
Flee False Teaching

I Timothy 6:3-5, 11

Introduction

Series Concerns

This series is a continued effort on the part of the ministry leadership at Clearcreek Chapel to challenge us to consistent Godly living based upon a clear and understandable interpretation of the Bible. We believe that God calls us and challenges us to a life that is holy and consistent with his own character. This is the fundamental problem with us and the reason that a substitutionary means of justifying us is necessary. But in the act of declaring us “right”, he then positions us to reflect this glorious “rightness” in our own lives.

We are constantly engaged in the practice of encouraging each of us to a more Christ-like character because of the work of Christ and the power of the Gospel. The constant interaction between the indicative and the imperative motivates our actions. Who we are in Christ and the response of faith in Christ are the engines of holiness. We must realize our position in Christ and the character of the righteousness that has been placed in our accounts and then live in faithfulness to the King who has graciously worked this wonder in our lives.

Challenges

When we engage imperative texts, texts which tell us we are to do or be a certain way, or are to think and feel in a particular manner, we easily can get the idea we are able to accomplish this “task” in our own abilities. But we must never lose sight of the grace of the Gospel. If we somehow “move on” from the power of the Gospel we then easily and quickly get caught up in exactly what our text warns us about this evening. We are going to look at our topic tonight from two angles: the effects of false teaching, which is what our text describes in detail, and examples of false teaching, looking to a handful of Biblical examples to clarify the concerns before us.

Effects of False Teaching (I Tim. 6:3-5,11)

A False Attraction (vs. 11)

Let us begin by the examining the verse that is the title-lending passage, that is, verse 11.

But as for you, O man of God, flee these things.

In the following verses we see the presence of four words in the imperative. We find “flee” here in verse 11, “pursue” also in verse 11, “fight” is in the next verse, verse 12, and “take hold” or “seize” also in verse 12. These are often

used as strong words implying action and energy. ‘Flee’ as used in this sequence should not be read as a casual avoidance, or a mere “walking away from.” We should feel the energy of “run from” or “get outta’ here” or “get away from there!” The reason that such energetic words are used should provide us with a hint that somehow this problem has a strong attraction and requires effort to avoid it. He is very much concerned with the false and potentially fatal attraction before him.

But what is Timothy (and by extension, the rest of us) to run away from? Verse 11 speaks of “these things.” “These things” could just refer to the money and material gain that can be had in this business of preaching (we will speak more to this apparent inconsistency later...). But “these things” probably refers to what he has spoken on in the verses 3-10 in their entirety. This includes the challenge of materialism and discontent but we are going to focus on Paul’s remarks in verses 3-5.

A False Foundation (vs. 3)

If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness,

The NLT renders “accords with godliness” as “foundation for a godly life.” Paul, the champion of “justification” is very much concerned with how this justification plays itself out in the lives of those “justified.” The idea behind the word for “godliness” includes ideas of reverence and worship. Our lives demonstrate what we are worshipping. Paul Tripp puts it this way: “God intended worship to be the motivational core of our lives. Adam and Eve were created to live so that everything in their lives drew its meaning and purpose from the person, presence and purpose of God. This is called a God-ward referent. Because of this design, everything a human being does expresses worship. What you do and the way you do it express your desire to serve something. Some central love commands our allegiance and directs our behavior.” He goes on to say: “Stolen worship is at the core of what is wrong with fallen human beings. Sadly, we are all guilty of the crime. Because we are worshippers by nature, we are always (1) giving proper worship to God, {what Paul the apostle is encouraging Timothy to take care to do in our passage} (2) serving something else, or (3) worshipping ourselves, demanding to be the center of our own universe.” Paul the apostle is pointing us to a clear problem that promotes false worship--that is--teaching that is false.

God created us to receive and interpret information (another Paul Tripp concept...) We change and grow by receiving and then doing the right thing with information from God, also known as revelation. Most of our receiving of this information is from others as “teaching”. So if we start with the wrong information what can we say about the way we will interpret and use this information. The idea of “sound” in sound teaching is teaching (or doctrine) that is healthy and promotes health. If we expect our lives to *blossom* as flowers for Godly worship we must start with healthy soil. If we expect to *build* a live of solid form and function we must lay an appropriate foundation. In our recent trip to Florida we noticed that there is a fair amount of construction occurring. Much of it is beach-front. In order to build a multi-story

beach front tower or simple house a significant foundation has to be dug and poured. The sands themselves are unstable and the occasional storm needs to be weathered if the structure is to give any security to its investment. Big holes and a lot of concrete and steel then go underground to bring one of those babies up! Can we afford to lay a faulty foundation for our lives?

It is also interesting to note the confidence that Paul has with his teaching. He equates what he has just taught earlier (verse 2b “teach and urge these things”) with the “sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ” We too need to spend effort to listen to and to teach words that agree with Paul and with Christ. We need to be saturated with the Word so that truth is obvious and falsehood clearly recognizable.

A False Response (vs. 4,5)

he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment,

Verses 4 and 5 then show that there is great moral effect in false teaching. A false foundation by definition will lead to false response. In order for false teachers to gain hearers, the context for the audience must be built. Often it is a situation of conflict and suspicion that allows for this falseness to breed and multiply. Unity and harmony is not good “feed” for the wolves that would spread falsehood.

But who would begin to think that becoming a preacher is a way to get rich? Does anyone else see this as a potential oxymoron? Now in some circles and in history clergy positions are and were often well endowed. Some in modern society would react very positively to hearing this passage. But in evangelical circles this would not seem to have much application if this was all that was intended. The temptation or attraction to false teaching is to continue to have a hearing and a position at all. How many a pulpit has strayed from “the truth” to keep its congregation, or an influential member or family, or a reputation with other pastors or theologians? How far down this “slippery slope” does one go before “false teaching” occurs?

Let’s examine before we leave tonight a few short examples from Scripture as to what constitutes “false teaching.”

Examples of False Teaching (II John 7; Gal. 1:6,7; Jude 4)

A False Christ (II John 7)

And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it. For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we¹ have worked for, but may win a full reward.

The Gospel and the Epistles of John lay great emphasis on the person of Christ. Deceivers don't walk "according to the commandments" and we need to "watch ourselves."

These are John's ways of saying the same things that we read Paul as saying. But we are confronted with a great concern for John. That we truly understand who this Christ was. John was very concerned for us to know that Christ must be both divine and human for the gospel to have any real foundation in truth. He must be God living among us as he constantly portrays as occurring in his Gospel. But he must also be truly "in the flesh." Jesus must be a true incarnation and not a mere appearance. Again a quote from Paul Tripp is appropriate: "Jesus incarnated the ultimate marriage of grace and truth. In his life, death, and resurrection, we come to understand the grace of God. God sends his own Son, as the second Adam, to face the full range of temptations in a fallen world. He does so to keep the Law on our behalf, there by satisfying God's requirement for life. He willingly offers up himself as the perfect sacrificial Lamb, so that the penalty of sin is fully paid. He rises from the tomb, purchasing new life for all who trust in him." Paul Tripp goes on speak of Jesus as thereby incarnating grace and truth, the power and ground for true change. He then says this: "God's agenda is glory received and glory given so that glory would continue to be incarnated on earth. Maybe the best way to think of the incarnation is as an ongoing event: God made known, no longer in the physical presence of Christ, but in the glory of his work through his people as we live incarnationally. Incarnation helps us understand the purpose and character of personal ministry. People are changed by seeing Christ in new ways, ways that reveal the bankruptcy of their own agendas and the emptiness of the glories they seek. Their most important encounter is not with the counselor, but with Christ...God has placed his glory on us so that our live and ministry would reveal him on earth. In this way, incarnation for us is a life agenda.

A false Christ can lead only to false hope. We also need to keep clear the truth of the gospel...

A False Gospel (Galatians 1:6,7)

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

Our intent is not to expound the full message of the letter to the Galatians but to point out that the truth *about* the Gospel and the truth *of* the Gospel are key for Paul's understanding of the world. The message that God's agenda for change is provided by Him in the work of the true Christ and is appropriated by faith in his provision. Our fundamental problem is rebellion to the High King of Heaven. Our penalty is the ultimacy of torment forever in hell. But the King has come and has made our redemption secure by purchasing us with the blood of his Son. The power of His Spirit makes this alive in our hearts and brings us into relationship with him. Any other message that purports to be from God as our way of salvation save the power of the risen Christ by the work of the Spirit is to be rejected in the strongest terms.

Which leads us to our last concept...

A False Life (Jude 4)

For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

The NLT puts it this way...*I say this because some godless people have wormed their way in among you, saying that God's forgiveness allows us to live immoral lives. The fate of such people was determined long ago, for they have turned against our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*

The gospel has with it power to change lives. To deny that it does or that it should is also challenging to the gospel. "God's response to the willful rebellion of his creatures was grace (in the gospel). This grace justifies, providing complete forgiveness and unwavering acceptance with God. This grace adopts, welcoming us into his family with all the rights and privileges of true sons and daughters. The grace enables, empowering me to think, say, and do things I could not do in my own strength. This grace transforms, radically changing every aspect of my life." This also comes from Paul Tripp.

Conclusion

So let's finish this way.

We first of all need to be aware that false teaching is attractive and deadly. One area that the Bible speaks the most about in "false teaching" is the area of the gospel. It will rob us of the truth for our own lives and our effect on the lives of others...Beware!

But more than beware, flee! Run away from false teaching, don't let this kind of power-denying thinking become a part of your life. Later more will be said about what to pursue, but at this point look at your thinking, your reading, your viewing, your listening, your informal counselors, where is false teaching found? As Scar, the brother of the Lion King, Mufasa encouraged Simba following the death of Simba's father...Run away, and never come back!

From the NLT our passage reads:

Some false teachers may deny these things, but these are the sound, wholesome teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they are the foundation for a godly life. Anyone who teaches anything different is both conceited and ignorant. Such a person has an unhealthy desire to quibble over the meaning of words. This stirs up arguments ending in jealousy, fighting, slander, and evil suspicions. These people always cause trouble. Their minds are corrupt, and they don't tell the truth. To them religion is just a way to get rich.

But you, Timothy, belong to God; so run from all these evil things,