

When Wrong Seems Right – 2 Tim 3:14-17

Turn to 2 Tim 3

Is it any surprise to you when I say that we live in a day and age where the whole concept of truth is being questioned?

Where people are asking the same question Pilate asked in Jn 18:38 – *What is truth?*

Remember that? He’s questioning Jesus just before he turns him over to the soldiers to be crucified, and in the midst of their conversation, Jesus says . . .

For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world – to bear witness to the truth [to proclaim and affirm the truth about God and his plan for the world]. *Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.* (John 18:37)

And Pilate responds, with all the disgust he could muster – “*What is truth?*”

In other words, don’t give me that – there’s no so-called “truth;” it’s all relative
You Jews believe one thing; we Romans believe another; Somebody else yet another
And none of them are more or less true than the others
So don’t be playing the “truth” card on me

- Do we not live in a day and age where the same thing is being said?
That there is no absolute truth except the truth that there’s no absolute truth
As contradictory as that is, that’s the “truth” most people live by
Your way of thinking/believing/living is no better than theirs, because there’s no ultimate truth or standard by which to live and think

Believe whatever you want and do whatever you want; If it works for you – great
But just because it works for you doesn’t mean it has to work for me
Your beliefs are no more “true” or better than mine
Though we know deep down that’s not true . . .
It’s so prevalent and sounds so reasonable, that *wrong seems right*

Add to that the wrong living that most often accompanies such thinking
And false teachers who go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived, in and out of churches
And it’s very easy to sacrifice your convictions and succumb to the majority “group-think” on this, that maybe truth is relative . . .
Different for different people at different times – maybe wrong *is* right

- That was exactly the situation for Timothy we find in 2 Tim 3
People were so selfish and sin so prevalent, that wrong seemed right
A situation where filthy, guiltless people preyed on the weak
A situation where corrupt people opposed the truth and those who proclaimed it
A situation where God’s people suffered persecution at the hands of evil men
And it’s in that situation – filled with arrogance, and void of truth, that Paul says in v14 . .

When wrong seems right, when every standard of God is being questioned or dismissed –

Stick to the truth . . . (v14-15)

14 – *continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed*

It doesn’t matter whether you learned it years ago growing up . . .

Like Timothy did from his mother Eunice, and grandmother Lois

Or more recently as an adult

Either way, stick to the truth even when others aren’t

Don’t be swayed by “new” philosophies – *there’s nothing new under the sun* (Eccl 1:9)

Don’t be tossed about by every wind of doctrine from well-meaning people who advocate something contrary to the truth of God’s Word

Stick to the truth

- And put yourself in the best possible situation to learn it in the first place
Find those people who practice what they preach and live what they believe
Even if you had the privilege like Timothy to learn the truth as a child . . .
Find them, attach yourself to them, and soak up everything you can from them

People like SG leaders, and youth leaders, and children’s teachers

Because knowing the lives and godliness of those from whom you’ve learned the truth, adds confidence to stick to it when wrong seems right

That’s why Paul says in v14 – *continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it* (14)

The life of your teachers/mentors/leaders makes a difference

Find and learn from godly people

- Godly people, who teach from the Bible
That’s the only way you can know that you’re getting the truth
If it’s not, it doesn’t matter how smooth, or cool they are – can’t trust what they teach

Once again, that was Timothy’s situation to which Paul was referring

From childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings (15a)

He not only learned from godly people, but they taught him the Scriptures

To the extent your religious upbringing doesn’t square w/ the Word of God, it’s not truth
To the extent that your favorite religious traditions or beliefs are not found in the Bible, they’re not the truth

And to the extent that they are *contrary* to the truth of God’s Word, they’re wrong

As in not good; As in you shouldn’t believe them or practice them

Truth that you can stick to is most often learned from godly people who teach fr the Bible

- Find them, and stick to the truth that leads to salvation
Or as Paul says it in v15b – the truth as found in *the sacred writings which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus*
Truth like – *There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved* (Acts 4:12) – referring to Jesus . . .
Who said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me* (Jn 14:6)

Stick to *that* truth, and you won’t go wrong

- In my ordination council, somebody asked me how I would respond to open theism – a belief that God does not possess perfect divine foreknowledge
That is, he doesn’t know what you’re going to do before you do it
Rather, he’s really good at *reacting* to what you do, and as it happens, fashions it to accomplish his purposes
Sounds reasonable, but it’s very wrong

So I began to give a very ordered response as to why the *logic* of that view didn't hold up, and why I believed differently

James interrupted me and said – “I don't care what you believe; You're using the same kind of logic they do; What should you be doing?”

As the words were coming out of his mouth it was one of those God-moments in my life, and I said – “I should be turning to the Scriptures, to the *truth* of God's Word” And immediately turned to Acts 17:24, one of the many passages that prove open theism is wrong, and that God does indeed have perfect, divine foreknowledge

When wrong seems right, or tempted to rely on logic, or some other source for life . . .
Stick to the truth; and stick to . . .

The whole truth . . . (v16)

All Scripture is breathed out by God

All 1189 chapters, 31,102 verses, 773,746 words

All of it comes from the mind of God

The Greek word here for “breathed out by God” is theopneustos – God-breathed

All Scripture [the whole Bible] is *God-breathed*

Just like all of your thoughts are “you-breathed” when articulated by your mouth with spoken words . . .

So too, all of the Bible was “God-breathed” when the Holy Spirit moved men to articulate *his* thoughts, with *written* words

Bottom line – every last word of the Bible is God-made, not man-made

And since God can't lie, the *whole* thing is truth, cover to cover

Which means there's not one part we can dismiss because it's hard to follow, or hard to believe

- Dr William Evans was one of the foremost Bible teachers in America in the first half of the 20th century

Extremely intelligent and well-educated; Knew the Bible by heart; preached 50 years

On one particular occasion after he retired in the 1940's, he was filling the pulpit for his son at the very large, formal, and prestigious 1st Presbyterian Church of Hollywood

On that occasion, he did something I've thought about many times, but have never had the guts to do – read you the account

One unforgettable Sunday Dr. William, as he was affectionately called, spoke on the virgin birth in the gospels. Suddenly, in the middle of the message, he raised his Bible and tore out the pages that narrate the birth of Jesus. As the tattered scraps floated down toward the congregation, he shouted, “If we can't believe in the virgin birth, let's tear it out of the Bible!” And then as he drove his point home further, he tore out the resurrection chapters, then the rest of the miracles, and anything else conveying the supernatural. Until finally, the floor was littered with mutilated pages.

And then with immense drama, he held up the only remaining portion of the gospels and said, “This is all we have left – the Sermon on the Mount. And it has no authority for me if a divine Christ didn't preach it.” (Hughes, 1&2 Timothy, p235)

Dr Evans was exactly right – you can't pick and choose from the Bible

That's one of the massive implications of this passage in 2 Timothy – *All Scripture is breathed out by God* . . . no exceptions

You can't pick and choose the passages you like, and ignore the rest

You can't decide to live only by the ones that are easy, and forget the rest

You can't choose to abide only by the passages that are culturally appropriate or politically correct, and rationalize the rest away

If you do, the Bible will have no sustaining power for your life

If the whole Bible is the God-breathed truth, you have to stick to the whole thing

It's not a restaurant menu, where you can pick and choose what you want

When wrong seems right – stick to the truth, the whole truth . . .

And nothing *but* the truth (16-17)

There are 5 Reasons for that in these verses –5 reasons to stick to nothing but the truth of Scripture when it comes to life/godliness

1. There's nothing better for *teaching* the truth

It's *profitable for teaching* (16a)

Profitable carries the nuance in Gr of useful and sufficient for its purposes

Just like a chemistry textbook is profitable for teaching us the truths about chemistry . . .

How much more is the Bible profitable for teaching the truths about life/godliness

There's nothing better for teaching the truth

2. There's nothing better for confronting sin

Reproof – a strong rebuke, reprimand, scolding

There's nothing better than the very words of God as found in the Bible, for confronting the sin of someone who doesn't want to hear it

There's nothing better for exposing it in our own lives, and convicting us of it

No other religious book in the world does that

No other religious book pierces the heart and presses on our guilty conscience like the truth of Scripture

Nothing else floods the darkness of our depravity with such penetrating light

It's no wonder God said in **Jer 23:29** – *Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?*

There's nothing better than the truth of God's Word for confronting sin

3. There's nothing better for correcting errors

Not all sin is due to willful rebellion and requires confrontational reproof

Some is due to not knowing any better, and simply requires laying out the truth of the Word and letting God do the work to convince us of error

How many times have you seen this in your own life?

You were living and thinking one way, when through the truth of God's Word, you were convinced you should change that, and live differently

Those are called growth areas, and we all have them

And there's nothing better than the truth of God's Word for correcting them

4. There's nothing better for training in righteousness

There's no better manual for training yourself for godliness

To be holy like God is holy – inside and out

Why do you think we teach 350 kids every Sunday morning from the Bible?

Why do you think we preach the Word without apology every single Sunday?

Other than not knowing what else I would do . . .

There's nothing better for training in righteousness

5. There's nothing better for preparing us to serve

Read v17 – can't see it in English, but Paul uses two forms of the same word for

equipped, back to back . . .

Intending to convey that the Bible, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, is

profitable for *super-equipping* us to serve

There's nothing better for making us competent servants of God

Ready for every good work – inside these walls and out

Summary

Do you see why it's beneficial/profitable to get serious about the Word?

Do you see why it's important to stick to the truth in a day and age when the concept of truth *itself* is being challenged?

Do you see why it's important to stick to the whole truth and nothing but the truth at a time when people are doing everything they can to avoid it?

What is truth, Pilate asked? *This* is truth God says – my Word

When wrong seems right – stick to *it* . . .

The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth