

Uniting or Dividing part 2 of Serving Jesus Together
Oct 1, 2017

I introduced this series of sermons from 1 Timothy last week by taking us to the middle of the letter. There Paul explains his purpose in writing.

1 Timothy 3:14-15 (NIV) Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

This was not a new church, and what he writes are not elementary Christian teachings about how to conduct themselves. Many of them were followers of Jesus for years by this time. They have matured. They are ready for more advanced Christian teaching. This is what we can expect in this letter. Some of what he writes will challenge you to think more deeply about some of the issues.

He begins with the most pressing issue. It concerns those who wish to profit off of the church. They wish to become leaders in the church. They want influence and money. They do not care about God's will. They do not care that the church be protected and sanctified. They are only looking for personal gain.

With that background let us turn to the beginning of this letter.

1 Timothy 1:3-4 (NIV) As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines (**teachings**) any longer nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work--which is by faith.

This subject is so important that he comes back to it towards the end of the letter.

1 Timothy 6:3 (NIV) If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing.

Paul writes about those who are teaching false doctrines (different doctrines). A more literal translation is different doctrines. This is anything that does not conform to "the sound instruction of Jesus." The word sound there means whole, healthy, uncorrupted. These men are teaching **corrupted teachings of Jesus. They consist of truth mixed with untruth.** Many people are teaching such things today.

For example, last week our study group was discussing the novel, The Shack. This is one of those different doctrines. The author has some good things to say, but is introducing different doctrines, things that do not agree with Jesus or His apostles in the New Testament. The godhead characters in The Shack teach things that are inconsistent with the Christian faith.

There are many such teachings in our world today. They have been around since the days of Marcion in the second century. Such people prey on Christians who are not

mature in their faith. They prey on Christians who have not matured past the elementary teachings of Christianity. Such people do not know enough of Christian theology to recognize false doctrines when they encounter them.

The mature Christian knows the major differences in theology between Catholics and Protestants. The mature Christian knows something of the doctrine of election and the issues involved. The mature Christian knows something of the charismatic movement and the issues involved. The mature Christian knows of the Health and Wealth gospel and why it subverts the Christian faith. The mature Christian knows why we do not baptize babies or ordain women to be preachers.

These false teachers prey on such immaturity. He characterizes these men as conceited. They think much of themselves. There is no humility in them. They are confident of their intelligence and wisdom.

What are these people after? They are trying to be teachers and leaders in the church.

1 Timothy 1:7 (NIV) They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.

Some likely want to be elders or deacons, which is why Paul will go over the qualifications needed to serve in those positions. Then too, they hope for financial gain. Note what Paul writes at the end of verse 5.

1 Timothy 6:5f (NIV) "...who think that godliness is a means to financial gain."

These false teachers that Paul warns of are trying to be leaders in the church, pretending to seek the will of God, but their motives are not holy.

And how will they do this? What methods will they use to become leaders in the church? They will create controversy. Why? Because when there is controversy, people get stirred up emotionally. They react emotionally to issues instead of thinking biblically. Most people do not like controversy and will look for quick and easy solutions. That is what these people will offer. They will offer easy answers to complex issues. Rarely do easy answers work for complex issues. Our government leaders have not learned that yet.

And in giving these answers they will present themselves as those who should lead. Paul writes of these controversies, these divisions, in both chapter one and six. They like to create controversies in the church with arguments over words. They introduce different doctrines that have the sound of truth, but actually lead astray.

See the results of the work of such people.

1 Timothy 6:4-5 (NIV) He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

Their actions result in "envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions, and constant friction among the members of the church." They do great damage to the loving peace between Christians. In such an atmosphere they push their way to the front. This is why Paul warns of those who are devoted to different doctrines.

In addition to different doctrines, some are devoted to myths.

1 Timothy 1:3-4 (NIV) "...command certain men not... to devote themselves to myths..."

Every culture has its legends. America has Paul Bunyan for example. Paul Bunyan was a giant of a man who worked as a lumberjack in the pioneer days of America. He is a part of our American folklore.

Well other nations and cultures have their legends too. The ancient Jews had their legends (Titus 1:14). Even Christians developed legends and myths. There is an old story that says Jesus, as a boy, was playing with some other boys and they saw a baby bird fall out of its nest. The story goes that Jesus picked up the bird and healed it and it flew away. This story is not in the Bible and does not fit with what the Bible teaches about Jesus. There is nothing in the Bible that even hints that Jesus did miracles before He was baptized by John.

Another Christian myth, this one about 200 years old was taught by a movement known as Landmarkism. This myth stated that Baptists, in some form, existed all the way back to the first century. This became a very divisive issue in the early 1900's resulting in many churches dividing from other churches.

Paul warns of those who are devoted to their myths as if they were truth. Such things have no connection to God's revealed word.

In addition to different doctrines and myths, Paul also warns of those who promote their heritage.

1 Timothy 1:3-4 (NIV) "...command certain men not...to devote themselves to endless genealogies."

This was a Jewish issue. The point of genealogies is pride. The Jews were proud of their heritage. It was important for them to be able to recite their family tree all the way back to Abraham. Not all could do so. And those who could used it to show how special they were.

Paul reminds Timothy that ethnic heritage no longer matters. The gospel is by faith he says at the end of verse 4.

The title this morning is Uniting or Dividing. That question is being asked of many different things these days in our country. Are the various protests uniting or dividing the nation? Are the laws being proposed by our government uniting us or dividing us?

Division is a way of life for Americans. Our nation has almost always been divided over something. In the early days of our country, before and after the Revolutionary War, people were divided over loyalty to the king of England.

As the nation grew the people were divided by their devotion to big business in the industrial north or to big agriculture of the southern plantations. Laws that helped one often hurt the other. With the civil war the nation divided over slavery and state's rights.

Today our nation is divided over differing moral values, differing views of national government, differing values about social issues. We see division between the wealthy, the middle class, and the poor. We see divisions between urban and rural areas.

Division seems to be a part of our American values. It comes with the freedoms we have. The American way of life stresses the rights of the individual. You can be what you want to be and do what you want to do. That makes division almost a certainty, for **It is hard to be united in a "have-it-your-way" world.**

Even those who are labeled Christian are divided. We see divisions between conservative religious and liberal religious persons. Our own denomination divided over the issue of slavery before the civil war. The issue was over whether or not slave owners could be appointed as missionaries. Some said yes and some said no, and they could not work it out and divided into two separate Baptist groups. That was the beginning of the Southern Baptist Convention.

In 1990, some 1,900 churches left the Southern Baptist Convention and formed the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship over differing beliefs about the nature of the Bible.

Controversies create divisions. And divisions can be hard to stop. Have you ever tried to tear off a piece of scotch tape, and it splits into two pieces, both still attached to the roll? And you tear some off and more off trying to get ahead of the split so that you get one whole piece of tape, and it fights against that. It tends to want to stay split. It is MADDENING!

In John 17 Jesus prayed for unity. He prayed for the unity of His church. We must guard that unity in our church. We must guard against different doctrines and those who promote them, for whatever reason they do so. Some are sincere in their beliefs. That makes them even more dangerous to God's church.

This is at the top of the list of things Paul writes to Timothy about for the church at Ephesus. It is no less important for us, even though we don't have anyone I know of teaching such things in our church.

We must be on our guard against teachings, ideas, philosophies, and religious fads that conflict with the tenets of our faith. How?

1. We must know the truth.

2. We must become familiar with the kinds of untruth being presented in the world today.

3. We must agree together. Paul and Timothy are no longer here to command anyone. That means it is up to us as the gathered church to guard over what is taught in our church. The author of Jude, in 1:3, commands us to "contend for the faith". This is the

faith that was announced by the apostles of Jesus. We must contend for this faith. We must contend for the truth, not watered down, not added to, not subtracted from. We must struggle to keep the truth pure. For if we don't the generation to follow in our church will not hear the truth and be saved. Instead, they will be like many others in America today. They will be spiritual people, religious people, but lost never-the-less.

Jesus came into the world to save us, for we cannot save ourselves. We do not save ourselves with the help of Jesus. Jesus does not save us with our help. No, it all Jesus and Jesus alone. Anything more or less is NOT the good news of God's gift of righteousness.

Today, won't you receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord?

1. godly = devoted to God; pious, devout
2. This is a religious term, but not specific to Christianity. Anyone, of any religion, might be characterized as godly, or not, depending on their behavior.
3. Godly does not mean God-like, but rather God-focused. This is not a person who simply believes in God. This is a person who is actively seeking to live out the tenets of his religion.
4. Christian Godliness is seeking to live the will of our God in response to the Gospel.