

# The Fundamental Mission of the Church: Share the Truth

*1 Timothy*

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Last week, we're doing a topical series on the church. We normally work through a book of the Bible expositionally and from time to time we do some topical series as a part of just dealing with things that we need to as a body to be faithful to the Lord, and so this is a several week series on the church, the doctrine of the church. Last week, we looked at the glorious possession of the church, the truth, and we talked in particular about the power of the truth, the power of God's word, and this week the title of the message is "The Fundamental Mission of the Church," the fundamental mission of the church, "Share the Truth." If we have come into contact with the power of the truth, then we have come to have possession of that which has power to change our lives. We cannot keep that to ourselves. We must share it. The pressing need of every single human being is to come to know the truth, the truth supremely as revealed in Jesus Christ himself but the problem with this world is that the world has believed a lie and is captivated through lies into slavery to sin; the tyranny of the kingdom of darkness is over every single person that comes into this world, we are brought into the world as citizens of the kingdom of darkness who need to be delivered and translated into the kingdom of God's beloved Son and that happens through the truth, the truth of the gospel. As we saw last week, this is the greatest miracle is when the truth of God's word comes into a human heart and transforms it. That is the greatest miracle of all that we can ever experience, much greater than any physical miracle to see someone translated from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's Son, to see someone who hates God become someone who loves God.

That's the glory of the truth that we possess and so we're going to look today at 1 Timothy 3. Last week was 2 Timothy 3, this time 1 Timothy 3:14-16, and we're going to look at the mission of the church, the fundamental mission of the church, you could say the purpose of the church, what does God want us to be about in the world, in a phrase sharing his truth, speaking his truth, making his truth known. That is our mission. It's our calling even though our culture does not want us to do that at all. This is our calling and we're going to see that our situation and circumstances are very much like those in which the young pastor, Timothy, found himself as he was called by God to do this exact same thing, to help the church to be the pillar and support of the truth.

So 1 Timothy 3:14-16.

14 I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; 15 but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. 16 By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.

Let's pray.

*Our Father, as we come this morning to the pages of Scripture, we come, Lord, aware of our great need of grace. Even though we have, many of us have been born again and come to know You in a personal and living way, we still come as people that are tainted by sin, hearts that are dull and hard in many ways, and so we come in need of grace, continually in need of grace, Your unmerited favor, Your lovingkindness because of the liberality and generosity of Your heart to open the eyes of our souls, open our minds, open our hearts, and help us to see and to believe wonderful things from Your word and to walk in Your truth, to love Your truth and to share Your truth. For the glory of Your Son, we pray in His name. Amen.*

The fundamental mission of the church to share the truth. This is the purpose of the church, it's the purpose of all of God's people, it's the purpose of your life if you are a part of the church. This is your mission to share the truth that you have found, to not hoard it, keep it to yourself but to publish it, to make it as widely known as possible. We see this in that key phrase in verse 15 when he says that, he writes to Timothy, a young pastor, this is one of the pastoral epistles, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus are called pastoral epistles because they are written to pastors themselves directly, not to the churches at Corinth or Ephesus or Philippi as 1 & 2 Corinthians and Ephesians and Philippians are written to churches. These letters are written to pastors to show them how to shepherd the church, how they are to lead the church, and this is what Paul is saying, "This is the purpose of why I've written you," he says in verse 15, "so that you," Timothy, "will know how you ought to conduct yourself in the household of God, what are you to be about, what are you to do in the household of God." The whole letter is about that. It deals with a number of different practical issues that Timothy's going to need to be aware of. He's going to need to actively work against false teachers in the church. He's going to need to teach the people how to worship and the relationships of men and women in the church. You see these things dealt with in this passage, he's going to talk about leadership, in fact, in this chapter the immediately preceding verses are about overseers and deacons, you need leaders in the church. Then he's going to talk about the reading and preaching of the word in chapter 4. Then in chapter 5 the importance of caring for widows. And then how to deal with accusations against elders. Very practical things in this letter and he's writing to Timothy to show him how to lead the church but as he writes him he wants him to see that you're not just leading an organization, you are leading the most important instrument of God in the universe. It's not something that's small and insignificant. It is of the highest order of importance because the church is actually, first of all, the household

of God. God's house. He's talking not about the building but the people. The people who belong to Jesus are the house of God.

The New Testament emphasizes this again and again in various passages, 1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2; 1 Peter 2. The church is the temple. The Old Testament temple foreshadowed the real temple of God which is the people of God bought with a price, brought back to God, called out of the world to be a dwelling for God. And so when the church gathers together as we are gathered this morning, there's a sense in which our purpose is to be a dwelling for God. We are here to worship God, to love God, and for him to make his abode more fully known even in this time together, and there's a sense in which there's a richer experience of the presence of God when we're corporately together than we can have independently individually. There are always exceptions. God ministers to us, the Holy Spirit is with us, but there's something glorious about when the people of God come together and so Paul says, "Timothy, it's not a small thing that you're doing. It is the household of God. It's the church of the living God." It's ekklesia. The word "church" literally in the Greek means "called out assembly." The word actually means "called out ones," and the idea is an assembly of people called out from a larger group, called out to assemble together.

So the church are those that God has sovereignly called out of the world unto himself and the God that has called us out is a living God. He is the one true God. The world is worshipping false gods but we worship the living God who rules and reigns, and so we come to know how to, he says, "You need to know how to conduct yourself." If you had the mindset that you are coming into the household of God, to the assembly of the living God, doesn't that make you, even as a believer, want to know how you should conduct yourself? I mean, imagine that you were invited to the White House or to Buckingham Palace or to some other place where there is someone, the highest official in a nation. I think the king or queen seems a little more appropriate because there's all kinds of rules about how you have to bow or whatever, what you're not supposed to do. In America we don't really do that so much so the President is not as big a deal as it would be to meet the Queen, in the sense of knowing the propriety, right? And you'd be instructed, "This is what you're to do." Like you never turn your back on the Queen. When you leave a room, you back out of the room. That's pretty interesting, isn't it? You back out of the room until you're all the way out of the room and then you can turn and walk away. But you would learn how to handle yourself because of the worth and value of the person that you're seeing. How much more when you come into the household of the living God?

We are called to conduct ourselves according to his guidelines, his rules. This is why the Bible is so clear on the fact when you approach God to worship him, you don't come on your own terms. You come on his terms. How insane is it to think that just because you're sincere and you want to know God in your own earnest desire, that you can make up your way to God? How ridiculous is that just logically? And then add to the fact that we are sinful from our mother's womb, God is holy, holy, holy, how would we think that we can do something like that? It is sheer madness. Sincerity is not going to get you into the presence of God. You come his way and his way alone. Now you need to come sincerely his way but you come humbly.

So Paul is reminding Timothy that, "Listen, this is not a small thing. It's the household of God. It's the church of the living God." And then he comes to that last phrase, "the pillar and support of the truth," and that's where we're going to focus our time. The pillar and support of the truth, that you are the household of God, the called out assembly of the living God, you gather together to be taught the truth, to love the truth, and then to take the truth out to the world. And the church is the pillar and support of the truth, these two words, the pillar, the church is lifting up the truth.

Just speak for a moment. This passage is misunderstood by a number of people, particularly Roman Catholics who act like the church is the source and owner and author of the truth. That's not what the Bible says. God is the source of truth. The Scripture is the way he has spoken. This is truth. Your word is truth. The church is the pillar and support of the truth. The church is not the source of the truth, the church is called to lift up the truth whose source is God. The pillar that lifts up the roof of the building, that lifts something high and holds it up, that's what it is to be the pillar of the truth.

It's interesting, he says the pillar and support of the truth. This word "support" speaks of firmness, steadfastness. The idea is in this word "support" is, it's very similar as you can tell in the English, they're synonymous terms but with slightly different nuances. The pillar is that which holds up but the support has the idea of holding up against opposition. This word is translated a number of times in the Scriptures as "steadfast; stand firm," same root word. The idea is the church is the pillar to lift up the truth and to lift up the truth even against opposition. Opposition against the truth is no excuse for not lifting up the truth. No, the mission of the church is to lift high the truth and to lift it up against all opposition, unapologetically to lift up the truth. That's the church's job and that's everyone who belongs to the church's job. That's what we're called to do even where and when people don't want to hear the truth because the reality is no one wants to hear the truth unless God works in their heart to open their eyes.

If you're a Christian today, there was a time when you didn't want to hear the truth but God has worked in your heart and given you a love for the truth and you've received a love for the truth, and everyone needs to receive a love for the truth and the way that God has ordained to give them a love for the truth is through the proclamation of the truth even when they hate it, even when they oppose it, to speak it. Now there's a wisdom about how to do that but we have to understand that is our mission.

It's interesting to think about where Timothy is pastoring when he receives these instructions. In chapter 1, verse 3, Paul tells us he left Timothy in Ephesus. Timothy is the pastor of the church of Ephesus. In 1 & 2 Timothy, these two letters to Timothy are instructing him how to lead the church of believers at Ephesus. Ephesus is a place, when you read through the book of Acts and you walk through Paul's missionary journeys, you know, the first chapters of Acts chapters 1 to 12 really focus on the apostles, kind of major on Peter, and then in chapter 13 the transition is to Paul and to the mission of taking the gospel to the Gentiles and there are three missionary journeys that are recounted in the book of Acts. Usually your Bible, if you look for the headings, will tell

you this is the first missionary journey, this is the second missionary journey, this is the third missionary journey. On Paul's second missionary journey, he planted the church in Ephesus. He spent three years in Ephesus preaching the word of God. It was extraordinary. The most we know of any place he spent of all of his missionary journeys was this time in Ephesus.

He spent a year and a half in Corinth but most places he was only for a few weeks, but three years in Ephesus and when you read about that city, one of the things that become clear when you read Acts 19 recounts for us, in fact, we'll turn over there for a moment, Acts 19. Of all the places that Paul went, this is the place of the most intense spiritual opposition to the truth. When you read this chapter you see that the Ephesians were particularly mired in the darkness of this world. There's a sense in which unbelievers, all unbelievers according to the Bible are dead in trespasses and sins. They need to be made alive. That's what the gospel does, the gospel, the word preached makes you alive when the Spirit of God accompanies the preaching of the word of God, the proclamation of the word of God, the sharing of the word of God, the reading of the word of God, the Spirit of God gives someone new life, but before you become a believer, we're all dead in trespasses and sins, we all are in the dark spiritually. But there's a sense in which though everyone is dead and in the dark, you can descend into deeper and deeper darkness if you choose to, and there are places in the world that are darker than others. There are places in the world that have given themselves over more to the oppression of Satan, have given themselves over more wholly to the dominion of sin.

You may have experienced, I know I've been places where you can sense the spiritual oppression just in the area. This is a place just given over to wickedness and you can feel it. Ephesus was like that. They were people that were consumed with the occult, with magic, with the very real experience of the power of darkness. Do you hear that? There's a lot of fake stuff going on out there under the name of magic or the occult but there's real spiritual power at work in many people who are giving themselves over to darkness. Satan is a real personal tyrant and he has a kingdom of demons who delight in bringing people into greater bondage and Ephesus was a place of unique spiritual bondage.

And you see it just clearly as you read through the account and God, as Paul was taking the gospel and we talked about last week how he confirmed in the first century, he confirmed the reality of his word through the miracles and signs that accompanied the word just like, remember, it had under Moses. God confirmed the word through miracles and signs and then he quit doing miracles and signs almost exclusively after that, they were definitely of a different sort and order all the way up until Elijah and Elisha, and then there's an explosion of miracles again under Elijah and Elisha inaugurating the ministry of the prophets, and then after Elisha's ministry the miracles again die down, and as you read through your Bible carefully you see they're just not the same kind of miracles anymore because the miracles were there to attest that the power is in the word and you're to look for God's power not in signs and wonders but in his word.

So as the apostles went forth, they also had for that unique beginning of the church the power of God displayed in them. So Paul did as he went into places like this proclaiming

the gospel, the power was there to testify that the signs and wonders were outward evidence to people who were given over to that kind of power themselves, that the power of God is made known through the word of God; that what delivers people from demonic bondage is not fanciful people saying, "I rebuke in the name of Jesus Christ." No, that's not for us anymore. The power to deliver people from demonic bondage is in this: repent and believe in Jesus Christ and you will be saved. That's the message that drives out demons, the gospel.

So Paul is preaching the gospel but, again, he's preaching the gospel against great opposition and then he's going to leave Timothy a little bit later, some years later, in Ephesus as he goes back through to visit again, he leaves Timothy there and says, "You pastor this church now." Timothy is probably thinking it's like pastoring maybe in Las Vegas. That's probably not bad enough. Anyway, but you get the idea. Sin City. Pastoring in Sin City and, "Paul, can't I go to a more pleasant place?" "No, this is where you're called to be."

They don't want the truth here and you see this and let's look at 19, verse 11. "God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out." So, again, many people that are under satanic bondage, there are many people who are possessed by demons and the evil spirits going out of them as Paul ministers.

It's an interesting story, verse 13, the Jews try to imitate what Paul is doing, "But also some of the Jewish exorcists," that is, unbelieving exorcists, "who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, 'I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches.' Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. And the evil spirit answered and said to them, 'I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?' And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them," that's seven men, one man subdues all seven of them, "overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded." Totally humiliated them. "This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified. Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices." Now people are coming to Christ out of the occult, out of idolatry. Actually, another thing about Ephesus, it was center of some of the deepest idolatry in the Roman world. The temple of Artemis, Roman name Diana, the Greek name Artemis, the temple of Artemis was there, and so idolatry and evil, great power of that darkness there. So we read then, verse 17, "This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified. Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing." That's what the word of God does. The word of God goes into the den of iniquity, into the darkest areas of the world and the word of God grows mightily and prevails. The word of God is living and active and when you speak the word

of God, when you share the word of God, you are sharing that which has the power of God unto salvation. Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation."

And the word of God was prevailing. Actually I looked up how much 50,000 pieces of silver would be in today's...a conservative estimate would be \$4 million. I mean, these were hundreds of people coming out of darkness and bringing their libraries of witchcraft and sorcery and burning them. Now listen, we don't support burning other people's books but if somebody comes to Jesus Christ and they're turning away from sin themselves, they can burn their own books. That's on them. You know, they could have sold that money and built a building. \$4 million would build a nice building today but to do that would be to distribute that which kills and destroys the souls of men and so the best thing to do with that as a Christian is to burn it. Nobody else needs to look at this evil bondage.

We read on into the section, let's skip on down to verse 24. So the Lord's doing a great revival, a spiritual awakening is happening there. It says in verse 24 of Acts 19, "For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen; these he gathered together with the workmen of similar trades, and said, 'Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business.'" Listen, it was affecting the economy of Ephesus. The gospel was making such powerful impact. Verse 26, "You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all. Not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned from her magnificence." They took great pride in the temple of Artemis. It was a magnificent edifice, 450 long by 225 feet wide, 60 feet tall, 127 giant pillars. I wonder if Paul had that in mind when he said the church is the pillar and support of the truth.

Look how they respond, the people when they hear this. A crowd is kind of gathering around Demetrius. He's saying, "Look, we've gotta do something. Our economy is being destroyed by this man who says that the gods made with hands are no gods at all." Verse 28, "When they heard this and were filled with rage, they began crying out, saying, 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!'" Verse 29, "The city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia." They see some guys that belong to Paul's group, they grab them and they carry them into this huge amphitheater.

Verse 30, "And when Paul wanted to go into the assembly, the disciples would not let him." Paul wants to go in and speak but the disciples say, "No, you can't go in." Verse 31, "Also some of the Asiarchs who were friends of his sent to him and repeatedly urged him not to venture into the theater." Those who were from Asia, they know this crowd is rabid, this is not the time, they're not going to listen, "Don't go in, Paul. This is not the time. You'll be casting your pearls before swine."

Look what it says, verse 32, "So then, some were shouting one thing and some another, for the assembly was in confusion and the majority did not know for what reason they had come together." This is people flow into this theater, there is an uproar that started with Demetrius saying, "We've gotta get rid of the gospel. We've gotta get rid of Paul."

Verse 33, "Some of the crowd concluded it was Alexander, since the Jews had put him forward; and having motioned with his hand, Alexander was intending to make a defense to the assembly. But when they recognized that he was a Jew," they see a guy that's about to speak, he's not actually one of Paul's associates, he happens to be a well-known Jew though and he starts to speak to the assembly and when he starts to speak they recognize a Jew and these Gentiles began, look what they do, "a single outcry arose from them all as they shouted for about two hours, 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!'" Now think about that. It's impressive if you go to a ball game, I know I'm a Georgia fan, and I remember years ago when they started doing the Georgia Bulldogs, some of you guys that probably strikes a chord in your hearts in a really wonderful way. This Georgia Bulldogs, whatever, and so but, you know, that only happens for about 30 seconds. For two hours this crowd yelled in unison, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" The only explanation is demonic bondage, incredible spiritual power, people given over to this.

But the word is still prevailing and a few years later, probably about a decade later, Timothy is pastoring in that church and Paul says, "Listen, Timothy, you've got to know that what you're doing there is not a small thing, you are in the household of God, you are in the church of the living God. Every time they gather together, people called out from darkness into God's marvelous light, you come together, you lift up the truth and you send them out to share that truth with all those around them in darkness." That's the calling and, in fact, when they hate the truth the most, ironically those are often the people that you will find bowing their knees in the face of the truth preached to them. The people who are indifferent are the ones, or who are maybe cordial and nice to you as you proclaim the truth, are the ones whose hearts are harder and hardened to the gospel. The ones who are reacting most vociferously are the ones who are being convicted and because of the light shining at them, they're responding in hatred of that light. There's a sense in which they may continue in their opposition but there are many of those who will then turn and become followers of Jesus Christ just like a man named Saul of Tarsus who became the Apostle Paul. We must not trust in our own human wisdom to think about those who seem close to the kingdom. We're to lift up the truth wherever we can and many times with those that we think most unlikely to come will be the ones who come and, boy, when they come, how glorious it will be to see the transformation that God makes.

Now there are two points we're going to look at in the time we have left here: how are we to make known the truth, how are we to share the truth, essentially we're to live the truth and we're to speak the truth. Those are the two points that we're going to finish up with this morning.

We're to live the truth. We're told in Matthew 5:13-16 when Jesus says you are the salt of the earth and you are the light of the world, he's talking about the people of God, the



church, those who have been brought out of darkness into his light, the assembly of the living God. You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world and the light is you now because God has worked in you, you have the truth and you are not to hide that truth under a peck measure, Jesus says, you don't light a lamp and then hide it underneath something, you light a lamp when the house is dark and you set it up high so that it gives light to the whole house. So let your light so shine before men, he says in Matthew 5:16, let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven; that we are called to share the truth by living the truth. We're to be constantly seeking to bring out lives into obedience to that which we are coming to know and hear. We're not just to be hearers but doers of the word. We do this, first of all, personally in our own hearts. We're to pursue personal transformation. We come under the word to be changed by it, not just to hear it and be titillated by it, not just to enjoy it but to obey it by the power of the Spirit.

And when we live the truth, what a powerful way of proclaiming the truth that is. When someone who formerly, think about in Ephesus, when someone who formerly was a sorcerer or a witch or a pagan priest then comes to follow Jesus Christ and puts off impurity and wickedness and has a passion for holiness, a person who used to be all about themselves now becomes a humble servant. What a powerful testimony to the truth that is. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, he says no adulterer, no homosexual, no effeminate, no reviler, no swindler, no drunkard, he has a list of things he says will inherit the kingdom of God. He's saying that essentially the true Christian is someone who experiences transformation. It's not perfect at the time we get saved, it's a continual process. It's something we have to pursue daily. We fight against sin. We have to kill sin through the power of union with Christ, by reckoning upon the reality of our crucifixion with Jesus and our resurrection with Jesus, believing that we're free from sin, laboring to fill our minds with the truth, depending upon the power of the Spirit. But we are to pursue personal holiness and as we do that, that is a powerful way that we make, we share the truth, and so then we have the opportunity to tell other people about how we used to be. They say, "You're so kind. How do you do that?" "I didn't used to be this way. It's Jesus."

You see, living the truth is a platform then for speaking the truth. We do it in our families. In a world today that is going mad and trying to do everything they can to dissemble the patriarchy, as they call it, the way God has set things up, God has made us male and female, God has made the man to be the head of the home, to serve his wife lovingly, to lay down his life as Christ loved the church and lay down his life for her, a husband is to do that. That's what it looks like to be like Jesus in leading your family. Their wives are called to submission, yes, and there's no getting around that. God has said it. That settles it. For us, people think that's crazy. That's patriarchy. That's tyranny. That's evil. No, it's not. You're speaking of that which God has declared to be good. And you and I and the opportunity we have to live in our marriages, husbands to try diligently to cultivate a love for your wife, that you love your wife as your own body as Ephesians 5:28 says, that you nourish and cherish her just as Christ also does the church for we are members of his body. And wives learning to submit to their husbands, to give their full counsel to their husband, to contend as joint heirs of the grace of life, we're equal before

God in the ultimate sense yet God has made to have roles and responsibilities that we're to fulfill. It doesn't mean we're not equal in glory or value, the same way the Father is in charge of the Trinity but it doesn't diminish Jesus, it doesn't diminish the Holy Spirit. Equal in power and glory forever.

So when we live that, we are proclaiming the beauty of God's design. With the light that we have in our marriages is testimony to the fact that God is good. Parent-child relationships. You try to bring your child up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord. You brood over them. You care for them. You discipline them. The world says that's tyranny and all of that that the world is foolish. The world is ignorant. We can kindly disagree. Of course, respectfully and we should not be proud because we once were just like they. It's only by grace that we are any different but we should confidently live out what God says is good and when you love your children and you brood over them, you care for them, and people see the connection that happens in a Christian home as you deal with the same kind of problems that they have in life, and yet you do it in an entirely different way and they ask a reason for the hope that is within you, you say, "It is Jesus. He's done it all."

Then when you move out into your community, your neighbor, your coworkers, your student, your fellows students at school or at college, and you try to do good works among them, you try to live for Christ among them, you try to serve and look for opportunities to be a blessing to unbelievers around you, to be kind, truly kind, not just nice but kind, to serve others, they see the glory of God shining out in your life and you have an opportunity to then speak the truth.

So living the truth then leads to speaking the truth, the second point. We're to speak the truth. Our passage, we're the pillar and support of the truth. There are three things that I want to, subpoints under this and the first is we speak with authority. This is how we speak the truth, three adverbial phrases. With authority is the first, speak with authority. In 1 Timothy 3:15 he says we are the pillar and support of the truth. Not a truth. We're not lifting up a truth. We are lifting up the truth, the definitive truth. We are lifting up the one and only truth of God and so we need to do so with a measure of authority and it's not an intrinsic personal authority because you and I, in ourselves, we know nothing. But it's not humble, there are people who misunderstand this and think humility is acting like, "Well, you know, your truth is as good as my truth." No, that's not humility, that's just deception. Humility is being willing to say, "Listen, you and I by ourselves, we wouldn't, neither one of us could tell our right hand from our left if it was just you and me, but God has spoken and He has spoken clearly in His word and this is what He says."

So it really doesn't matter about me and what I think or what you think, what matters is what God has said, and when you look at the ministry of the apostles, especially as you walk through Acts, you see they speak with authority. In fact, the word "gospel" itself, just the word "gospel, euangelion," is the Greek word, e-u-epsilon, but anyway, in English e-u means good, eulogy is a good word. Euangelion, angelion is a message, an angelos is a messenger, an angel is a messenger. Euangelion is a good message but it's an authoritative message. It's a message from someone else in authority that is good news.

It's a message from a king that is a good message, a message of peace not of war. That's what the gospel is.

When we take the gospel, we are telling other people what God has said. We're delivering his message and when you deliver his message, think about this, if you had the business of being a messenger for a king under Persia or Babylon or Rome or Greece, do you think you would go and take the message to the city when it's come down from your king that you're going to go and tell them this is just a suggestion, just my opinion? No, it has nothing to do with what I say. This is from the king. Thus says the king. In fact, another keyword in the New Testament is the word for herald that is used over and over in Acts to speak of preaching. Preaching is heralding like a herald is a person who cries out with the voice of the king. So euangelion, gospel, and this word for herald, both speak of authority. It's an authoritative message. It's not our opinion. What does my opinion or your opinion matter? I mean, it may have some value but it doesn't have eternal value. What has eternal lasting value is what God says.

So we're to speak with authority. We say God is the one who said there's two sexes. He made them from the beginning male and female. There's two genders. There's only two. It's not up for debate. I mean, people can have their debate in the culture and we can respect that but we're not going to participate in the lie. God has said he made them male and female and we believe the most loving thing to do to say to someone who's wrestling with gender dysphoria which is something very painful, it's one of the evidences of great bondage and darkness that are happening in our culture, is to compassionately love them and to deal with them with understanding but to love them enough to speak the truth. The way out is to submit to God and to believe his word and you can do that through Jesus Christ. Anything less than that is not love. In fact, now the world says that's hate speech, to say that there's only two genders is hate speech but that's a lie because the world is built on lies. God is truth. God is love. And God has said this is the way it is. And though we understand how hard it is and, listen, we understand how hard it is because all of us have been wrapped up in lies, even as Christians today we're still overcoming the lies that are in our hearts through the truth of God's word. We're being daily delivered. We're fighting against sin ourselves and we understand the bondage that you can feel and we care deeply about your soul and we want you to know the freedom that Jesus Christ brings. He can truly set you free. You know the Son and the Son shall make you free indeed.

But speak with authority, secondly, speak with specificity. I say this because this is a key part of getting to the gospel is starting with where people are and the issues that they are dealing with and speaking truth into those situations. Like I was just mentioning this issue of gender, can be any area, could be someone who is being unfaithful to their spouse. You speak to them and you say, "Listen, God says that marriage is til death and that He's designed it that way." Somebody might say, "You don't know what my life is like." "Well, I don't know what your life is like but I do know this, that it is always best to follow God and His word. It's always best to submit to the word of God." Now in part of that conversation and you don't back off of that, "This is what God has said, adultery is a

sin. You should repent of that. You should stop. You need to stop. You need to go back to your wife. You need to go back to your husband. What can I do to help you?"

Now that's going to open up an opportunity later for the gospel of Jesus Christ because what they need is they need Jesus but you start with the point that they're really struggling with, the lie that's right in front of you, and you speak truth in that moment. One of the things that we've been tricked into in recent years in America, there's this idea that redefined what it means to be cordial, you could say, or nice, to be a good citizen. To be a good citizen is to never offend anyone. That's what's being a good citizen. Now they say that and the reality is and that's what I think of as I grew up in the South in America, that you were taught to be a nice person. You try not to offend people and certainly you don't try to offend people unnecessarily, that's foolish, that's unkind, but there are times where kindness and niceness are very different things. Kindness seeks the good of the other. Niceness seeks the safety of myself. I'm nice because I want you to like me. I'm kind because I care about you as a person. And kindness speaks truth even when it's offensive because it's the one thing that this person needs is truth.

So what happened is the culture has kind of made it, convinced us that we have to be cordial, don't offend anyone, and then they say things like speech is violence, that to speak that which is offensive to someone is violence. No, you're just saying, I say God made us male and female, there are people who would say what I'm doing is violence. Well, that's just wrong. It's not violence. Violence is actually hitting somebody, burning something down, doing destruction. That's what violence is. To speak to someone and express an opinion is not violence.

Then they go beyond that, so they say, for instance, what we're supposed to do is be nice to everyone and so when it comes to speaking about issues about whether or not, you know, there's just two genders, we're to be silent, we're not to speak against this idea that there are many genders. Don't speak against it because speaking against it is violence. So first of all, you're told to be silent and then you're told that silence, the next phase is silence is violence, now you must not only not speak against it, you must positively affirm the lie and to not do so is to be violent. Do you see that logic that they work through? Well, the reality is you have to flip that upside down. That's not biblical. First of all, when someone is affirming ungodliness, we cannot participate in affirming lies. We're the pillar and support of the truth and so we will not say evil is good, or good is evil. We will only say what God has said.

So at first we will be silent. We will not affirm that which is ungodly. This is where I think, for instance, if someone were and I know this is something that some of you have experienced, we've talked about this, a couple of you have talked with me about this where someone has said they've changed their gender and they have a new name and they have pronouns. We talked about this. Basically my view is I'll use your name but I will not use your pronouns. I mean, names are something, names are so different anyway. Okay, I might use your name but I will not use she instead of he or some other kind of X or whatever instead of he or she. I will not use your pronouns. I'll try to just always use your name because I care about you as a human being but I care about you enough to also

understand that I will not lie to you. Even though you believe a lie, I will not participate in your lie and thus share in your destruction and when I have the opportunity, I will tell you why I do that, because God has been clear in his word. And there are things that if I went according to how I feel, my life would be a wreck. If I went according to what I desire, my life would be a wreck. I've learned to submit to God and to look to Christ and to find in him true freedom.

So we don't participate in the lies and then we understand that speech is not violence, to speak the truth. Listen, to speak it unapologetically. At the right time when the moment is right, we say, "No, listen, God has said there's just two genders. The world is very confused about this but there's two genders, there's male and female. And while we're at it, why don't we look at the animal kingdom too? There's a reason Moses took two of everything in the ark, male and female. This is the way God has made it and we ignore his design at our own peril." And when we do that, we do it in love. This is true cordiality. This is true kindness. And when you speak the truth like this, the specificity of dealing with the particular issues, lays the groundwork for the gospel.

You see this in Paul's preaching. He starts off preaching in Acts 17 and he talks about who God is and how God has made the world. He doesn't go right into who Jesus is, he starts off with, "We've got to get connected and get you to understand, you know, a context for Christ." Then you do all of that through the relationship so that you can lead them to Jesus. In 1 Timothy 3:16, that interesting verse I think is telling us that the ultimate truth that we're trying to always get to, verse 16 of 1 Timothy 3, "By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness," look at this description, "He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory." Those six clauses all describing in a comprehensive way the life and death and ministry of Jesus Christ. From birth to ascension our message is Jesus Christ, that he came into the world, left the glory of heaven, came into the world to save sinners like you and me, lived a perfect life, never sinned, and then went to the cross and bore our sins in his body on the cross that he might die to sin and then his death to sin, we would die to sin that we might live to righteousness, and through his sacrifice you are made righteous forever when you believe in him. And then he not only delivers you from the penalty of sin, hell in the future, he delivers you from the power of sin in the present. He makes you able to live life according to his word, according to the way God designed it and that is life indeed.

Sin brings bondage. Sin brings misery. Sin appears to be that which is life but it is actually death and we are the pillar and support of the truth to say, "Listen, truth is in Jesus Christ. There is the truth from God, His name is Jesus." And the world needs to hear that. May God help us to share that every way we can for as long as we have.

Let's pray.

*Our Father, how grateful we are for the truth. We acknowledge, Lord, that we are in and of ourselves completely unworthy, we are sinners by nature, fools and blind by birth, and apart from Your miraculous grace we would still be walking in darkness. But how*

*grateful we are for the power of the gospel that truly is the power of God unto salvation, and how grateful we are that we now have the opportunity to take that glorious message that will continue to increase and prevail in the midst of a dark sinful world, every time we unleash the word, You accomplish Your purposes. You will not send Your word out without accomplishing the purpose for which You sent it. It will not return to You void. Lord, help us to be more faithful, people who love the truth and who speak the truth in love. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*