

## Defend God's Doctrine, and Use It Properly

### Introduction

- Scenario: young cong; new believers; not 150 yrs old – founded about 10 years ago by missionary pastor, taught people gospel first time, brought them to faith. Really loved pastor; helped them through hard times: anti-Christian culture, even riot. Stayed 3 years, many came to faith; also trained lay leaders to guide church. After three, left for other mission work; when left, many tears, missed pastor. But while gone, some people began teaching doctrines contrary to Scripture, false teachings. When heard, missionary pastor very upset, sent young pastor to cong to help with situation.
- This scenario is true story: not WELS missions overseas, not home mission cong here in US. This is setting for 1 Timothy. Paul had started congregation in Eph, then left; false teachings came; Paul sent young pastor named Timothy. And 1 Tim is letter Paul wrote to young colleague to encourage him to defend God's doctrine. Very beginning, **vs. 3-4**. False teachers saying gospel of Jesus wasn't enough to save; Bible's messages of L&G (sins condemn; Christ died to take sins away) – not enough to get to heaven. Instead, needed something more: special revelation from God. Later: **“Godless myths and old wives' tales” (4:7)**. God's doctrine needed to be defended, because L&G being ignored.
- Today begin series on 1 Tim; last 8 weeks; through almost whole book. What find: Paul's words of advice to Tim about cong struggling over doctrine can really benefit us in our congregation. We at St. John's need same encouragement to remain doctrinally-sound, gospel-centered that Tim and Ephesians needed. So from now until Reformation, carefully work through 1 Timothy in sermons. Today in opening, Paul's urges Tim and us: defend God's doctrine, and use it properly.

### Defend God's Doctrine

- What doctrines do we need to defend today? As Luths, heritage born out of defending doctrine. When Luther was reforming church, defending her against work-righteousness (save yourself); indulgences (purchase forgiveness); purgatory (before heaven, purge off sins); praying to saints instead of God. To this day, Lutherans still defend God's doctrine of justification by grace through faith: Jesus did everything to save us, gives this salvation to everyone as free gift, everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness & eternal life. Centuries before Luther, there were false teachers denied doctrine of Trinity (3 persons, 1 God, F/S/HS). So know how church leaders defended God's doctrine then? Wrote creeds we say all time (A&N), so that every Sunday in church, we'd defend God's doctrine.
- What about today? What truths of Scripture are being attacked today that we must stand up and defend? Against abortion; homosexuality (& hetero) (**vs. 10a**). Roles of men & women in church (ch. 2). Creation. Baptism & Lord's Supper. Fellowship (participating in worship activities). Lot of Christians, even Lutherans, teach **“contrary to sound doctrine.”** In opening words, Paul: **vs. 3c**.
- But hard to do, because sometimes we feel like only ones doing it! Always talk about God's Word “in its truth and purity.” But make such big deal about truth & purity? Here's why, acc to Paul: **vs. 5**. Loving God means loving his doctrines. Can't say, I love Lord but not going follow everything he teaches. Incompatible. Jesus: **“If you love me, you will obey what I command” (Jn 14:15)**. Reverse: if you chuck what I command out window, you don't love me. However, when we love and cling to God's Word (all of it, everything it teaches), that produces in us: vs. 5b, kind of faith devil will have hard time stealing away from us.
- At end of day, that what false doctrines do: steal faith away from us. Satan uses false doctrines to inch us further away from God. Picture it like wooden wheel (Cat). One broken spoke may not crash wagon, but does compromise integrity of wheel. When more spokes break, eventually wheel will, too. Doctrine. That's what was starting to happen in Ephesus; their doctrine was slipping. We're always in danger of that happening among us, as well. So what Paul told Tim, also tells us: defend God's doctrine!

## *And Use It Properly*

- **Vs. 8.** Law = God's commands, standard of holiness. Summer, 10 Coms – law. Paul says use properly. Know how law used improperly? Two ways. 1) “Pretty good job! Pretty good person. God's pretty pleased with me. I do some bad. But look at everyone worse. I keep law pretty well.” First, when compare ourselves to others instead of to law itself. Sure, you can find worse sinners. That doesn't make you holy. 2) “Yes, done wrong in life. But I'm really going to try harder and make up for it. Going to show God how good I can be. If I've made him mad, now I'm going to impress him by following law.” Second, when we think our attempts to keep law will impress God. In this life, always sinful. So no good things we do can ever earn salvation or impress God.
- How properly? One way, remember **vs. 9...list**. Not meant for righteous but unrighteous. If A&E never sinned, wouldn't have needed 10 Com. Someday in heaven, won't need 10 Coms there, because holy, sinless people don't need 10 Coms; already follow God's will perfectly. Is that us – sinless, holy? No way! But we are Christians! We do believe Christ gave life on cross to take away sins, declare us holy; we do believe that because of Jesus God does see us as holy. So where does that leave us? Here, with this theological fact: a Christian is at same time sinner & saint, unrighteous (deserving hell) & righteous (holy in sight of God). Both true at same time, because not only sinful nature, also saving faith in Christ.
- What that means, practically speaking: two ways to properly use God's law. 1) To show us sin and fullness of guilt. We want to use law as mirror, look into, shows exactly who we are, what we've done. No escaping – very guilty. Then as Christians we repent: turn to Christ for forgiveness and trust his gospel of salvation. Then 2) when hearts so full of thankfulness to Jesus for saving, forgiving us, use law as guide for us to live for Jesus and say thank you to Jesus. If he says, “Don't...;” I don't want to. Law becomes roadmap for me to know God's will and follow it in my life.
- Remind you of anything? Remember chart with three circles, all summer long with 10 Coms? Chart I came up with to help us understand gospel better, and law better. Paul here says use law properly. Think chart: left – sin (law); top – gospel; right – guide for thankful living (law)! That's how use law properly! Live Christian life patterned after 3 truths (3 circles): condemned; saved; how to say thank you. Fail, start over. Repeat again and again.

## *Conclusion*

- I printed copies of chart for you, put them on kiosk. Take and apply. Homework. Actually gave same homework to 8<sup>th</sup> graders for Cat, will quiz them. Won't quiz you, but take one anyway. Another thing you could do this week: read 1 Timothy. Only 6 chapters long; won't take long at all. Read it. Starting series today; get ready for next few weeks of worship by reading it.
- Today Paul tells Timothy, Defend God's doctrine, and use it properly, because false teachers were messing up L&G in Ephesus. Sometimes we mess L&G up, too. So today Paul urges us to defend God's doctrine and use it properly, as well. Next Sunday, Paul goes into detail about the extreme riches of God's grace. So today I'll end sermon with words Paul used to begin his letter: **vs. 2**.

## **1 Timothy 1:1-11 (NIV)**

<sup>1</sup> Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, <sup>2</sup> To Timothy my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

<sup>3</sup> As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer <sup>4</sup> or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. Such things promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God's work—which is by faith. <sup>5</sup> The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. <sup>6</sup> Some have departed from these and have turned to meaningless talk. <sup>7</sup> They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.

<sup>8</sup> We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. <sup>9</sup> We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, <sup>10</sup> for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine <sup>11</sup> that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.