



Dealing with False Teachings

How important is doctrine in the Christian life? There are Christians who would say that doctrine divides Christians and leads to arrogance. They claim that what Christians need to do is to focus on building unity amongst Christians, especially in this world that is increasingly hostile to the Christian faith. As a result of this, orthopraxy (right behaviour and practices) is given priority instead of sound theology and biblical knowledge.

However, in our passage today, Paul warns Timothy against false teachings, and to focus on correctly handling the word of truth. This is not to the detriment of unity and orthopraxy, but rather it is precisely because of sound doctrine that leads to true unity and orthopraxy. False teachings have disastrous consequences, and correctly handling God's truth shows our approval as God's worker.

Launch

- 1) What are some consequences of false teaching that you have seen?

DEALING WITH FALSE TEACHINGS

Read 2 Timothy 2:14-19.

- 2) What is Timothy supposed to be reminding God's people? (v14) (cf. 2 Tim 2:8-13)
 - a. What else does Paul call Timothy to do? (v14b)
- 3) What is Timothy supposed to do his best to be? (v15)
 - a. What do you think that means?
 - b. How would you know if someone is not correctly handling the word of truth?
- 4) What are the elements of the false teachings that you can identify? (v14b, 16)
 - a. What does Paul ask Timothy to do about them?

- 5) What is Hymenaeus and Philetus teaching? (v17-18)
 - a. How would what they are teaching “destroy the faith of some”? (cf. 1 Cor 15:12-20)

- 6) Why do you think false teachings generally spread like gangrene?
 - a. What can we do about false teachings? (cf. v14-15)

- 7) What assurances can we draw from the doctrine of election in v19?
 - a. Does the doctrine of election mean that Christians are able to do whatever they like (including sinning)? (v19b) Why or why not?

- 8) What are some steps that you can take so that you are not taken in by false teachings?

- 9) Take the time to read Subi Church’s Statement of Faith. Discuss with each other any section that you may be confused or have questions about.

Conclusion

Paul calls Timothy to remind God’s people of the Gospel message constantly (v14). False teachings can spread like gangrene because they always start off subtle and appeal to our desires. False teachers tend to redefine the same words that Christians commonly use. This causes confusion, arguments, debates, and in the end “ruins those who listen”. Instead of being someone like that, Timothy is to be a person who correctly handles the word of truth. This word of truth is the Gospel message that Paul gave to Timothy (cf. 2 Tim 2:2). Timothy is to “to be accurate on the one hand and plain on the other in [his] exposition [of God’s truth].”¹ As Christians then, we need to be firm in our theological foundations. One way that we can do that is through familiarising ourselves with Subi Church’s Statement of Faith.

While it is our responsibility to be faithful to God’s truth, we are also to be reassured that God knows those who are his. The doctrine of election gives us the assurance that the result of our ministry is ultimately not up to us, but God himself. We are only called to the faithful in proclaiming and holding on to the truth. The doctrine of election doesn’t mean that we can do whatever we want (including sinning), as we must still “turn away from wickedness”.

¹ John Stott, *The Message of 2 Timothy: Guard the Gospel* (S.I.: IVP, 2021), 67.