

2 Timothy 3:14-16

Instructions to Timothy
Guiding, Growing, Guarding!



But As For You...



I absolutely love our passage this morning. It rings with truth! It begins with an admonition to young Timothy, evidently the lead pastor to the church in Ephesus, to stick with what he has been taught. Why is it that there is such a great temptation to change our truth. *In society, what was once known to be true has largely been completely reversed – turned on its head! Our morals, and even our ethics, our codes of conduct. When I was a kid, there was a universal acknowledgement that honesty and truthfulness were of great value. Character in a person was a priceless entity! The entertainment industry - films, TV, no longer attempt to espouse any kind of good and healthy morality any longer. Its all new morality, the SJ mentality, and they are all about that! It's hard to make a movie these days unless they are paying homage to social justice. Now the most immoral people in society are telling us that our morality should be like theirs! That, in itself, should tell you how off this new righteousness in society is! Even Hollywood productions *once* touted and preached these Judeo-Christian values and traits. Of course, the roles that illustrated these qualities were largely played by actors that practiced none of the tenants of good character in their private lives. But from the time moving pictures was created, actors and actresses often publicly espoused good values, and hid their often gross and boorish misbehavior from the public! Now that has all changed. The actors are still practicing gross and disgusting morality in private, while making no *public pretense* of being traditionally moral people. But if they are woke, they are considered righteous! Again, the temptation to “evolve” – to call the old good, “bad”, and the old bad, “good”, seems to be overpowering to society! Now, today, the old is labeled as racist, misogynistic, homophobic, and a host of other “istics” and “obics”. The new righteousness is labeled as a necessary evolution/progression of our understanding of good and evil – thus the term “**progressives**”. Yet, our society has never been more divided, more hateful, and more unsafe. *I mean, I took a hunter's safety class when I was 14, and I had to ride my bike down Grand Avenue, the busiest street in Wausau, with my .22 rifle strapped to my back, because it was required that we show the instructor that we actually knew how to shoot, and get some practice at it while he watched! No one even gave a second thought to seeing a 14 year old riding down a busy street with a canvas encased rifle strapped to his back. It was a different world back then! People were not afraid of weapons because we all possessed the strong morality *to not shoot other people!* There were not nearly as many mentally unhinged people looking to go out with a bang by taking many with them! There were not a fraction of the perverts and pedophiles that we have today, lurking around city neighborhoods, and stalking public parks, and scouting jogging trails and country roads looking for victims! That should tell everyone that something is terribly wrong with the new morality – but, no, it doesn't! The progressives only double down! Yet, the more “enlightened”, and “compassionate” we become, the more unsafe we are!



Likewise, the temptation to “evolve” theologically has always been a temptation. People can rationalize the darnedest things. Now, eternal hell is questioned, and homosexuality is relabeled, repackaged, and sold as true love by woke pastors and woke churches, and woke “Christians” in general. But it is simply the church’s newest cult - it’s newest departure from the apostolic teaching of the New Testament of the Bible, and the moral mandates of the Old Testament. Pastors that formerly preached the gospel of Jesus Christ have “evolved” and are preaching the gospel of social justice! They are right on this, and everyone else is wrong, unevolved, backward, stupid – even, **and especially**, in the church! You cannot believe the complicated explanations of such a theology! I’ve read their theological justifications, and I can really sense that they believe their theological justifications are superior to traditional theology! But I have learned over the years that the more complicated the explanation, the more suspect that theology is! Theology was not intended to be complicated! We make it complicated when we need to come up with a plan to change what are otherwise entirely straightforward concepts and precepts of scripture! *I remember in Christian college when in our Contemporary Religions class, our professor had two of the smartest students in the class research the Jehovah’s Witnesses, and come back to class to debate with the class and professor, **as if** they were JWs. They did such a thorough job of preparing for that assignment, that they argued us all to a standstill. They had a comeback for everything! I was devastated! But then, I thought it over and revisited the debate in my mind! Those two students had done most of the talking that afternoon. That was because they had such huge and convoluted and wordy arguments to get through! Most proof texts had long explanations attached to them – explanations that went back to the Greek, or Hebrew, and I guess, by the time they were done, I will admit, it could be taken that way. But it happened again, and again, and again! You don’t have to do that for the true gospel! It really is quite simple, and was intended by God to **be** simple! We are supposed to have “the faith of a child”, if we are to be saved – saved from our sins and saved unto the love of God! Now, there are many things that require long explanations – often scientific, or medical, or judicial, or technological explanations and so on, that require a huge amount of words to explain the concepts. But theology should not be that way! Even commentaries are not long in their explanations as they go verse by verse – **UNLESS** they are trying to explain away what is obviously in the text. **Then** it gets long and laborious/tedious!



The longer
the explanation,
the bigger
the lie.

So Paul encourages Timothy to stick to what he originally learned. He had been discipled by Paul and taught apostolic truth – what the apostles had agreed upon as being the unadulterated teachings of Jesus the Christ! His admonition is to **NOT** be like these people that are swayed by false teachers – **“always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth”**. I have known people who claimed to be Christians, with a voracious appetite for reading – book after book – and the books they read are not always good books, but which skew traditional beliefs a little this way or a little that way – and,.. admittedly, it could be. **It isn’t,..** but it could be, I suppose. And I have seen them attracted to this edgy kind of perspective, adopting a bit of it here and there, until they are, in the end, far from apostolic orthodoxy. And they are lost, victims of their own intelligence!



Now, I am not trying to dumb down the gospel. There are many facets to the gospel, but none of it is terribly complicated. Theologians try to make it sound complicated, and it disgusts me when I read some egg-headed professor, or PHD, that tries to impress by using words and phraseology that is virtually unintelligible to the average reader! That is not sounding smarter! In my book, that person’s intelligence is suspect! A truly smart person is able to break an argument down into understandable language and terms so the most people possible can understand it – not just those in academia! That’s showing some real intelligence, and not just the egotistical desire to impress other smart people!

Anyway, Paul admonishes Timothy to not give in to that natural inclination to outsmart himself. It is what got the false teachers into trouble. They were always open to the newest theories if they thought someone was really smart. If they come across as smart, they must come across as right. So, out with the old (the apostolic teachings) and in with the new (bizzaro, unbiblical, different, convoluted) theories! But that jeopardizes the soul of the person that messes with this. Christianity is a personal relationship with the Creator, but that relationship is need-fully based on God’s self-revealed facts about who and what He is, what He has done in salvation history, and what He wants! What God has revealed about Himself in the Bible, **must stand!** It is our job to dissect and correctly understand what He has revealed - not play around with it to match any idea of the world’s. The world’s system opposes God – aligns itself with His enemy, Satan! So,.. no,.. It’s incompatible! Christianity is a body of knowledge that is solid, absolute, reliable! It doesn’t change or even shift without the most solid proof in the world, because when it does, it kills us, it makes the church unusable to God! The mores/norms of society change like the shifting winds, but God’s word remains steady, constant, a rock, a refuge that will not cave in under pressure! We have to cling to that, **or we become more lost than those that do not know Jesus at all!**

You don't mess around with salvation! You don't take what is God's and make it your own, molded in the image of your own preferences! That's god-making! * Do you remember when a whole nation-wide chain of stores grew out of the popularity of the Cabbage Patch Dolls. Kids and parents would go in there and mix and match the available traits, and they would come out with a creation of their own. Doing that with the knowledge of God is a bit like making your own cabbage patch doll to suit your tastes. Making a cabbage patch doll is a **benign** activity, but re-making the definition of God or messing with the fundamental knowledge of salvation – that is creating a spiritual/ intellectual **malignancy that will grow and multiply in your mind and life, AND IT IS ULTIMATELY FATAL to our souls!** I don't know where, exactly, God draws the line, but I do know that He has drawn **A** line! **It's there**, and if you have any fear of Him you will respect that line and stay well away from it for the sake of your own self-preservation. If you have any love of the church - the church that God loves like a bride, we will adhere to the simple gospel truths, without adding or subtracting anything to suit yourself!



Now, I don't think that Paul suspected that Timothy was doing that at this time! Paul knew this letter would be circulated and that EVERYONE would read it! This missive, directed at Timothy, was for other readers, many of whom would be flirting with unorthodoxy. Unorthodoxy is **extra-biblical beliefs and practices incorporated into the church**, which are not found in the Bible! But church history is full of things that have messed with, added to, or out-and-out changed the apostle's teachings – traditions and doctrines that are instituted to help God out! Who instituted these things! I almost feel sorry for them. But unless we have strict adherence to the scriptures, this is the kind of thing that happens, and the church loses its way!

So, Paul's injunction here is an important one! **"But as for you, continue on in what you have learned..."** – referring to what Timothy had learned from Paul, which was clear apostolic teaching, and the teachings of Jesus, through and through! Amazingly, because of the efforts of God Himself, the apostles words and Jesus' words are preserved for us in the Bible's New Testament. Read them. Read them again. Keep reading them. Master them! If you do, you will be serving the Lord's purposes without ever unwittingly working against them!