

A few weeks ago I was at the Pistol club, and I was measuring a bush that slides over a barrel. I thought it might be worn out because there was too much play in it.

Now, at my shed, I've got a really good set of Mitutoyo callipers for measuring such things. But I've also got a cheaper set that live in my ute. And of course, that's the ones I had.

But I trusted them... At least I trusted them until I realised that I shouldn't.

You see, I measured the outside of the barrel, and then I measured the inside of the bush that slips over the barrel, and the inside of the bush measured smaller than the barrel, which is an impossibility, because it slips over the barrel.

And so, what I realised was the internal measuring bit wasn't calibrated correctly.

When things we rely on and trust aren't calibrated right, that's a big problem.

- *When a laser-level isn't calibrated correctly, the concrete slab won't be level;*
- *When the speedo of your car isn't calibrated correctly, you might end up with a speeding ticket;*
- *When the thermostat on the oven isn't calibrated correctly, the birthday cake gets burned, or it doesn't get*

cooked;

- *When the reloading scales aren't calibrated correctly, you end up with a hot load or a light load;*
- *When the clock isn't calibrated correctly, such as happens when one enters into or out of daylight savings, you arrive an hour early or an hour late...*

Now, Paul is writing to Timothy (Pastor of a church in Ephesus) and pretty-much what he's telling Timothy, is how leaders of the church (and particularly **teachers** in the church) need to be properly calibrated, otherwise we **teach** the wrong things, and we **do** the wrong things...

And it's not only about teachers in the church – it's about **all** Christians. How well are you and I calibrated as Christians???

Now, when it comes to calibrating a measuring device of some kind, it has to be done against a set standard...

When I was working at the Ag College, we had a weighbridge there. And I think it was about every 2nd year, a truck would arrive, and he'd park himself at right-angles to the weighbridge.

- *He'd unchain his forklift and unload it first....; and then*
- *with nothing on the weighbridge, he'd make sure that it read zero; and then*

- *with his forklift, he would lift registered weights off of his truck, and place them onto the weighbridge.*
- *Some might be about 100kg; some might be 10kg; some might be a full tonne.... But each of these weights were a known quantity...*

They'd been tested by even more accurate scales, and so these could be trusted and relied upon, to set the weighbridge correctly...

On a smaller scale, this is a 50gram weight that I use to calibrate my reloading scales...

It's a set standard, that cannot be argued with. Here's another set standard... It's a set length, to set the micrometre, so we can get it exactly right.

So we calibrate against a known true set standard. What's the known true set standard for Christians? It's the Scriptures – the Word of God. The teachings of Jesus, and the teachings of the apostles, recorded in the Scriptures.

I think most of us should realise by now, how often Jesus and the Apostles would give a warning about “falseness” in the church, because it just keeps coming up in the Scriptures over and over and over again... It seems that in the early church, there was an epidemic (pandemic) of misleading teaching...

And I'm using these terms, because they're terms we now understand:

- *epidemic is an infectious crisis;*
- *it becomes a **pandemic** when it becomes an international infectious crisis; and then*
- *after a while, it becomes “**endemic**”, which means it's become an infection we have to live with (i.e. cold/flu)....*

Now, using that analogy for doctrine in the church (BTW doctrine: teachings/what we believe)... So when it comes to doctrine, in the Scriptures, we're seeing epidemics of wrong doctrine being taught – False teaching is infectious – it spreads, and it's destructive... And wrong understandings of the Gospel is so infectious, it becomes a **pandemic** – it spreads from church to church...

But in this letter that Paul is writing to Timothy, he's saying, that when it comes to wrong doctrine, we must never allow unhealthy teachings to become “**endemic**”, where it's just allowed to continue in the church, and we try to manage the side-effects of unhealthy teaching, rather than rooting out the infectious evil that unhealthy teaching is...

And Paul (years ago) had urged Timothy to pastor the church in Ephesus, for this very reason: so that you may charge [command] certain persons not to teach any different doctrine,

And as we read on, we discover that any **different** doctrine is not only different – it's not sound (not healthy) – it's false & destructive...

As a preacher, my task, is to teach God's word, without introducing novelties, to try and amuse my listeners, and without introducing alternatives (that are not the Gospel) merely because they interest me, or because they fit my way of thinking....

And Paul was telling Timothy, "You must not let **different** doctrines be taught in the church." Because, if it's different to what the Apostles taught, it's not sound (not healthy)...

In Ephesus, there were (unnamed) certain persons who would devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations...

Now, we don't know exactly what "myths" or what "endless genealogies" he was talking about, but we **do** know how they functioned. They promoted **speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.** (2 very different things)

Myths are **untrue** – they're **fiction** – they're things that are 'guessed at', or 'made-up' And endless genealogies, is looking back into historical family lines and especially the Old Testament family lines....

And when it comes to "myths" and "speculations", there's plenty of them around today.

All one has to do is browse the shelves of the books available at Koorong... The number of books on secret codes and

*secret prophecies and whatnot,,, And some of them are written as novels,,,, But those who are **devoted** to such things, read them and believe them, and they might say to you, "There's a fair bit of truth in this. You should read it too..."*

Myths; Speculations...

Promoting speculations leads to all of the disasters that come with having an uncalibrated faith/gospel/sense of morality... If it's different/adds to God's word, it's not truth.

We live in an age where many people claim that "Truth is relative... What's true for you may not be true for me..." What a non-sense that is. That's an uncalibrated logic...

Truth is truth. And anything other than truth, is falsehood...

The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the solid rock registered standard of truth said "I am the truth"... And the Word of God (Scripture), is the rock solid, indisputable standard of truth of what the Gospel is. And by **this**, the teacher must calibrate what he teaches, and by **this**, the listener must judge what he is being taught...

"Stewardship" is a word Paul uses in relation to "doctrine" (what we teach). "Stewardship" means it's not ours to adapt/change/update or modernise... The Gospel we preach today, is **God's** gospel. It's the same age-old Gospel that Timothy taught. The Truth of the Word of God today, is as sure as what it was when it was written...

But, when a church's teaching is based on **other** sources, whether its teaching is:

- philosophy;
- psychology;
- some kind of prophecy;
- experience (I've experienced this, therefore I'm going to teach you about this, even though it's foundation is not in the bible)

or whether its source of teaching is:

- the thinking of man in some kind of systematic theology;
- feelings;
- what gives the most excitement or is most popular;
- words of some celebrity Christian (they're famous so they must be right);

When a church allows teaching based on sources **other** than the truth standard of the Word of God, it's nothing other than uncalibrated speculation... (false measure)

And when a person or a whole church shifts their focus to speculations/theories/novelties,,, that's a 'telling' sign that (deep-down) they have a discontentment with God...

And this, I cannot understand (to be discontent with the true God/Gospel)... As Paul says V¹⁷ *To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

This is the praise that he pours out in response to the Gospel, as the Gospel is... Why would anyone of a true faith ever feel

a need to add some myths and speculations, to tweak the Gospel a bit... Why would one have such a deep-down discontentment with God or with God's word, that they feel they need to add to it?

This must not be. **Charge** those who would dabble into speculations – **Command** them “You cannot do that in the church”...

Now, we touched on V5 last week and I said that we'll probably keep coming back to V5 because it sets forth the aim we have, or the goal we have... The aim, or the goal of our charge is “Love”...

... And if I don't understand that “rooting out falsehood to let truth flourish” is “Love”, than I'm **not** seeing things the way that God sees them, and I need to be recalibrated...

Our love issues from a:

1. pure heart;
2. good conscience;
3. sincere faith...

Jesus said:

Matthew 5:8 (ESV)

⁸ “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

How do we become “pure in heart”? Well, we know that our hearts become pure by the forgiveness of our sin by the blood of Jesus on the cross... but I think it's more than this...

Let's not lose the perspective of what it truly means to be “born again”. To be born again, basically means that we have a heart transplant (now of course, I'm not talking about that thing that pumps blood around our body) I'm talking about the very centre of our being...

To be born again is not just a change of destination (I was going to hell, now I'm going to heaven) – to be born again is a complete rebirth of our personhood, where the centre of our being was once a heart of flesh, but now we're born of the Spirit. And the Holy Spirit in our hearts, is what gives us a pure heart...

It's where our desires are **Godly** desires because we're not craving things of the flesh – we're craving things of the Spirit...

And so, the fruit of the Spirit (love; joy; peace; patience; kindness; goodness; faithfulness; gentleness; self-control) isn't something that “I suppose I'd better try and do some of that” – it becomes our default attitudes of the heart...

So, love issues from a pure heart, changed because the Spirit is in us... **Secondly**, it comes from a good conscience.

Now, **all** people (unless you happen to be what's called a “psychopath”), have a conscience – they have an innate feeling/knowledge of what's right and what's wrong.

And usually when we think of “having a good conscience”, we’re thinking of “a clear conscience”. That means:

- I’ve acted well, according what I know as right and wrong;
- I’m good with myself;
- I sleep well at night;

But that’s not a **good** conscience... One can have a ‘clear’ conscience, without having a ‘good’ conscience. A person’s conscience may be clear, but it’s clear, not because they’ve done good, but because their conscience is bad – Their conscience is in dire need of calibration according to the set standard. And what is the standard? God; The Word of God...

When we get to 4:2, there’s going to be a warning for those who wander from the truth, and he says that their consciences are seared... Their consciences are not good – they’ve been blistered – burned (lost their calibration)...

And so, a Good conscience, isn’t about feeling self-righteous (I’ve achieved my standard) – a **good** conscience, is a conscience that’s been re-calibrated to God’s standard of God. I’ve shifted from my evil standard (the standard of men) to the **true** stand of good (the standard of God).

So, this love issues from a pure heart; a good conscience; and **thirdly**, a sincere faith.

A sincere faith, is the **genuineness** of the faith we profess.

- a) we truly believe it; and
- b) **what** we believe is the genuine Christian faith.

Alright, so love (true love) issues from:

1. a pure heart (a heart of the spirit, not of the flesh);
2. a good conscience (not being satisfied with my evil conscience)... It's a conscience in line with God's standard; **and**
3. a sincere faith – that what we truly believe, is the genuine Christian faith.

and that is where true love comes from.

And Paul tells Timothy, that it's the **lack** of these, that is the source of the problems in the Ephesian church. ⁶ **Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion**

There's 2 key actions here: "Swerve" and "wander"...

A person swerves (this is an intentional thing)... It may begin, with something that seems good – a quest for greater knowledge, but they swerve away from the plain, simple teachings of the Apostles,,, and once they've done this, they've deserted the standard. They've deserted the word of God that calibrates what we believe.

And once the calibration is lost, there's nothing keeping us on track – we wander away...

If you've ever been bushwalking, if you leave the designated track, there's nothing to guide you, and you end up wandering...

And when a person's heart is of the flesh, and when a person's conscience is not calibrated to God's standard, and when the faith isn't the genuine Christian faith, it's like wandering in the scrub. And we wander off from what's important, into vain discussion...

In other words, life without these virtues, leads to "reduced love" and "meaningless chatter"...

And it seems that what drove the false teachers in Ephesus was their own intellectual satisfaction. They craved to be seen as teachers of the Law, but they didn't understand what they were teaching. Now, there's a little hint here – to be "teachers of the Law", is primarily about studying and interpreting the Old Testament (particularly the first 5 books) (Pentateuch – The Book of The Law). Gen; Ex; Lev; Num; Deut.

And so they presented themselves as "We're experts in the Law", and they were brimming in confidence, and they would speak very confidently about "this means this" and "that means that", but they had no idea...

And we see this happening today, Most of the name-it-and-claim-it prosperity theology looks to the promises made to Israel (in The Book of The Law) about the blessings for them in the promised land, and these self-proclaimed experts very confidently teach, "We have to claim these promises today"...

They have no idea how to correctly handle the Old Testament...

Today (like then), certain persons lose their Christian bearings, by **wrongly** using the Jewish law.

And Paul says something astonishing here:

we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully
That's not the astonishing bit – we know this – the Word of God (even the Old Testament Law) is good, **if** we use it in the right way...

⁹ understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane,

The main purpose of the Law, is restraint from doing evil... Even the promised land, is intended as a restraint from doing evil. In the Pentateuch, there's blessings and there's curses. The blessing is, that if Israel were faithful to God and lived in a Godly way, they would be blessed. But if they were evil, they would be cursed and driven from the land...

The main purpose of the Law, is restraint from evil... And the examples given are the:

- ungodly & sinners;
- unholy & profane;

And it spills over into actions:

- those who strike their parents;
- murderers;

- sexually immoral (that's any sex outside of marriage between a man and a woman);
- practicing homosexuality (BTW, to be tempted isn't the sin – it's practicing any of these things that is sin);
- enslavers (kidnappers);
- liars;
- perjurers

and then he throws in 'a catch-all': **whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine**

(or "whatever else conflicts with [or opposed to] healthy teaching")...

Alright, so the Old Testament Law, provided a set standard, for those whose calibration is faulty.

- If I can tell a lie and my conscience is clear, I have a bad conscience – it needs calibrating to God's standard.
- If a person feels no remorse for pre-marital sex, or living with their boyfriend or girlfriend, that person has a bad conscience – it needs re-calibrating to God's standards.
- If a person is engaged in a homosexual relationship, and feels there's nothing wrong with it, their conscience needs re-calibrating to God's standard...

And I've told you this about myself, only a few months ago, God re-calibrated my conscience to His set standard, and I no longer speed...

But let's not forget, we don't live under Law – we live under Grace.

And the difference between “Law” and “Sound doctrine” (healthy teachings), is like the difference between having your stomach stapled and eating healthy in the first place... The Law stops you from doing what you want to be doing, whereas “healthy teaching” (with a heart surrendered to God) recalibrates our very conscience through God's word...

And Paul is so aware of this... He remembers that he was once the worst of sinners... He used to believe he was doing good things for God, hunting down Christians and having them imprisoned and even executed...

- His conscience was clear, but his conscience was wrong...
- He was sincere, but he was sincerely wrong.
- He believed his heart was pure, but it was flesh and not spirit...

And if God can change a bloke like Paul, He can change you and I.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

And Paul received mercy for this reason, so that we would know that we can receive mercy too.

Paul wasn't always this great Godly man – in the grace of God, he was saved and re-calibrated. And we can be too...

And so, Paul is commanding Timothy, to keep at it... To keep fighting the good fight (wage the good warfare). Remember, Ephesus is in the midst of a spiritual battle. Wherever the calibration is wrong and unhealthy teachings are endemic in the church, a spiritual battle needs to be waged....

How? ¹⁹ holding faith and a good conscience. Believing truth and being calibrated to God's standard...

In V20, two men (Hymenaeus & Alexander) are named... Paul says he's handed [them] over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

That means their sin was so great, and they were unrepentant, and so they were excommunicated from the church (you're not welcome here)... Their crime???

They rejected "a good conscience"... Their conscience was to their own standard, and not calibrated to God's, and Paul says, by this, they have made shipwreck of their faith,

They totally ruined their faith because their consciences were seared – they set their own standard, rather than God's standard...

And this is why warnings against different doctrines (unhealthy teachings) are so prominent and so common in the

New Testament... And this is why Paul is telling Timothy, you must not let a different doctrine be taught, because it's wrong, and it leads to a shipwrecked faith (total ruination)...

Let's praise God for His mercy;
Let's praise God for His grace...

Let's praise God, that Jesus died to save the worst of sinners, even us...

And let's be filled with the Holy Spirit, to have:

- a **pure** heart;
- a **good** conscience;
- a sincere faith

¹⁷ To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen.