

Teaching Wholesome Truth

Let us turn to our Bibles to 1st Timothy chapter 6. 1st Timothy chapter 6. We're almost done with 1st Timothy. Then I will go to 2nd Timothy, then Titus. These are the epistles of Paul to the pastors.

And here in 1st Timothy 6.2 in particular, although I'll read a little bit of 3, to give some of the idea of the context here and why I use the word wholesome. We have an attempt in my sermon to drill down and to apply a little further the positive aspect of the wholesome truths that ought to be taught in our churches. Let us listen attentively to the word of God.

1st Timothy 6.2. It's 2 C or D, however you want to break it down. The very last sentence there. Teach and exhort these things.

Verse 3. If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, he continues on to describe them as proud and knowing nothing. And thus, my usage of the word wholesome truth. Let us pray.

Indeed, Father, God above, as your people, we ask for more wholesome truth, more understanding, more open hearts, we pray, in illumination of our minds and our souls. To see the truth, to see what needs to be applied in our lives, God, that we not live in the darkness, that we would help others to do what we can, as we will see here, I pray, in this sermon. Our responsibility in doing and exercising proper instruction to those around us that need to hear it, and especially underneath us, Lord, that they would learn sound, glorious, wholesome truths.

Amen. In a day and age of radical individualism and independency, not only among Americans in general, but within the church herself, it is easy to encounter many, many strange teachings and practices that are either unhelpful, distracting, unedifying, or even downright harmful. In other words, they are unwholesome, unhealthy, unsound, which is what that word means there in verse 3. We went over that last week when I preached more of the negative part, that we should not consent to unwholesome words, unsound words, being obsessed with disputes and over words instead of substance in verse 4. Because of that, I thought it good to go over the wholesome truths that we ought to endorse and embrace, and practices as well, and what that looks like.

To that end, I want to point out that Paul, I think we know, was not only concerned about teaching doctrine only, but because, of course, he was dealing with troublesome false teachers, and Timothy is a pastor, he's supposed to stop that, but also wholesome practices in the church of God. Hence, at the end of his long sentence here, he connects doctrine to godliness in verse 3. If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, then he expands on that, and do the doctrine which accords with what? Godliness. Evil fruits, we read here in verses 4 and 5, arise from unwholesome, unsound, unhelpful teaching that Paul lists there, indicating his concern that doctrine is indeed connected to godly practice.

In this case, bad doctrine, bad instruction is connected to bad fruits, and contentions, and fighting in the church of God. So with that in mind, I want to cover both teaching and

practice that is healthy and sound, and how we're all called, not just pastors, not just Timothy, not just Pastor Mathis, to live a holy life and to instruct others as we are called to do. So the first point here, teach wholesome truth.

Teaching Wholesome Truth

I'll talk about the teaching here, and then I'll talk about the practices in the second point. Teach wholesome truth. First of all, it's a command to Timothy and beyond him, to all pastors, all those called to the ministry to teach and instruct the word of God to the people of God.

He's the immediate object of this and many other commands, of course, in first and second, what? Timothy, written to this young pastor, and a young pastor, Titus, as well, in the next letter. He's given a number of instructions and things he's supposed to do. His responsibility is to warn, to discipline, and to even apply the word of God to the situation of his church.

Now how can pastors teach wholesome truths? What does this look like? What's the manner? As experts knowing their material, as preachers who are bold and clear, and as dispensers of the truth applying what needs to be heard and taught as appropriate. If you recall, I explained what this obsession with disputes and arguments over words, verse 4, is and is not, and that we read elsewhere in Timothy and Titus that there are apparently Jews and Judaizers going into the genealogies and messing around or drawing some kind of wrong inferences from the genealogies. That was clearly a bad example, a bad thing to do.

That's abusing the genealogies, maybe of the word of God or their own genealogies, it's unclear. But we do have genealogies, for example, in the Bible. And you can't have instruction and wholesome knowledge of these things or what the purpose of those are there in the Book of Numbers, for example.

So a lot of it depends on what they are doing with what's before them, the material. It could be good material, but they are twisting it and blowing things out of proportion, for example. And so we are called, however, to be wise as pastors and dispense and apply these things properly with edification.

So the first sub-point, if you want to call it, as experts of biblical teaching, this is how pastors can give and present wholesome, sound teaching. Pastors, they're called, or parsons, or ministers, or teachers, or instructors, or whatever title you want to give them, should teach sound and healthy words, the words of life and truth. They should know the words of Christ.

They should have necessary training and public instruction accordingly. It does not grow on trees. It takes time and effort.

It takes more time than you even get in seminary. Seminary assumes that you are a Christian, that you have some idea of what Christianity is about already. You're already instructed by the Church of God, at least ideally.

The Church has always had a strong push for the educated in the ministry, not for the sake of being educated, but for the sake that they would know what they need to know so they could stop the mouths of those obsessed with disputes and tell them that's the wrong understanding of the genealogies and numbers, for example. Unfortunately, it died off in varying degrees in the Middle Ages, although there were the lights. It was revived, especially in the Reformation, the post-Reformation era, and it's important today because in the American way of doing things, as you know, every Tom, Dick, and Harry can become a pastor.

Look at me. I can just grow a church. People like me, they can declare themselves teachers and pastors and end up with unwholesome teaching.

Often they end up preaching what we call pet doctrines, or they are one-note johnnies. All they have is just one little specialty that they're excited about. I'm glad they're excited about it if they're true believers, but often, unfortunately, they ought not to be in the ministry.

They need to be better instructed. Apollos was one of those guys in one sense. He was godly.

The Spirit of the Lord was with him, but he didn't know the fullness of the truth. He had to be taken aside and fully instructed that Jesus Christ has come and fulfilled these things. Now his ministry can be, what, more edifying because he has more truth.

To that end, although it may sound like I'm disparaging these other people who declare themselves as pastor, if I run across them, I would like to take them aside and pray for them that they can have better instruction in these matters if need be. They ought to be highly educated in God's truth in particular. Secondly, the way in which pastors can promote healthy, wholesome teaching is as public teachers, not only in their content of the knowledge that they have, but also in their presentation of it.

They need to be bold without fear. Word is used a number of times in the book of Acts as I preach through it. I try to highlight that fact.

That was one of the characteristics of the apostles. In particular, it's interesting that word can be translated open. They're not ashamed.

They're not hiding in secrets. They are bold is one good application of that word. That's why it's translated that way.

That's the kind of pastors we want. That's how wholesome, good, sound truth will be presented to the world with pastors who are not hiding from these things. False Jewish teachings and the like were being attacked by sound teaching, by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The apostles, as you recall, going through Acts, were stirring up trouble, not intentionally because they want to stir up trouble, but they're bringing the truth about Jesus Christ to the synagogues and the Jews don't want to hear it. They're getting cranky. They don't want to go back and change what they had built up over the generations, these false teachings and additions to the word of God.

Peter told a crowd, I'll remind you of something. I guess the closest we would have today would be the BLM crowds. If you would go down there and try to talk reason into them, you might have gotten beat up.

You avoid mass crazy crowds. That's what it was like back then. Although it wasn't a BLM crowd in one sense, that is, you know they're kind of dangerous to begin with, they are still a crowd that can become dangerous.

It requires a lot of courage to speak to them. So when Peter in Acts 2 tells this crowd of Jews, what? You crucified Jesus. What did he just say? You're a bunch of murderers.

That took boldness. The power of the spirit of God within them. They were standing firm that he was going to apply the law of God to them.

Pray that ministers would be clear and brave in the truth. You can be bold all you want but if you're unclear and your words are going round and round and you're not direct and to the point, stop this. This is wrong.

You're going to hell. Repent. The boldness will be to no avail.

Then thirdly, they have to be wise dispensers of truth. Know the content. It's what you want out of the pastor.

Teachers of the church of God. Pray. I'm instructing this so you can pray intelligently for them.

And to have the courage to do the right thing, to say it, but also have the wisdom to give what needs to be given at that time. I can't preach, pastors can't preach and go over every particular topic in every sermon. You simply can't.

So they must select these things for their audience. He needs the knowledge and the boldness but also wisdom. So Matthew 13 52 If you recall there, Christ says And therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasures things new and old.

Right? He knows what he needs to grab and get out of the treasury and to give to the people of God. The scribes back then were the ones who spoke the truth in the Jewish context and had the Bible before them. And so they also preached at times.

And they Jesus is saying, they the pattern you're supposed to follow, apostles and take the old and the new as well. The Old Testament you can say and the New Testament and bring them to the people of God or old truths and new applications perhaps that we hadn't thought about before in the Christian life. To dig into long standing truths as well.

Old and new, whatever that is in particular in the ministry it requires the Spirit of God upon the pastors as Matthew Henry puts it in his commentary. Old experiences and new

observations all have their use. We must not contend ourselves with old discoveries but also be adding new.

Live and learn in the Christian life, he says. And that's what Jesus is talking about here. The pastors should not be, as I this thing, this one doctrine, a couple of doctrines but get to the other doctrines as well we've perhaps forgotten.

New applications and understandings in our situations this is what I'm talking about. Another way to describe this for pastors, because we want pastors to give us the truth and nothing but the truth and apply it with wisdom is they are called to be the sons of Issachar. That's an odd way of speaking.

Well that's right out of 1 Chronicles 12.32. The sons of Issachar who had an understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do. That's what we want from our pastors and leaders in the church. They are called to be the sons of Issachar like that.

Not living as though still in the 80s and 90s and preaching as though the people are still struggling with those problems back then when new things have come along here. So they have to have, as it were, new applications of the old truth to the situation of the church and Christians today. This command, of course, is given directly to Timothy and by extension to all pastors, but also to all church officers to the extent that they are there to support and do their jobs and also support the minister.

So ruling elders of course, as we know, coordinate with the pastors in the discipline of the church and making decisions therein to rule, to guide, and what's included in that is instruction, although not officially as such. They know they're not pastors, but they still have to open their mouth and tell somebody what? You're wrong or you're right. This is a good thing.

Keep it up. We have home visitations. Part of that is and can turn into instruction time, although the pastor may or may not be there.

And so they are, of course, supposed to be men of experience and as such, they may tell you about their experience and thus instruct you and host some words and teachings. So they will warn, they will direct, and the like. They may not be as eloquent or as learned, it doesn't matter.

If the truth is needful in that situation, the ruling elders and even the deacons are called to speak truth to that situation. So, the experience they have and the like, they don't pretend to be public instructors and teachers, instructors as such, but they will teach. Now, this also means the command of the churches in general to teach wholesome words, the truth of Jesus Christ.

If pastors then presbyteries that ordain them ought to be aware of these things and stand for the truth of God's word and preserve them and give them to the people of God with respect to their own responsibilities. And if presbyteries that ordain them, of course, then denominations that created the presbyteries. In other words, the means, causes, occasions

needed to support good, wholesome, sound teaching and instruction in the church of God, they're all involved in that, in different degrees of course.

So, there's a moral responsibility. And this is part of here in our larger catechism, question 99. The Westminster larger catechism, question 99, has eight principles of how to apply the law of God.

And the last two principles, seven and eight, are quite interesting. I'm not going to go over both of them, just number eight. They describe our mutual responsibility as Christians.

You're not a pastor. You don't pretend to be a pastor. I'm sure you probably don't even want to be a pastor.

Who wants to talk to people, strangers in public? That's crazy. But you still have a responsibility to help the pastor. To pray for the pastor and do what you can with respect to your responsibilities therein.

What it says here in particular is that in what is commanded to others, so the reference point is you, to what is commanded to others, me the pastor, I'm the other, we are bound, I could say you are bound, according to your places and callings to be helpful to them. And to take heed of partaking with others in what is forbidden in them. They're forbidden to sin, you shouldn't partake in their sins either.

Paul wrote that he as an apostle was called to help the saints of the church of Corinth, for example. Not that we have dominion over your faith, we read, but our fellow workers for your joy. 2 Corinthians 1. Fellow workers.

He's an apostle. How is he a fellow worker with non-apostles? With non-church officers for that matter. Because he recognizes that what is commanded to others, to the Corinthians, Paul is bound, according to his places and callings, to be helpful to them.

See that? That's what's going on there. And that's what we're all called to do, not just Paul, but on the flip side us for Paul, us for our pastors and our willing owners, our deacons, for one another for that matter. Parents help their children get their work done by giving them the tools they need to clean their room.

If it literally needs tools, then they better get some tools. But usually it just means some time at least. Maybe some clean blankets for the bed.

Something the kid can't do. So the parent is there to help what is commanded to others. Those others being kids, you're called to do what your parents tell you, clean your room.

They are bound as parents, and they're calling in places to be helpful to them in that regard. That's what he's saying here. We're mutually responsible and supposed to be helping one another.

Here, churches as organizations with money and collections of leaders ruling elders and pastors both locally in the Presbytery and nationally in the General Assembly do what they

can to help pastors teach the whole counsel of God. They are called. They are commanded to help those pastors what are commanded to others.

They are bound according to their places and calling as a session, as a Presbytery, as a denomination to be helpful to them, the pastors. And them, of course, just means anybody. I'm using pastors as a particular example.

That includes churches as well. They are called to be helpful to our churches to make decisions that aren't harmful to our churches at the broader assemblies. And so teaching the word of God and wholesome instruction therein involves the whole church in one sense.

At a minimal, prayer. It's knowledge that there's a pastor and we want pastors in our churches. We need to pray for more pastors as I did in the covenant prayer this evening that there would be more missionaries, both locally and internationally.

That's what I can do to help in this regard. It is, of course, therefore the same for all Christians. Not just the ruling elders and the deacons.

Not just the structure of the church itself, the presbyteries and the committees and the denomination. But you as an individual Christian are therefore called right here out of those verses, out of that summary of the law of God that what is commanded to others, to pastors, you are bound according to your calling and placing in life to be helpful to them. That is pastors who are called to instruct the people of God in sound gospel teaching.

And so you are called to pray, to help and to encourage or whatever the case may be. They have their own responsibility, the pastors of course. And if pastors fail and the church is a fold, you are still called to do what you can to instruct others.

Pastors have their public formal office. It's what laying on hands is. It's a public act to tell the whole world this man has this responsibility before all of us.

We recognize this responsibility. But you also have a responsibility. And I'm giving you the worst case scenario if the pastors fail and the church is a fold that means no one can speak anymore.

Of course not! You're supposed to do what? Be able to give an answer to the hope that is within you, 1 Peter. You still have a responsibility to know what the wholesome truth is. So when you hear it from the pulpit, you're like, Amen! Or, wait a minute, that's not it! So it's not the pastor only, not the ruling elders, it's not the denomination.

You yourself have a responsibility, a duty, to know these things, to know what wholesome words of Christ are and what unwholesome, unhelpful, dangerous lies are on the other hand. Now you can't learn as much as a pastor. You're not going to go to seminary.

You can learn a little here, a little there. I know you have a busy life. All this is true.

I just want to make sure I give you a presentation here, to do what you can do. You have the word of truth, people come across your path, you give them some pearls of wisdom you

heard. And of course you encourage them to come to church or Bible study or whatever the case may be.

But often you're the first step. You're the first person people see, not me. I'm only one guy and there's a bunch of you.

I'm outnumbered. We do what we can do. And of course never forget to pray for the help and guidance for the pastors and the churches in our sessions.

They need it. They need your prayers, brothers and sisters. Secondly, exhort wholesome practice.

Exhort wholesome practice. So I played off the two verbs here. Teach and exhort these things in verse 2. And here secondly, exhorting wholesome practice.

Exhorting Wholesome Practices

There are two types of practices the way I'm categorizing it here. The first is natural practices. Practices, again the moral law of God in particular that even unbelievers recognize and see and say this is a good thing.

You're taking care of your family. That's a good thing. You're not murdering people.

That's a good thing. Unbelievers know these things. If you recall, Paul reaches back way before the fall when nature had not fallen, arguing that women should not be church leaders in chapter 2. On the other hand, he encourages women to take care of the home for the Lord or sanctify them in child rearing, he tells them.

He also writes about widows, arguing that ordinarily widows are taken care of by whom? Family and kinsfolk. Not the church. The church taking care of widows is under specific structures, strictures there and structure as well.

In a particular situation there in which they are put on the rolls and taken care of as though they were part of a family. What are these but appeals to the natural things of life? That's why I categorize it that way. Family is natural, of course, in so far as it what? Predates the church.

There was no church before the fall. Forget that. Because there was no sin.

But the family was there. And it's part of the world before heaven. From now into eternity, brothers and sisters, there will always be families and where there's always families, there's always going to be extensions of families, communities and nations.

That's how God has designed it. And the world knows this. The world acts upon these things, although inconsistently, of course.

So these are the natural things. In other words, wholesome practices are not just explicit proof texts, but include common sense applications for yourself, your family, community

and even state. So it may look a little different from here and there in our lives, but have much similarity, of course, in the bigger matters like, you know, stealing, lying and murder.

In other words, in a Christian society it may look very much like a non-Christian society insofar as, again, these major parts of natural law like murder and thievery and adultery and the like are outlawed. But there will be some differences, of course, because in a Christian society we take the Lord's Day seriously. We take his worship seriously.

We even have blasphemy laws in America into the early 1900s. If you can believe that. And you should, because I'm not lying.

So, of course, there are differences and more explicit uses of the Ten Commandments to be sure. But the point being that the pastor's duty and calling here, as Paul illustrates in his own example here, is to apply the law of God to the natural situation in which we find ourselves. The family situation, friendships, businesses and the like as needed.

Often, Timothy, here in Timothy we read, Paul does not go into the details exactly what a lot of this stuff looks like per se. And often that's a matter of wisdom. So you've got to pray for wisdom.

Next I talk about, here in my notes, supernatural practices. And that would be the first table of the law of God. In particular, things dealing with God, the supernatural.

Honoring the Lord as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Honoring him as he wants to be honored in worship. Honoring him in his holy name and works and all that's attached, his name is attached to.

And honoring him on his day, resurrection Sunday. These are practices, Christian, good Christian practices. Wholesome, sound things that we ought to do and not flee away from.

The fourth commandment in particular and of course the second, I guess I can't say in particular, second and fourth commandment are really just lip service it seems unfortunately in the American churches. The Lord's day is often desecrated with sports and the like. And Christians don't think twice about it.

We have these Christian stars that are football players. I mean why? They're playing on Sunday. At least the professional, I guess the college is Saturday, right? I know it's hard.

The guy looks really great and you think, well he can be a witness and draw more people to Christ. I never see evidence of that ever. You can see evidence of a man being bold and standing for the truth.

His duty is to follow God's word. And that means, oh well, I lose my job as a professional football player? Oh well. That's what happened to Simon as you recall and others and people that we know in homeschooling circles.

They're like, we can't play on Sunday, we have to go to worship. And they put them on the back bench. Christians put their best players on the back bench because the coach was angry.

Because how dare you take the Lord's day seriously? It's wholesome practice. That's an unwholesome practice. We want to have good sound practices and that begins with the supernatural, that is God and the first table of the law.

And of course the details of the Bible help guide our lives and direct us so that we can be more faithful in his word and the like. Many of the Ten Commandments have helpful details in the Bible. And we can go through that and I mentioned that book in Sunday School Class as you recall.

It collects all those verses and illustrations for each topic of sin and righteousness there. The stories, especially in the Old Testament, are there to teach us by example. We read, as you recall in 1 Corinthians 10.6, 1 Corinthians 10.6 of the Old Testament church wandering in the desert.

We read at the end of that description there, now these things, Paul writes, became our examples to the intent that we should not lust after the evil things as they also lusted. He speaks of Christ being baptized into Moses and of course being baptized into Christ by implication in the opening verses of chapter 10. But his conclusion here in verse 6 is a moral conclusion we would say.

Not a conclusion about the doctrine of the gospel, not a conclusion about Jesus and the Trinity. But as a believer don't live that way. And here's an example to warn you not to live that way.

It's unwholesome, it's unsound, it's dangerous and unedifying. Paul says they are examples for us. Don't be afraid to learn the examples in the Old Testament.

Yes, they point to Jesus, but they also point to the holiness of the Christian life as well. Because of course, Jesus is the penultimate of holiness. He lived it all perfectly.

And that we should learn not to lust after evil things as they also lusted. Brothers and sisters, the church of God and pastors in particular are called to teach and instruct wholesome words of our Lord and Savior into the doctrine which accords with godliness, godly practices as well. We need both in the Christian churches.

We need to be aware of these things and encourage these things and expect nothing less within our churches. And the followers of Jesus are called to his truth, to the law and the gospel to equip the saints as he's given us in his word with practical application as the calling of the pastor in particular. You're called to do a little bit of that, of course, as best you can as a man of the house, for example.

And as parents over children to instruct them, give them examples from the Bible. But the pastor is here to equip you, to equip others. And always pointing to Jesus our Lord and Savior.

Always. Amen. Let us pray.

Indeed God Almighty who was and is and is to come, we rejoice in you and what you've done for us and given us these words of encouragement that Timothy is called to teach and exhort these things. And not just Timothy but those around him are encouraged to help equip him so that he can teach and exhort and not be a hindrance to him in his duty and therefore by extension all pastors. And Lord we pray in particular that all pastors will stand firm regardless of those hindrances and to be bold and to apply what is needful both in doctrine and in practice to the Christian lives we pray.

Give them wisdom Lord that they at the end of the day always point to the calling of repentance and faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.