

**Church Matters**  
**Studies in Paul's letter to Titus**  
**Truth Matters!**  
**Titus 2:1-15 October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2022**  
**Preacher: Pastor Roy Summers**

This past week Steve and I signed, on behalf of Manor Park Church, a "Declaration of Truth." We belong to a group of around 640 local churches called the FIEC, The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches.

And each year we are required to declare that we continue to believe orthodox biblical apostolic truth. Truth matters so much to our group of churches that if one day we changed our beliefs, we would no longer be welcome in the FIEC.

It was a real joy to sign that document, because truth matters to me, and to us at Manor Park Church, and this morning we learn why truth is so crucial.

We're making our way through Paul's little letter to Titus and we've arrived at the first verse of chapter 2: "*You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.*"

Paul says to everyone who teaches in the church—you must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. And by implication to every believer, Paul says, "be careful to listen to truth and believe truth and love truth."

Let' remember what's going on here... Paul has travelled right across the island of Crete preaching the Good News about Jesus; lots of people have believed the message and become followers of Jesus Christ. They began meeting together in homes—as all the first Christians did and no doubt they were filled with joy as they fellowshiped together.

But in spite of the joy, false teachers had infiltrated the little churches teaching all sorts of nonsense. And many young Christians, had fallen for the meaningless talk of these false teachers. Whole households were being spiritually led astray. We can imagine a false teacher rocking up to Sunday meeting in one of these homes, this guy sounds so impressive with his clever myths and man-made rules; the baby Christians don't know any better, and before long that whole household believes him and are led away from the Gospel! What turmoil!

Paul was pulled away from the island on urgent Gospel business, and so he leaves his trusty assistant Titus to sort out the problems. Titus must rebuke and refute the false teachers, and, here's our one verse for today, he "*must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.*"

"Titus, the remedy for all this false teaching in Crete is true doctrine"

This command is not only for all preachers and teachers, whether on a Sunday here or in our home groups or in any of our outreach works—Explorers, Trailblazers and Senior and More, it's also for every believer. Make sure you listen to sound doctrine.

Let's explore Paul's command together with the Lord's help.

## #1 What? *What is sound doctrine?*

*A is for Apostolic—sound doctrine is apostolic*

What do we mean? Sound teaching comes from the apostles, which means from the NT which was written by the apostles and their close associates. In Acts 2 we read that the first Christians “*devoted themselves to the apostles teaching.*” (verse 42). But since the apostles are always quoting from the OT, we can say that the teaching of the apostles is the teaching of Scripture.

Sound doctrine is teaching from the Bible.

What does the Bible teach? That's what we believe. Not what the scholars or the wise men or philosophers of our age teach, but what the apostles of Jesus taught. If it's in the Bible we believe it!

This “A” is the main definition of sound doctrine; sound doctrine is apostolic. But we should add a small B and a small C.

*B is for balanced—sound doctrine is balanced.*

Sound preachers and sound churches teach from the whole of the Bible, their preaching is balanced. Paul wrote to Timothy: “*All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*” (2 Timothy 3:16)

Every single book in the Bible, the 39 of the OT and the 27 of the NT, is inspired by God and useful!

There have always been individuals and movements in history which have cut out parts of the Bible they didn't like. Marcion, a false teacher in the 100s cut out the OT and only kept Luke's Gospel and Paul's letters in his 14 book mini Bible! In our day, many churches want to cut out parts of Paul's letters because they are “politically incorrect”.

But sound doctrine accepts the whole of Scripture.

*C is for complete—sound doctrine is complete*

I am now thinking of preaching truth that is difficult to preach, either because of individuals or situations in the local congregation, or because of trends in the culture of the day. Suppose there was a rich person in the congregation, or a person who loved money, it might be tempting to skip over certain parts of James 2 and 1 Timothy 6, but that would render the teaching of God's Word

incomplete. “You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.” (Acts 20:20) and verse 27, “For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you **the whole** counsel of God.”

Have you ever got cross at the preacher for what he was saying? Because he was pointing out sin in your life, unforgiveness, or a wrong attitude, or a wrong pattern of behaviour? That’s as it should be—if the teacher is sound!

Someone took a friend to hear their pastor. The visitor rebuked their friend and told them they’d never come again! “You must have told that preacher all about me!” It wasn’t true, it wasn’t true, but the preacher had mentioned about sins that clearly hit the bull’s eye.

There is something seriously wrong with preaching that neatly avoids all the sins of the congregation and the particular sins of the age.

Don’t be surprised if the Word of God, not only encourages you, but also finds you out.

That’s the ABC of sound doctrine, but how do we maintain sound doctrine, from year to year?

## #2 How?

### How can we maintain sound doctrine?

Maintaining truth is a more urgent issue today than it has been for many decades. For two major reasons:

#### 1) *The real possibility of being led astray online*

First of all, the real possibility of coming across false teachers online. Anyone can set up a YouTube channel and spread error all over the world. We have had Radio and TV for decades but accessing error is far easier now that almost 90% of the world's population has a smartphone.

#### 2) *A culture of acceptance*

But perhaps even more damaging than the internet—and perhaps they are connected—is the global atmosphere of “tolerance.” It’s no longer acceptable to call someone a “heretic” or a “false teacher.” People who do that are called “bigots.”

Some of us will remember from our teens and twenties how we often heard talks at church about the false cults and sects such as the Mormons, the Jehovah’s Witnesses (who are back after Covid in all the towns and cities of Europe), the Church of Scientology, The Children of God, and so on. But today it’s unpopular to call *this group* “true” and *that group* “false.”

It takes real courage to swim against the tide, to run against the grain. And yet the internet and the pervading culture of inclusiveness are the very reasons we need to lovingly maintain sound doctrine. How can we do that? Can I suggest three simple ways:

### 1) Love Truth

Be as passionate about the truth as some people are about football, or whatever sport or hobby takes their fancy! Paul warns in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 that when the man of lawlessness comes—a particularly evil man at the end of time—he will deceive many, *“they perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved..”* (verse 10)

### 2) Adopt a “Berean attitude to truth”

When Paul and Silas were preaching in Berea, we read, *“Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”* (Acts 17:11):

Don’t be gullible, test the spirits, whether it’s a sermon on Sunday here or a podcast, ask yourself always “Does this line up with the Bible?”

### 3) Sing the truth!

The best Christian songs, whether old or new, are the ones whose words you can trace right back to the Bible, whose words are doctrinally faithful. It’s the reason we sing older songs as well as new ones: truth is the criteria! How do we teach and believe “sound doctrine”? We guard the words we sing.

*“Christians don't tell lies—they just go to church and sing them!”* said AW Tozer

That is too strong, and it’s not true of us here, but I know where the American preacher is coming from.

## #3 Why?

### Why should we believe and teach sound doctrine?

The clue is in the Greek word for “sound” which is *hygiainousē*, from which we get our word “hygienic.” Sound doctrine is healthy.

I recently read in a science magazine that most of us do not eat enough fibre. The helpful bacteria in our gut use fibre to produce fatty acids that protect us from various diseases. Adults need around 30g per day, said this article. So guess what breakfast cereal Yvonne bought this week? Bran Flakes!

In the same way, believing sound doctrine makes a healthy Christian and teaching sound doctrine leads to a healthy church community.

If, for example, you and I believe the apostolic doctrine of the sovereignty of God—that God our Father has sovereign control of our lives, and that nothing—absolutely nothing—happens to us that he does not permit. If we can truly say: *“we know that in all things God works for the good of those that love him, who have been called according to his purpose”* (Romans 8:28)

The doctrine of God’s sovereignty will keep us spiritually healthy in seasons of deep trial.

Some trials are long trials. They said in September 1939 when the second world war broke out “it will be over before Christmas” but it wasn't, over Christmas 1939 or Christmas 40 or Christmas 41, or Christmas 42 or 43. And some trials we pass through are long trials.

If we believe that our Father in heaven truly and deeply loves us and if we believe that he has allowed this trial to come upon us for our good and for his glory, Oh what a difference it will make!

Instead of blaming God and descending into a spiral of bitter disappointment, we shall instead, with the help of the Holy Spirit, wait patiently on the Lord, trusting his wisdom and relying on his grace to sustain us.

Believing sound doctrine makes us spiritually healthy!

Believing truth is how we begin our spiritual journey, “*If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*” (John 8:31-32). And believing sound doctrine is how we continue to be healthy followers of Christ until the Lord calls us home.