commit it to others. Four generations, Paul to Timothy to faithful men, to others also, and you're all responsible to guard the truth. And he launches right out of that into verse 3, you have to be a good soldier. Why? Because it's a battle. It's the Super Bowl of spiritual life, it's the battle for the truth. It's the contending for the faith. It's holding on while the Bible is under attack. And the most devastating attack, listen, the liberals have never been able to accomplish the attack on the integrity of Scripture that the PTL scandal has accomplished...never. This scandal is way beyond the proportions of other ones in terms of public view. And that's why we have to be soldiers who fight for the truth. It's always under attack.

Verse 15 chapter 2, another part of fighting for the truth and proclaiming the truth is to be diligent to study, you could translate it either way, to be approved to God a workman needing not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. What that means? Cutting it straight. It's a term used for cutting a pattern to make something. You know, when a woman makes a dress, she cuts out all the pieces and puts them together. And what the Apostle is saying, when you come to a piece of Scripture, make sure you cut it straight or when you fit it all together it won't work. And I've always said you can't be a theologian unless you're an exegete. If you don't cut the individual passages right, your theology doesn't come together. So be an interpreter. Be an expositor, be an exegete. Understand the Word of God. And then verse 16, here's the flip side, the negative, "And stay away from profane and vain babblings, they just produce more and more ungodliness and their word eats like gangrene." And he names a couple of guys who erred from the truth because of the encroachment of this pseudointellectualism.

Then in chapter 3 verse 13, he says, "Evil men and seducers become worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." How you going to counter that? Verse 14, "Continue in the things you have learned and been assured of," and then he reminds him of the holy Scriptures in verse 15. Not just

the Scriptures, the holy Scriptures. And then reminds him in verse 16 that they're given by inspiration of God, profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, instruction and righteousness. And with the consequence of making the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. What a sacred trust. Timothy, hold the Word.

Look at chapter 4. "I command you...I command you before God, I command you before the Lord Jesus Christ who is the judge, I command you before these two members of the trinity, verse 2, preach the Word. Be diligent in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering, the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine but after their own lusts will heap to themselves teachers having itching ears and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and be turned to fables. But you watch in all things, endure affliction, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of your ministry." In other words, don't let go of the truth. Everybody else around you may be doing it, don't you do it.

Paul said I didn't do it, verse 7, I fought a good fight. I fought for the truth. I kept the faith. I love that line, I kept the faith. That's the way it ought to be at the end of your life. I come to the end of my life, the question isn't going to be how big was his church, how successful was his ministry, how many radio stations heard his program, how many books did he write, all that stuff, the question is going to be: did he hold the truth? Was he faithful to the truth? "Because moreover, my brethren," Paul says to the Corinthians, "it is required in stewards that a man be found...what?...faithful." The sacred trust of the truth is the issue. And the question of all questions that a man is known by is what does he do with the truth...what does he do with the truth? Did he uphold it? Did he live it? Did he teach it? That's the issue.

And then you go to Titus the third of pastoral epistles written to pastors, Timothy and Titus. Look at chapter 1 verse 9, here is a qualification for an elder, a bishop, a pastor, he is to be holding fast the faithful word as he's been taught that he may be able to sound doctrine to exhort and confute the opposers. Boy, there it is again. The whole goal of this man of God is to have the truth in his heart, fight for the truth, teach the truth, preach the truth. There are many unruly vain talkers, deceivers, their mouths have to be stopped, verse 11 says. They subvert whole houses, they teach the things they ought not for filthy lucre sake, they do it for money. They're nothing more than lazy liars, evil beasts, gluttons, selfindulgent people. Against that we stand with the truth.

Chapter 2 verse 1, it's almost like Titus had to be reminded instantaneously after what he was just reminded of. Speak the things which become sound doctrine. Again that same emphasis. Verse 7, "Show yourself in every area a pattern of good works in doctrine showing uncorruptness." Boy, what a statement. No corrupt doctrine. Sound speech that can't be condemned, verse 8. Verse 10, "Not pilfering...not getting rich by misuse of Scripture but showing all good integrity that you may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things." Stick with doctrine, live by true doctrine, live by sound doctrine.

Chapter 3 verse 9, "Avoid the foolish questions, the genealogies, the contentions, the strivings about the law, they're unprofitable, they're empty and a man is a heretic, first and second time admonish him and then reject him knowing that he is such a man who is subverted and sins and is condemned of himself." Just reject him after you've admonished him to turn away, don't listen to his error.

Do you see whether you're in 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy or Titus, these are written to pastors. They are models of what the concern of the heart of God is for the man of God who leads the church of God and the concern is the truth. That's the truth. That's the concern. Now that is the scandal of all scandals to misrepresent the truth.

All right, with that in mind let's look at the last two verses briefly. And it just sums up, handling truth. First there is a duty to fulfill, a duty to fulfill. "O Timothy, guard that which is committed to your trust," stop at that point. That's the duty to fulfill. The word "guard" phulasso, it's used of valuables kept in a safe place. The interesting word "that which is committed to your trust," that's one word in the Greek, paratheke, the deposit. Guard the deposit. What has been, it could be translated, what has been deposited with you, guard. Guard the deposit. And what is the deposit? Truth. "O," that word "O" let's the heart of Paul leak a little bit with passion. "O Timothy," his name means one who honors God, "O Timothy, he cries at the end, using his name, please...as if he's pleading...guard what has been deposited with you as a sacred trust." That's the most sacred thing of all.

The Christian message...the Christian message is not something which the minister invents. The Christian message is not something which the minister works out for himself and is entitled to embellish. The Christian message is a divine trust which cannot be diminished or added to without serious consequence. And I would say to you, if God was scandalized and moved in against something like the PTL, we could say He was angry with their immorality, we could say He was angry with their misuse of funds but I would venture to say the thing which broke His heart and grieved Him and angered Him even more was their perversion of His Word. That's the sacred trust. That's the sacred trust. What a duty. What a duty we have.

Secondly, a danger to avoid...avoiding, verse 20, the profane empty babblings. "Profane," interesting word, bebelos. It originally was used in Greek to refer to everything outside the sacred grounds of a temple, anything common, anything open to everybody. It then came to mean anything unsacred, something outside the sacred place. So these pseudointellectual musings that attack the Scripture, these liberal neoorthodox newidea kind of theories that approach on Scripture, these private interpretations that people come up with, all of this supposed stuff that attacks the Scripture is unsacred common outside the holy place, not sacred, not holy, having no connection with God, having no connection with His truth, having no connection with His holiness, unrelated to what he really desires to communicate, all that stuff, Paul says to Timothy, avoid it. And the word "avoid" means to go out of the way, to turn aside from. Present tense, continually steer clear of such stuff.

Some people think that education is spending your whole life learning error. Not so, not unless you want gangrene spiritually.

Preserve the truth, guard the truth, protect the truth and stay away from error, stay in the truth, stay in the sphere of truth, stay away from the empty voice...the word there for babblings is empty voice, empty utterances, useless arguments, vain jangling, meaningless talk unrelated to truth. It's amazing how when it comes through some scholarly mode people want to bow to the shrine of this babbling.

And then he calls it oppositions of knowledge falsely so called. Oppositions is antithesis, antithesis, counter affirmation. It's a technical term used in rhetoric for a counter proposition in a debate...those who just want to argue the Scripture, who want to attack the Scripture, who want to offer their counter affirmations, their contradictions, pseudo intellectualism falsely called knowledge. Nothing but Satanic lies, Satanic heresy and he says stay away from it, turn to another path, it eats like gangrene.

So a duty to fulfill, guard the truth. A danger to avoid, error, stay away from it. I can't stress how strongly I feel about the necessity of avoiding false teaching. It destroys, it eats like gangrene. I mitigates against your spiritual strength. It sucks your life blood out. It creates doubts...deadly stuff. The duty to fulfill and the danger to avoid lead him to the development to consider. Here's a motive, look at verse 21. These unsacred, unholy useless babblings and counter affirmations and antitheses of a false kind of knowledge, pseudo intellectualism, some having proclaimed have erred concerning the faith. Some people who picked up on that and started articulating and announcing and proclaiming that have deviated from the faith. They have deviated from the faith and therefore they have abandoned their sacred trust. And they have led a lot of other people with them. You know, Peter says they do this and many follow their pernicious ways, 2 Peter, I think it's 2:2...many follow their pernicious ways.

You see, how we handle the treasure, that's the issue. What is the church to be? Primarily a depository of God's truth. What are you looking for when you look for a church? What do they believe about the Word of God and how do they affirm it? What do they teach? How do they handle the treasure, the real treasure, the treasure of God's Word?

So Paul closed this wonderful epistle with that simple reminder: Timothy, you are there to guard the truth. And then he says, "Grace with you." No verb, grace with you. Very abrupt because he knows he can't do this unless the grace of God is his portion, right? By the way, "you" is plural. He knows there are going to be a lot of other folks who are going to hear this letter, not just Timothy. And so he embraces the whole church because it's their responsibility to guard the truth as well and he pleads the grace of God on their behalf for such a tremendous responsibility. Usually he would close with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, but he just cuts it off, grace with you. You know what you're to do and you need God's grace to do it.

So the whole epistle has been a call to spiritual responsibility and the primary issue in spiritual responsibility is to guard the truth. Listen very carefully, I'm going to tell you how you're to respond to this. One, believe the Word of God. Believe it, it is the Word of God. "This is My beloved Son," the Father said, "listen to Him." Believe it.

Secondly, honor it. Job said in 23:12 it was more important to him than his necessary food.

Thirdly, study it to show yourself approved, believe it, honor it, study it.

Fourthly, obey it. John 8:31, "If you continue in My Word you're My real disciple."

Believe it, honor it, study it, obey it...love it. Psalm 119:97, David said, "O how I love Thy law." Psalm 19, "Sweeter to me than honey in the honeycomb." Love it, cherish it, defend it, earnestly contend for it, believe it, honor it, study it, obey it, love it, defend it and finally proclaim it...proclaim it. And I have found in my own personal experience that what I teach and what I preach I tend to remember best. Have you found that to be true? What you give away you keep, and so one of the greatest ways to guard the truth is to give it away because by the time you've poured it through your own mind, your own heart and given it to somebody else, you've solidified it in your own understanding.

We have a sacred trust just like Timothy did. But we have a war out there and we will stand for the truth. That's what God has asked us to do, that we might pass it on to the next generation pure and unadulterated. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we thank You this morning for the years that You've given us here in this place to teach Your Word, to honor Your Word, to guard it, to proclaim it. We pray that we will be faithful until Jesus comes to continue to do that and never deviate from the path. Make us guardians who are worthy of the task and the title. And we plead Your forgiveness for those times when we fail to guard the truth, we fail to live the truth. And we ask that You would glorify Your name and that You would not be mocked by a society who laughs at such a God who is identified with such foolish people as You are identified with.

Be glorified, Lord, we long for the day when Jesus comes and is seen for who He is, that day when the glorious manifestation of the sons of God takes place and mystery is ended, transformed into reality and the world sees the living Christ. But until then, honor Your name, preserve Your glory. Help us to adorn the truth. Forgive us for those failures when we were a dishonor to You and Your Word. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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