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SERMON TITLE

What is Truth? Part 5

SERIES

DATE

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KEY SCRIPTURE

2 Timothy 4:1-5

SYNOPSIS

The world may twist truth and reject the gospel, but we must remain faithful, proclaiming, protecting, and persevering in the truth.

HIGHLIGHTS





☞ What is Truth, part 5

2 Timothy 4:1-5

4 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction. 3 For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

Imagine being handed the last words of a spiritual father. That's what we find here – this is the last of Paul's writings, and he knows that his time is short. So, these are some of his very last thoughts, which indicates the importance of what we are reading today. Paul is writing to his protégé, Timothy, who was young, timid, and surrounded by false teachers in the town of Ephesus. We may feel like Timothy today – small, inadequate, surrounded by people who have different beliefs, and living in a world that rejects the ways of God. But we are encouraged to hold to the truth and carry out what God has called us to do.

☞ Proclaim God's Word, v. 1-2

Paul's charge to Timothy starts with "preach the Word." The word 'preach' is sometimes translated 'proclaim,' 'tell,' or 'talk freely.' So, this passage isn't just for pastors and evangelists – it applies to every Christian because **we are all called to tell the truth of the Good News**. And, we must tell the whole truth, not just the parts everyone likes. Whether it's convenient or not, comfortable or not – we preach.

We should be prepared to share our faith anytime, **'in season and out of season.'** 1 Peter 3:15 says, **"Always be prepared to give an answer** to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." Peter affirms what Paul says about being ready at any time, and clarifies that our talk should be done in a gentle and respectful way. As I have said these past few weeks, telling the truth doesn't need to be harsh or condemning. It must be enveloped in love.

To share the Good News also doesn't require a lot of theological expertise. Karl Barth was a scholar and outstanding theologian in the last century. When Barth visited the University of Chicago, at a press conference someone asked, "Dr. Barth, what is the most profound truth you have learned in your studies?" Without hesitation he replied, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." This master theologian summarized the gospel in a few simple words that could be repeated by a young child. This shows that **we do not need a degree in theology to share our faith**. I've often said that your personal story about God's work in your life is the best tool you have to share the gospel.



☞ Part of our motivation to **proclaim truth is because Jesus is coming again**, and this time will include judgment. That's what Paul says in verse 1. **Romans 14:10** reminds us that we will all stand before God's judgment seat. Now, as believers, the thought of Jesus returning is inspiring because we will be united with him to live in glory forever, with perfect resurrection bodies, and no pain, death, or sorrow.

But the return of Jesus will be bad news for those who have not trusted in him because they will be excluded from God's presence for eternity. So, the return of Jesus should encourage us and also inspire us to share our faith with those who do not already know him. Eternity is at stake.

Proclaiming the Word includes **correcting, rebuking and encouraging – with great patience and careful instruction**. The word for **correcting** means to bring to light. Since there's so much darkness ☞ and deception in the world, part of our calling is to **bring the truth to light**.

Rebuking refers to holding someone accountable for what they have done. A significant part of the true Gospel is about repentance. So, at some point, people need to know they are accountable for their sins and be called to repentance.

☞ **Encouraging** means to urge, inspire and comfort. So, sharing the Gospel includes **leading people to a point of decision**, with the inspiration of knowing that Jesus made a way for them to be saved.

For most people all of this happens over a course of time – it is often a slow, gradual process. This is ☞ why Paul tells Timothy to do these things... **'with great patience and careful instruction.'** We live in a time where things change rapidly. We are used to instant coffee, instant meals, instant answers online, and even instant fortunes with the lottery. But, great patience means that we should not expect results overnight, but rely on God's timing, being patient through the process.

Careful instruction reminds us of the importance of teaching the right way to live, based on sound doctrine. Proclaiming God's Word is more than just teaching facts from the Bible; it must also affect how believers live. The truth of God's Word is **personal** and **powerful**, but must also be **practical**.

Imagine a lighthouse keeper on a stormy coast. One night, a ship may be caught in a violent storm, veering toward jagged rocks. But, the keeper won't dim the light or change its direction to make the sailors feel better about their course. Instead, he keeps the beam steady, guiding them to safety. Likewise, proclaiming the Word means shining God's truth consistently, whether it's popular or not.

☞ **Protect God's Word, v. 3 -4**

As Christians, we should realize that **God's Word is unpopular with many people**. That's because it challenges pride, selfishness and independence. You see, the gospel requires that we admit we can't



be good enough for God, we must accept forgiveness through Jesus, and we must submit to Him. For many, that is a difficult proposition.

Paul writes that the people who ultimately don't like the challenges of truth will turn their ears away from it and refuse to listen. Instead, they will only listen to what they want to hear. **...3 to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.**

Itching ears want to hear something that is comfortable or new, entertaining, and popular. Today, there are people who pervert the teachings of the Bible to make it more acceptable to people. There is a lot of pressure in society to adapt the Word to fit the world. This is not really a new thing – **Isaiah 30:10** says, "They say to the seers, 'See no more visions!' and to the prophets, 'Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions.'" That is backwards to what God wants. We must **not adjust to itching ears, but adhere to sound doctrine.**

4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. These 'myths' to which Paul is referring are counterfeit beliefs that he mentioned in both letters to Timothy. Those teachings included adding extra rules which are not supported by Scripture. Some of those false teachers were quarreling over minor issues. And, others went so far as outright denial of what is actually true. In **1 Timothy 4:1** Paul predicted that, "Some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits." This is a caution for all of us. It can begin with subtle little **discrepancies** and **disagreements** which may ultimately lead to **deserting** the faith.

☞ We should **beware of popular, but false teachings in our time.** For example, some say "Everyone will go to heaven," which contradicts what Jesus said in **Matthew 7** that only a few will find the way. Here's another: "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere." But, in **John 14:6**, Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father except through me." God-willing, we will look at even more of those types of beliefs and sayings in the weeks ahead.

We live in a time when people don't want truth – they want affirmation. But **the gospel isn't about making people feel good; it's about making them new.** *Imagine a doctor discovering that a patient has cancer, but choosing to tell them they're healthy just to keep them happy. That's what it's like to avoid preaching truth – it may comfort for a moment, but it kills eternally.* No, we must protect the truth of God's Word, and that will take effort and commitment.

☞ **Persevere in God's Word, v. 5**

5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. Paul's final charge is a call to perseverance. Holding to the truth and



doing ministry isn't easy – it involves hardship, rejection, and sacrifice. Yet Timothy is urged to endure and fulfill his God-given role.

1 Corinthians 9:24-25 says, “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training.” Like athletes, we're called to **discipline and endurance, keeping our eyes on the eternal prize of God's glory**. It takes effort to persevere.

The word translated **'keep your head'** literally means 'be sober.' Paul is telling Timothy not to be confused or easily swayed, but rather to **be steadfast and aware of what was going on** around him... aware of the trends in society, aware of the popular false teachings, and aware of what was contrary to God's will. We should also be like this so that we're not led astray. Keep your head; be sober!

☞ **Endure hardship.** Paul sounds like Jesus when he told his disciples that they should **expect persecution**. This may go against our natural desire for a quiet, peaceful life, but it would be wise for us to expect and be ready for opposition to God's Word. You can be sure this is true today, as people are all over the map in regards to truth.

Even when we're not being persecuted, we can get drained doing ministry. So, endurance is also about ☞ **remaining faithful** even when our efforts seem wearisome and fruitless. Our faithful endurance in small acts like sharing the gospel and serving others can have eternal impact. That's why God values the good and *faithful* servant, and, **Galatians 6:9** reminds us – “Let us not grow weary in doing good.”

Discharge all the duties of your ministry. Here is a reminder that we have an obligation to discover and mature in the ministry that God has given to each one of us. We have a responsibility, like Timothy, ☞ to **be willing and available**, putting the service of God before our own interests. As I said, ministry is not easy. But we're called to endure and fulfill the work we've been given. **1 Corinthians 15:58** says, “Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord...”

*Christ has no hands but our hands, to do His work today
Christ has no feet but our feet, to lead men on the way
Christ has no tongue but our tongue, to tell men how He died
Christ has no help but our help, to bring men to God's side*

Paul's charge to Timothy is ours today. The world may twist truth, chase myths, and reject the gospel, but we must remain true because one day, we will stand before the Lord, who called us. **In this age** ☞ **with a dominance of deceit, let's Proclaim the Truth, Protect the Truth, and Persevere in the Truth.**



3-Day Devotional: Proclaiming, Protecting, & Persevering in Truth

Day 1: Proclaim God's Word

Scripture Reading: 2 Timothy 4:1-2

Reflection:

Paul charges Timothy to “preach the Word” in all seasons, with patience and careful instruction. This call isn’t just for pastors but for every believer. Sharing the gospel doesn’t require complex theology; it can be as simple as sharing how Jesus has transformed your life. Like a lighthouse keeper guiding ships to safety, we’re called to shine God’s truth consistently, even when it’s inconvenient or unpopular. Today, reflect on how you can share your faith with gentleness and respect, trusting God to work through your words.

Cross-References to Explore:

- **1 Peter 3:15:** Be ready to give a reason for your hope with gentleness and respect.
- **Romans 10:14-15:** How can people believe unless they hear the gospel?
- **Colossians 4:5-6:** Make the most of every opportunity, letting your conversation be full of grace.

Application:

Think of one person in your life who doesn’t know Jesus. Pray for an opportunity to share your story of faith with them this week, and ask God to guide your words.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, give me courage to proclaim Your Word boldly and lovingly, whether the moment feels convenient or not. Help me share the hope I have in Jesus with gentleness and respect, trusting Your Spirit to guide my words. Amen.



Day 2: Protect God's Word

Scripture Reading: 2 Timothy 4:3-4

Reflection:

Paul warns that some will turn away from truth, chasing myths that suit their desires. Today, we see this in teachings that dilute the gospel to make it more palatable. As believers, we're called to protect the integrity of God's Word, not bending it to fit cultural pressures. Like a doctor who tells a patient the truth about their condition, we must hold fast to sound doctrine, even when it's unpopular. Reflect on areas where you might be tempted to compromise truth for comfort or approval.

Cross-References to Explore:

- **Isaiah 30:10:** People demand pleasant words instead of truth.
- **John 14:6:** Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.
- **1 Timothy 4:1-2:** Some will abandon the faith, following deceiving spirits.

Application:

Examine a popular belief or saying in today's culture (e.g., "All paths lead to God"). Compare it to Scripture and journal how God's Word challenges or corrects it.

Prayer:

Lord, give me discernment to recognize false teachings and the strength to stand firm in Your truth. Help me protect the purity of Your Word, even when it's countercultural, and guide me to speak truth in love. Amen.



Day 3: Persevere in God's Word

Scripture Reading: 2 Timothy 4:5

Reflection:

Paul urges Timothy to “keep his head” and endure hardship in ministry. Sharing the gospel and living for Christ can be draining, especially when we face rejection or see little fruit. Yet, like an athlete running for the prize, we’re called to persevere, trusting God’s timing and purposes. Your faithful acts—sharing the gospel, serving others—have eternal impact. Today, consider how you can remain steadfast in your calling, even when it’s challenging.

Cross-References to Explore:

- **1 Corinthians 9:24-25:** Run the race to win the eternal prize.
- **Galatians 6:9:** Don’t grow weary in doing good, for you will reap a harvest.
- **1 Corinthians 15:58:** Your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Application:

Identify a ministry or act of service you’ve grown weary in. Commit to one small step this week to continue in it, trusting God for strength and results.

Prayer:

Father, help me persevere in sharing Your truth, even when I face opposition or weariness. Strengthen me to stay faithful, trusting that my efforts in Your name have eternal value. Amen.