

Our Duty in the Truth War

By Don Green

sermonaudio.com

Bible Verse: 2 Corinthians 10:3-6
Preached on: Sunday, January 22, 2023

Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

Last week we started and embarked on a lengthy crusade, you might say, for the cause of truth and that will unfold for us a lot over the coming months, and one of the reasons that we're approaching the pulpit this way over the next few months is, as we saw last time and we just kind of stepped back and took a long look at the forces that challenge and undermine the truth in our culture, in the church more broadly speaking, and even the cosmic forces that undermine and resist the work of God that have been at work since the fall of Satan back in the very beginning, there is a battlefield that we are engaging our lives on, there is a battlefield of truth, and what I want to do today as we continue to prepare to enter into these things, is to address and answer the question what is our responsibility as a church and what is our responsibility, what more particularly, what is your responsibility as a believer? What is the mindset that we should adopt as we consider these things and enter into them in the coming months? Well, let me just phrase it this way and it's language that's not popular in the world in which we live and the somewhat effeminate culture in which we live, but it's the language of Scripture and it is the sense of Scripture that we must be warriors for truth, we must embrace a mission of fidelity to the word of God, and that is our goal, and that's what I want to cultivate in our mind as we approach these things. And in the time that we have together here today, it may surprise you to realize how often and how in so many places Scripture uses the metaphor of warfare for the Christian life, to describe the nature of the Christian life, and I just want to walk you through a couple of passages to set the groundwork for it because only the mindset of a soldier will equip us for what lies ahead, only the commitment and the consecration and the single-mindedness of a soldier to the battle is sufficient for the cause that we must uphold and the battles that we must engage in the years to come.

So turn in your Bibles, if you would, there's a couple of passages I want to show you in 2 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians 6 for example. 2 Corinthians 6 looking and identifying the battlefield mindset that comes to us through the word of God to help us frame our thinking rightly about what lies ahead and why we must prepare for it. 2 Corinthians 6, beginning in verse 3, the Apostle Paul says, "We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left." Paul describes himself

as a servant with weapons of righteousness in his hands in which he engages the battle, and notice, beloved, as he describes it in that way, notice both the challenges that serving Christ brought to him, as well as the virtues that he brought to the task. Look at it there in verse 4 as he speaks about afflictions and hardships and calamities, beatings and imprisonments and riots and laborers and sleepless nights and hunger. The path of serving Christ for the Apostle Paul was not the path of prosperity and health and the life of ease that is promised by those who promulgate such a false gospel and the apostles of moralistic therapeutic deism. This is not part of the package to them. They have to cut things like this out of the Bible in order to maintain the facade of what they teach and what they promise and it is just an ever-ongoing source of grief and sorrow to my heart to consider those that have been misled by such teaching when the inevitable time comes when life shows them that they have been following a lie, that those that they trusted to teach them in the word of God had misled them either through ignorance or active deception, to see and to find that they've come to the end of their lives and everything that they had built their lives on, or they come to a particularly grievous trial, a particularly deep flood that they try to navigate through, and to find that they've not been prepared and equipped for it by the empty promises of well-being that attracted them at the first, the promise of an easy life. This is not in what we see in 2 Corinthians 6. This has nothing to do with the promise of an easy life if we are actually following in the feet of Christ and the feet of the apostles.

Shall we follow a Christ who is crucified for us and not carry a cross of our own? And beloved, understand that when Christ was crucified, and we speak of Christ crucified, that we're speaking of a literal crucifixion that actually occurred in time and space in real history. Christ was crucified in this sense, you can think about it this way, that if you were there 2,000 years ago when Christ was hanging on the cross and you had rubbed your hand against the cross, you would have gotten splinters in your hands because it was real. We are not talking about some metaphor, some allegory, some fable. This is something that happened in time and space in a real manner that provided a real salvation. The faith of Christianity is built on truth. It is built on truth in history. It is built on truth in God. And it is based on truth in all that it speaks to us about unseen and eternal spiritual things.

And so, beloved, the consequences of truth are incalculable, they are infinite and eternal in their consequences, and so that alone would justify us stepping back and considering truth itself for an extended period of time, but understand that as we do this, beloved, that we need to approach it with the mindset of a soldier who is prepared and willing to go into battle, and just as modern-day soldiers, as the green Berets and the and the Navy SEALs and others prepare it great length for the battles that lie ahead, if we are going to be engaged in a battle for the truth, it's obvious that we need to be prepared for it, and that superficial teaching and, you know, just a love of ourselves and a love of programs that entertain us is not going to prepare us to engage a battle that the devil is out to win. And so Scripture speaks of this as a war. It speaks of it as a battle, and we're considering our duty in that truth war.

Now we won't turn to other passages, I won't have you turn in your Bibles to them, is what I mean by that, but listen as I read other Scriptures that use and build on this same metaphor and Paul particularly draws upon them toward the end of his life. Last week we considered Ephesians 6:11 to 13 where we are called, "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm." Take up the truth of God, as it were, take it up, clothe yourself in it, clothe yourself in the righteousness of Christ, and stand firm as you are called to your position in the conflict.

Now we could say, you know, the other stuff sounds more attractive to me, that sounds easier, it sounds more pleasant, but beloved, don't you see that it doesn't do any good to live our lives based on a mirage, to base it on that which is not true. Scripture shows us what is true and Scripture says that this is an engagement of conflict and if we're going to engage the conflict, then we must know the truth in order to do so.

Paul wrote several passages to Timothy along these lines. In 1 Timothy 1:18 and 19 we read this. Paul says, "This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience." In 2 Timothy 2:3 we read as Paul instructs Timothy yet again, Timothy being somewhat timid, somewhat retiring, withdrawing in his approach to ministry, Paul had to stir him up by way of call and command and exhortation. In chapter 2, verse 3 of 2 Timothy, he tells Timothy, "Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." And at the end of that epistle, the last epistle that Paul wrote, he summarizes his whole ministry knowing that his departure was imminent from this life. He says, "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith."

Now as we consider, as we will be considering in the days to come, the culture of thought, the culture of philosophies in which we live, we need to understand something. It is indeed a supernatural matter. This is not something that is just a matter of a difference of opinion among men. We face a combination of the wrath of God revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, so that in the language of Romans 1, we see that God has handed men over to a depraved mind in order that they might do those things which are not proper, and you can read about that on your own. There's a combination of wrath against the rebellion of God that is manifest in the lies in which we live, as well as what we've already considered, the supernatural opposition of Satan himself. Now look, I don't say these things to frighten you but simply to engage the reality of what we are facing so that we would humble ourselves, recognize the weakness with which we approach these things, and recognize how much we need the truth of God illuminated to us by the Spirit of God as we trust in the Son of God to keep us, how much we need the supernatural resources of God for this fight that we find ourselves in.

Now for further perspective on this, let's take a quick look at a key text just a few chapters further into 2 Corinthians 10. 2 Corinthians 10, beginning in verse 3. 2 Corinthians 10:3 through 6. Paul says,

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, 6 being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

In this critical text, beloved, we see that the church wages warfare for the truth and it is warfare of a spiritual kind, it is warfare in the realm of thinking and of thought and of philosophies. Our weapons are not human armies and our weapons certainly are not the shifting politics found on the American scene. If anything, if anything of living an adult life should show anyone, it's that politics come and go and politicians cannot be trusted to uphold the truth when they have coalitions that they need to keep together in order to be elected. There is not hope for us in human politics, beloved. I trust that you see that and know that. The church has lost sight of this and the church has been troubled and plagued by a desire to unite church and politics since the days of Constantine back in the 4th century. No. No, it is not through politics that we will win this battle. We will win this battle, we will engage this battle, what God calls us as his people to do is to teach Scripture in order to defeat hostile human philosophies. It is by Scripture that we overcome worldliness, and when I say worldliness I'm not simply talking about the kind of music that people listen to or movies that they watch or how they dress or anything like that. That is very much secondary tertiary to the issue. When we talk about worldliness, we are talking about the entire manner in which the world thinks, the way in which the world operates, as we'll see in a little while, but what you and I have to remember and what we commit ourselves to corporately as a body, as elders, as a teaching pastor, what we commit ourselves to is this, this is where our entire stockpile of supplies, our entire stockpile of weapons is contained, this is the one tank, so to speak, that we have for the battle, and it is this, it is that the omnipotent Holy Spirit of God uses the preached word to overcome prevailing human philosophies in order to lead his people into the truth. "All Scripture," 2 Timothy 3, "is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." And beloved, we have to use, to mix metaphors, we have to use the purity of those weapons and not dilute them with human philosophies, not dilute them with counseling theories that are so man-centered that they're not easily distinguishable from psychology and other matters of the flesh. It is the word of God preached and applied to your heart. It is the word of God, you reading it privately on your own, contemplating its meaning, internalizing its truth, guiding your life by the way that it instructs you, that is, that is our weapon. That is the one single solitary weapon that we have to combat the forces of this age. It is the word of God. And beloved, the truth of the matter is, is that that word in the hands of the Spirit of God, it's sufficient for the task. We don't need to accommodate worldly theories of origin and evolution. We stand clearly on the word of God and our Creator, Redeemer and judge.

We stand firmly and clearly on the sufficiency of Scripture. Paul says in Ephesians 6:17 that we take up the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. The sword of the Spirit, the sword of the word of God is our offensive weapon in the battle.

And so, beloved, and as we'll see in the months to come, again I'm just laying a foundation in these early weeks for what we're doing long term, and so understand that, but in the months to come, we will see and come to appreciate how a program driven church is not up to the task. We will see why pastors that are just so totally relationally driven at the compromise of their pulpits, they're not up to the task which we face. Those are human pop guns. They are squirt guns in a battle against cosmic forces, against cultural ways of thinking that are so deeply embedded around us. No, the church must be on the front lines of a battle for knowledge and human thought that is captive to the revelation of God. We must be on the front lines of this. We must have the sharp edge of the sword being wielded continually in front of us developing our minds, clarifying our thoughts, cutting away worldly thinking and casting it aside and replacing it by the truth of the word of God in its most fundamental primary elements.

At the great risk of being misunderstood, this is not the time, this is not the age, this is not the occasion for pastors to be teaching on obscure points of doctrine, obscure points of scriptural and debatable Scripture interpretation, things that are incidental in the broader context of what the battle for truth really is. You see, beloved, it is only by truth that you will grow in the Christian life. It is by truth that the Spirit of God will lead you safely into glory. Jesus said, "Those who abide in my word and continue in my word, that continue in the truth, they are my true disciples." It is only by truth that unsaved men can be rescued. It is only by truth that human philosophy can be contradicted effectively as the Spirit of God works through us. And so this is essential. This is essential and that's all by way of introduction.

And so the question that I lay out for today as we look toward what is to come in the coming months is this: what specifically is our duty as the body of Christ in this modern war in the cause of truth? And I want to be clear that I am speaking to Truth Community Church obviously as I speak, but I am also speaking beyond our walls to those who may listen because what we are seeing is what the church is called to around the world. This is a universal call to the church that we must unite around and be of common mind and of common purpose on. What is our duty in this modern war on truth? Well, remember before I get into my first point here, remember that we made a contrast last time and we exposed the feelings-driven subjective approach to truth that marks our modern world, as we illustrated it through the transgender person who says, "I feel like a boy in a girl's body, therefore I am a boy without regard to my bodily anatomy." The way someone feels inside drives what reality is and everybody is supposed to bow down before their subjective consciousness on what they think that they are, and if you don't, it will be enforced by legislation that tells you to call them by the their chosen name and their chosen pronouns. Beloved, what you have to see is that not only are people individually determining truth by their internal perceptions, that the time has arrived and now is in which government will use its force to compel you under penalty of all kinds of consequence to go along with it and to agree with it. Now the question becomes, and

again that's just an illustration of the problem, the question becomes how do we prevent ourselves from being sucked into that vortex and participating and propagating the lies that undergird it? Beloved, it's only through the truth. It's only through the word of God. There is nothing else that will do this. Those of you that were with us on Tuesday night or saw it on the live stream will understand the somewhat inside joke that I use here: dodgeball night isn't going to equip us for this and a mindset that puts forth dodgeball night as the great event for the church of the week, the mindset that thinks that way cannot help us in the battle for truth. We have to recognize these things enough to stand apart from worldly philosophies and pragmatic approaches to ministry that drive so many, to stand apart from that so that the focus on truth is clear, it is compelling and it is unmistakable. I'll have more to say about that in a few moments.

I want to identify three things here today to help clarify what our duty is, what our responsibility is, and understand, beloved, in everything that I'm about to say we are talking about the most fundamental aspects of Christian thought, of Christian theology, of Christian thinking, of Christian living; these things might sound simple at one level but we are speaking about them in a profound way that goes beyond a superficial nod to something so that we can get on to another matter. And so let me just walk through these things with you. First of all, the church must point to real truth. The church must point to real truth. Now real truth is actually redundant. Truth is real and that which is real is true, but the thinking of our culture and the philosophy of the world is so confused in its definition of truth that we have to specify exactly what we are talking about and that we are being specific, and when we speak of truth we are not addressing what you might feel is true. Feelings have nothing to do with it. Feelings have nothing to do with truth. And if you think about it, there are many ways to vindicate that position. If truth depended on what you feel, then are we saying, are you saying that truth dies when you do? Does truth die when you die and take your feelings away to another realm? Did truth not exist before you were born and started having feelings? Is truth that casual, that inconsequential, that temporary? The world would say it is and, beloved, those of you that know Christ and know Scripture know it could never be that way. We simplify in order to make the point.

And so what the church must do, in my judgment, the first call to arms that the church must engage is that we must positively assert and teach and defend the fact that objective truth exists, that there is objective absolute truth that applies to all men at all times without exception, that truth is independent of man, that truth comes from a God who is true, and it is rooted in his eternal nature as he has revealed himself in so many different ways. The truth is real. That truth is objective. The truth is independent of the feelings of a man or a woman so that in Psalm 119:142, Psalm 119:142 we read this, "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law is truth." The law of God coming from the revelation of God, that is true, that is unchanging, truth unchanged unchanging, truth immutable rooted in the immutable character of the God who revealed it and made it known. Jesus said in John 17:17, "Your word is truth," truth being found not in man. Jesus addressing God the Father in his high priestly prayer, Jesus speaks to God the Father and says, "Father God, your word is truth." The eternal transcendent God is the source of truth and what he says is the way things really are. It's that which is

actual. And so truth is objective. It is external to us. It predated us. It will live on after our earthly lives come to an end. It transcends us. There is truth like that.

Now at this point, we're not identifying any specific doctrines of truth in what we're saying here, we're simply contending for and asserting the reality and the existence of something independent of man called truth that is revealed in God's word. Now look, if we are to destroy modern arguments and modern approaches to the knowledge of truth and how we even know what is real, if we are to do that, if we are to change the fundamental way that men think about reality, we have to confront postmodern assumptions about the nature of truth. Now look, please stay with me. Please stay with me as we go through these things because what you will find in time if it's not immediately apparent to you right now, is that these things are profoundly practical and these things profoundly shape every aspect of life. When these first principles of truth are established in a person's mind, they drive the way that he thinks about everything else. What someone thinks about these fundamental issues set a trajectory for the way that their minds go for the rest of their lives. Is truth real and objective or is it subjective and dependent upon me? Am I the final judge of what is real or is it outside of me and does it reside in the word of God? Those are fundamental issues of which there is a colossal conflict between God's word and the thinking of man.

And so we come to the modern world, we come to the spirit of our age, and we say this without apology: we deny absolutely that men can find truth about reality within themselves. Your feelings are no judge to what is true. The feelings of man cannot possibly be a guide to what is real. Back when I was a kid, there was a song, a real, sappy, syrupy song, I can't even remember who sang it which is good, but the song said it can't be wrong when it feels so right. It can't be wrong when it feels so right. Understand beloved, that that is a statement of profound philosophical consequence saying, "I can know that it's true, I can know that it's right by what I feel about it inside." Beloved, that is a prescription for deception, blindness and eternal damnation. What does Scripture say? Scripture says in Psalm 36:1, "Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; There is no fear of God before his eyes." If someone is simply listening to what he feels in his heart, Scripture says he's listening to the lies of the devil, he's listening to transgression that can only lead him astray.

The unregenerate heart is filled with deception and deception may feel good in the moment, but it's not true. It's not real. It's not right. You and I have to be abundantly clear on this. Of course, the prophet Jeremiah famously said, "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick, who can understand it?" Beloved, your heart, your unregenerate heart, your heart apart from the influence of the Spirit of God and your heart uninformed by the truth of God is a pit of deception that you cannot trust your emotions to lead you into what is true. What you feel is not an indication of what is real. What you feel is not the voice of God. You cannot think that way. The mind and feelings of man are utterly defiled and deceiving. They do not and cannot guide us into truth. They lie to us. One of the things of developing a biblical mind, one of the things about developing truth that transcends, truth that transforms, is to understand that we have to look outside

ourselves, we have to humble ourselves and look outside ourselves for truth and authority. This the world does not do.

What other conclusion could we draw from what Jesus himself said in Matthew 15:19 to 20, listen as I read it. Matthew 15:19 to 20. Jesus said, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man." What is the source, James asks in his epistle, what is the source of quarrels among you? He says it's your lusts within. It's the things that are going on inside you that are producing quarrels. Jesus says when you look around at the debauched nature of our society, understand where that comes from, it's all coming from the heart of man. The man acts upon that which is in his heart. The mouth speaks from that which fills the heart, and Jesus says the heart is filled with evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. As far back as Genesis, Scripture said that their thoughts were evil continually. In Ecclesiastes it speaks of how insanity fills the hearts of men all their days.

Beloved, stop for a moment, whatever you may have thought about these things before now, whatever the level of your engagement with the thinking and the mindset of the world is, understand what Scripture says and see it clearly for itself. The heart is no source of truth. Truth must come from outside because our hearts are fallen and defiled. And as I said earlier, the present wrath of God rests on the modern mind. In Romans 1:28 we read this, "just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper." Now look, at some point we should be discerning a sense of discomfort and disconnect between us and the world with what Scripture says, as Scripture drives our thinking we realize that we are in a world that we do not belong to. We may be in this world but we are not of this world. I cannot think like the world thinks. I cannot process information in the way that the world does because the world's thinking has been so totally perverted by the fall. We could sum it up this way from Proverbs 28:26. Proverbs 28:26 where it says, "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But he who walks wisely will be delivered."

And so, beloved, we point to the reality of objective truth, we point men away from themselves, and the beauty of insisting upon objective truth, the beauty of insisting upon truth outside of a man, I can picture a hypothetical modern man saying, "If what you're saying is true, then where do I look? What you're saying is I am helpless on my own." Yes, that's precisely what we're saying, that we are saying to the modern man, we are saying to the unsaved person on the live stream or in the room today, we are saying that you are miserably and hopelessly lost. You have a mind that cannot lead you into the truth. You need help from outside. That is exactly what we're saying. It's an assault on human pride. It's an assault on human self-sufficiency. But beloved, it's the truth. How can we not say that? How can we not make that known? And the beauty of it all is that when we insist on truth, objective, external to the thoughts of man, that that approach leads us to the Lord Jesus Christ. Understand that as we do this, this is all ultimately pointing us to Christ. It is all ultimately pointing us to him, pointing to a person who alone has the power to deliver man from this spiritual bondage. In the gospel of John we read that, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we saw his glory, glory as of

the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." There, there we find truth. Not in the way that a man feels about his circumstances or about his life or about his body, truth found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know, when you think through the philosophy of the world in which we live and you compare the words of Christ to it, it is shocking and stunning the self-assertion, the claims that Christ made about himself because Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me." So that we are left with this vast dichotomy that has no overlap. There is no common ground between the mindset of the world and the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ says, "I am the truth." The world, I understand, rejects him as they do, they reject the truth itself and they commend themselves into ever-increasing darkness. Are we... listen, in light of that, in light of that when a world has turned off the light and is going into darkness having rejected objective truth, having rejected Christ himself, are we as the people of God supposed to lightly withdraw from the engagement of that which detracts from his glory, that which denies the glory that is uniquely Christ's? Are we to look at our Commander-in-Chief, as it were, realize the assault upon his esteemed nature and person, and then just say, "Eh, you know, it's kind of a bummer, but we've got dodgeball coming up on Thursday night. We've got life groups coming up." We've got our little circle and we just withdraw, surrender the ground without a challenge, ignore the command to preach the word, to make truth known because it's too difficult, it's too long, it doesn't appeal to our carnal desires? Is that a picture of the church militant? Is that a picture of the church ultimately triumphant, self-centered, not engaged in the battle?

Beloved, when the question's put to you like that, I trust that in your heart somewhere is resounding the thought, "Not me. I can't surrender that. I can't let that go. I can't let Christ be desecrated that way by Philistine lips." And not even more but in addition to that, further to look at a world spinning off into darkness and not call out, "Be saved from this perverse generation," Acts 2:40. Can we as men are engulfed in this deception both inside and outside of the church, can we be silent? Can we not call out to them? Can we not call attention to the issues that would awaken them in the hands of the Spirit of God that they might repent and come to Christ and be delivered from that which guarantees their eternal destruction? Would we be silent in the midst of it while we're making our plans for free Chick-fil-A at dodgeball night? It's appalling to me. I can't but speak. The church must point to real truth that there is objective truth and keep emphasizing that point until men understand what it is that we are saying, that we are assaulting the spirit of the age and telling them that they cannot think rightly if they are living their lives by their feelings and impulses and what they simply want to do, and that they are not right with God if their mind is not submitted to the word of God itself. I don't know, beloved, I can't do anything else. I can't evade this and I don't want to.

Now secondly, what else must the church do? What are our call to arms? What are our call to our battle station? What is the battle station that we man in this truth war as warriors, as warriors for the truth as we embrace a mission of fidelity to the word of God, what do we do? Now, superficially, superficially, even someone sympathetic to my point, a fellow pastor could say, "Well, we preach the word." And yes, of course we preach the

word but this, look, this is a really big book. What is it that we choose to emphasize that addresses the spirit of the age? Yes, we could do a character study on King Manasseh. We could do that. Yes, we could have an extended series on what was the nature of Jephthah's vow in the book of Judges. And we could fascinate ourselves with theories and historical information and all the while teaching the word, yes, that's good as far as it goes, but does any of that address the spirit of the age in a direct confrontational way that actually is for the battle at stake? Martin Luther talked about this. He said, you know, "You can affirm the word of God in," I'm paraphrasing, "You can affirm the word of God in every particular but if you evade, if you do not address the point of issue that is actually at stake in the world around you, you're not a soldier faithful to the battle because where the conflict is you're not to be found." Where are you, I'm speaking generally, I'm not being oppressively confrontational to individuals in the room today. I'm really not. But speaking to pastors, I guess, where are you on the point that is driving the philosophy of man? To me it seems, point number 2, that the church must point to fundamental truth, fundamental truth, and I'm going to explain what I mean by that here in this message and then we'll spend months unfolding it.

And now I am speaking to people directly in the room in a supportive, loving, gracious way, as much as I'm able to do that. Beloved, as adults you must know what you believe and more particularly, you must know why you believe it and you need to know this for yourself. Those of you with parents that still have young people under your roof, there's an added responsibility for you to know and to know what you believe and why you believe it. The why you believe it is so crucial and is the point that I'm going to try desperately to get to over the next few months. Beloved, beloved, the days of assuming, of presupposing a Christian worldview are over. Those days are long gone. There is no assuming these things anymore and so here's a preview of coming attractions. What are we going to do over the next few months from this pulpit? Well, we're going to emphasize seven key themes and I'm just going to lay them out to you. I'm not going to explain them now or anything like that. This is what's coming, and each of these themes is a subject of multiple messages in and of itself. What is it that addresses the postmodern mindset of the world? What is it that addresses the darkness in which we live? How do we bring light into this darkness?

Well, these are the seven series that are going to come, I may switch the order of them a little bit at the end, but number 1: how to know God exists. How to know God exists. Listen, it makes a whole big difference in the way that you think about life, the way that your mind operates, and the way and the choices by which you live your life, it makes a big, big difference whether God exists or if he doesn't, and those are two diametrically opposed mindsets and the consequences of not being clear on that are lethal. How to know God exists. You're all here to one degree or another, you assume that, but how would you articulate that? On what basis do you believe that? How can you instruct your child in these things in a way that will stand the test of time and opposition? How to know God exists. Secondly, how to know the Bible is true. Thirdly, how to know Jesus as Lord. Fourthly, how to know that God rules over all. Fifthly, how to know Christianity is true. Sixthly, how to know truth exists. And seventh, how to know true salvation. The titles of those messages are carefully chosen. It's not up for debate whether God exists.

He does. As a matter of objective reality, God exists, the question is how do we know that? As a matter of objective reality, the Bible is true. That's not up for debate. The question is, how do we know that? Jesus is Lord. That's not up for debate. The question is how do we know that? How do we defend that? How do we assert that? And on it goes.

Now, I said, you know, you have to point to fundamental truth on these things. This is the fundamental truth. This is what drives Christian thinking. You could say and there are secular people that use this term, I'm not identifying with them or tapping into their worldly wisdom with what they say about this, but these are the first principles of a Christian mind. These are the things that a man, a woman, a child needs to know in order to have a biblical mind, a worldview that is driven by right and Christian thinking: the existence of God, the truthfulness of Scripture, the Lordship of Christ, God ruling over all, the truth of Christianity, the nature of true salvation. Now listen, think about it this way, beloved, because I feel like... that's funny, isn't it? I think, I've been thinking about this for a very long time and I think the challenge is to help people understand that we're speaking of these things in a way that goes beyond the superficial. When we raise these matters for consideration, beloved, understand this: that the world does not think this way. Think about all the different ways in which the world environment informs the way that we live and think. Think about it in entertainment, even in movies that are not specifically carnal and, you know, wrong in their content themselves. You know, entertainment, news reports, sports, Disney, politics, music, advertising, all of that which just pours into our minds continually day after day after day. None of it, none of it is informed by a perspective that affirms the existence of the biblical God. None of it upholds the Bible is true. None of it upholds Jesus as Lord. None of it upholds the providence of God superintending and directing all things to his appointed ends. None of it supports the truth of Christianity. None of it teaches men how they can truly be saved and delivered from Satan and darkness and sin and enter into eternal life and the forgiveness of their sins. None of it does. If you're going to watch the Bengals game today, none of the ads are going to reinforce a single aspect of this, and that means that you and I have to consciously step out of the world's realm and into this realm of truth in such a way that by the time we're done in several months, that those of you that are with us, that stay with us that internalize this, at the drop of a hat can engage a conversation, "Do you want to know why I affirm the existence of God? Do you know why you're responsible to believe it?" 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 all beginning with C. That's why. And just to be able to articulate that, "Let me give you two words that establish that the Bible is true. Let me give you seven principles that establish the Lordship of Christ."

Now look, these are all multiple message things but that's what I'm talking about, that's what I'm aiming at is that I want to, I want this pulpit to be the means by which those presuppositions are articulated, supported in your mind in a way that will stay with you and those that you influence long after I'm gone. Peter speaks of that, "I want to stir you up by way of reminder. My earthly departure," Peter said, "it's imminent. I want to stir you up with these things so that you'll be able to recall them after I'm gone." And beloved, that takes sustained study and application and proclamation, it takes sustained application over time in order to really develop this, to purge out the poison of the worldly influence that is in our minds and replace it with the purity of God's truth.

Now look, I realize that for most of you, you would already affirm these things at one superficial level. The problem is that as Christians we live inconsistently. We say things that we believe and perhaps genuinely believe them, but we're so inconsistent in carrying it out because the fundamentals, the pillars that support those presuppositions have never been clearly understood in our minds. So I realize that many of you would already affirm these things that I'm talking about but I'm also, I'm responsible to be realistic enough to realize that most of you could not on the spot persuasively support those beliefs and to engage them, and to the extent that you're lost if they're challenged is the extent to which we need God's word here. You put it this way in a little metaphor. You affirm these truths, and look, I'm on your side as I say these things. I am not being critical, in fact, let me say this, I nearly forgot to say this and I'm going to be excessively vulnerable in what I'm about to say, excessively candid in a way that I don't like to do typically but you need to understand what drives me. If you understand what drives me about these things and why I feel like this has to be the subject of a long series in the defense of truth, this will help you understand. I went to a fine seminary for eight years. Did well in my studies and I'm grateful and owe a debt to the men that instructed me, many of whom have gone on to glory so I want you to understand that in what I'm about to say. But I found after I came out of seminary that I was not equipped. Maybe that was my fault. I was not equipped to articulate these things myself in a clear and compelling way. It was as I was raising children and having to answer questions and as I was stepping into a pulpit on a more regular basis, I realized that these most fundamental things were things that I needed better to articulate. I did not come out of seminary with the ability to say these things clear and in a compelling way. Well, if that's true of me as a moderately competent seminary student, what am I to think about those of you that haven't had the benefit of that? How can it be clear in your mind if it wasn't clear in my mind back then? That compels me to do this. And so I look back at my, you know, the days when I first came out of seminary, my lamp was plugged in to these truths but it was plugged into someone else's outlet. This wasn't internalized in myself in a way and, beloved, you and I, we cannot live in this world on borrowed belief. That will not sustain you nor your children through the assaults that are to come. We have to make a sustained effort to make it our own. We must know why we believe in what we teach.

Alongside that and why we're doing this, it's not just because I was an idiot coming out of seminary, although that's part of it. Understand also, beloved, and speaking to those of you, you adults, you've been around the church a long time, maybe you think you know these things, maybe you do know these things, but understand that our young people under the age of 18, under the age of 15, our young people, many of them will be hearing these things for the very first time. We owe it to Christ and we owe it to them to lay a foundation that will serve them all their lives and not simply engage in the things that we find interesting at this stage in our lives. We have an obligation, we have a sacred duty to the hundred or more young people under the age of 18 that come here to lay these things in their mind. I'm going to give an account, I'm going to stand before God and give an account, what else can I do?

Now we can be successful in this together if we take to heart the final point for today, the third and final point for today. We've said that the church must point to real truth, the church must point to fundamental truth, thirdly, the church must make a principled commitment. We must make a commitment based on principle as we move forward in this direction and understand and count the cost before we start to build this tower. I'd like to think that I've done that. I'd like to think that I've counted the cost before embarking on this path. Look beloved, I am under no delusions here. This is not the path to human glory. This is not the path to human popularity, not just in the world but within the church itself. To say, you know, we need to humble ourselves all the way back to the beginning and begin to renew our understanding and build our understanding of things that we in our pride we say, "I've got that down." Well if the church as a whole had these things down and was believing it and living it and teaching it, if the church was truly, truly had this governing its heart, do you think we would possibly see the mess that constitutes the evangelical church that I described last week? It's impossible. It's because we don't see these things, speaking broadly, we don't see these things, the church does not understand these things, the church is not obedient to these things that all those things I listed last week have come to pass.

And look, look, this is not the path to human glory. Truth did not make Christ popular. Truth did not make Jeremiah or the other prophets popular. Truth did not make the apostles popular. The scars on their back are testimony to the contrary. Truth did not make the early church popular. Truth did not make Protestants in Scotland popular under the reign of Roman Catholic monarchs. And on and on we could go. The world killed them all. Killed them all. And so, beloved, you and I, and as a church, we cannot go forward being governed by a desire to please carnal men. We cannot be intimidated by those who lose interest. We have to have bigger goals and bigger motivations than that and Scripture tells us this. There's no excuse to miss this. Paul said in 1 Timothy 4:1, "In later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons." Elsewhere Paul said, "In the last days there will come times of difficulty." Most pertinently, in 2 Timothy 4:3 and 4, Paul told Timothy, he said, "The time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions and will turn aside from listening to the truth and wander off into myths."

Beloved, look, as a pastor, as a church, as elders, we cannot wet our finger and stick it up in the air and check how the wind is blowing and then decide what we'll teach from that. We can't be driven by the opinions and the desires of men. We have to be independent of those. We have to be driven by the word of God because only truth can change the fundamental way that men think. And beloved, you change fundamental thinking with fundamental truth. And these are the fundamentals. This is no path to ease and popularity in the world or in the church to the extent that anyone from the world notices. They will mock us and despise us. I'm okay with that. I don't need their approval. But we must confront their dysfunctional minds. Frankly, if I read the situation right, the bigger challenge will be inside the church with the professing people of God because the professing people of God, Scripture tells us, not always clued in to a desire for the truth. Not even ready to hear it. The writer to Hebrews said this in chapter 5, says about this,

"We have much to say and it is hard to explain since you have become dull of hearing, for though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food." This was a problem in the first century, how much more 2,000 years later in our postmodern mindset? People want that which pleases their ears. They lack the patience for sustained teaching of fundamental truth.

And again, I'm going to be far too transparent in what I'm about to say, but I don't know how else to say it, and I say what I'm about to say in order to prepare you when this inevitably comes to pass. I know in advance, I know in advance as we go this direction that there will be some people who will not stay. And when that happens, it will grieve me. It always does when that happens. But beloved, we can't be motivated by the turnstiles in and out of Truth Community Church. We have a transcendent duty in the truth war. We have to be soldiers manning the station. Attacks will come from expected and unexpected places that I'm sure will surprise even me. But beloved, we have a transcendent duty in the truth war. We may get weary in the battle but we have a transcendent duty in the truth war. We can't do anything else. We don't want to do anything else. It's not just a matter of duty. This is a matter of desire.

In 1886, the professor of systematic theology at Princeton Seminary died, back in the day when Princeton was a beacon for truth. Archibald Alexander Hodge. He had been the professor of theology there for about 10 years following in the steps of his father, Charles Hodge, who was professor of theology there for about 50 years. Sixty years the Hodge family, the Hodge name upheld biblical truth at that great beacon of light. One of A. A. Hodges' colleagues, Francis Patton, gave a eulogy for the man who had died too soon by human perception, and in words that apply today Francis Patton said this as he gave his eulogy to Archibald Alexander Hodge. Patton said this. He said, "We need a theological revival. We need an era of conviction. We need, if this appalling inertia and religious indifference is to be overcome, the outbreak of an epidemic of faith. We need a revolution of thought that shall reach the core of manhood and that shall make men see that they have forsaken God." Beloved, my strength, our strength, is unequal to the task but we must rise to duty and may God use our great weakness to his great glory.

Let's pray together.

Father, once again time has betrayed us but we just lay all of this at your feet and pray that you would use the word by your Spirit in the lives of your people. However weak the presentation may be, Father, may your Spirit make it strong to accomplish your purposes. May you establish in the minds of those that look to Truth Community Church, these great principles, these fundamentals of Christian thinking, Father, may you look upon our young people with great grace and favor and mercy and raise up among those that are still running around in their youthfulness, look upon them, lay your hand on some of them and raise up, Father, pastors and preachers of the word of God that would carry forth your truth in generations yet to be born. We ask for nothing less. We can do nothing less. We ask you to help us in the cause, O God, because it's your cause. It's the cause of Christ for which we do these things. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Thanks for listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find more church information, Don's complete sermon library and other helpful materials at thetruthpulpit.com teaching God's people God's word. This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.