

## The Task of Teaching

Nov. 15, 2015

Brian R. Wipf

(READ 2 Tim. 4:1-5)

Paul gives some very important insight in this passage about human nature. He says a time is coming when people will no longer endure sound teaching. Sound teaching is Paul's way of saying teaching that's true and correct; teaching that's in accordance with God's truth. Why? Why would people turn away from sound teaching? Why wouldn't people want to hear and believe the truth; why believe something that's false and misleading? He tells us why. It's because people want teaching that suits their passions. People have desires, we have cravings; and in order to have desires and cravings satisfied and while still maintaining a clear conscience, we look for teachers of God to tell us what we want to believe. Even if it's a lie. That's how much we need a Lord and Savior. We need a Savior to rescue us from ourselves. And we need a Lord to keep telling us what's true about ourselves, about Him and about this world so that we are steered back to him as our fleshly desires want to lead us astray.

Friends, are you blind to this temptation? Are you blind to the reality that the earthly, fleshly part of you wants to hear what you already believe so that you can keep your favorite idols close at hand? We're like Gollum from *The Lord of the Rings*; we all have something we call *our precious* that, if we're honest, we're not about to give up without a fight. And for some, the commitment to having these desires and cravings satisfied is so strong they wander away from truth into myths and false teachings.

The messages that I would label as false teachings today are all focused on having some sort of earthly satisfaction now. Self-esteem *today*; wealth *today*; fulfilled relationships *today*; the attainment of my dreams *today*. Acceptance of others *today*. The truth of the scriptures, sound doctrine, does not satisfy the passions of the flesh; they don't. The greatness of God and not man; the hope of resurrection; union with Christ; growth through sufferings. These things do not satisfy fleshly cravings. That's why a lot of popular internet preachers of the day don't preach such things. They may "believe" them; they may give lip service to them. But that's not the heart of their message because it doesn't tickle the ears of their hearers.

There is a remedy to false teaching, which always is looking for cracks in the church of Jesus Christ to find it's way in. The remedy is sound doctrine; it's the faithful teaching of God's truth. Paul tells Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:16, "Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers." Doing what? What saves yourself and your hearers (key word is *hearers*)? What are they hearing that saves them? Teaching! Sound teaching. Teachings of the faith; good doctrine. Jesus Christ saves his church from the schemes of the devil by the teaching of sound doctrine. And - let's not take this for granted - this sound doctrine is found in the pages of God's inspired word.

So, where do we get this teaching from? The church of Jesus Christ is to receive their primary teaching in sound doctrine from their elders. While there may be other places to hear and read about sound doctrine, I want to beg you to believe, my dear brothers and sisters, that the primary place God designed for you to receive teaching in sound doctrine to save you from your own passions and desires is from the elders of your church. Let's utilize the wonderful resources available to us today in our world; let's also be on guard against false teaching. And let's prioritize the teaching of God's word found in our local church.

Today and next Sunday we are going to look at the responsibilities, the tasks of the elders of the church of Jesus Christ. As we've learned the last two Sundays, the Lord's church is to be led by a collection of elders. These elders are to be humble, godly, courageous men who can teach God's word and who can manage their own households well because they are given the charge to manage the church of God. The first responsibility, the first task of an elder concerns the teaching of sound doctrine to the congregation. And I'm praying that the introduction we just heard stirs your soul to want to hear more specifically what God has planned for his church in this regard. The faithful teaching of his word saves the body of Christ. There's not much more important than that.

This responsibility given to elders to teach the church of Jesus Christ is best seen in Titus 1. We read this section last week when we studied the qualifications of an elder. Look at vs. 9 (READ).

Paul's word to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3 says that an elder must be "able to teach." His word to Titus here in chapter 1 spells out why. He must be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and rebuke those who contradict it. Put 2 and 2 together, FBC. An elder is to give instruction in sound doctrine. That's a responsibility of the elders of a church.

1 Timothy 5:17 says, "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching." There are some elders in the church who spend a particular amount of time preaching and teaching the word of God to the members of a church. Obviously, they need to hold firm the word of God as trustworthy. They can't be wondering if it's true; they can't be questioning if it's right. No, there's this conviction and even joy that the Word of God is powerful and effective and truthful; he believes strongly that the Word does not lead God's people astray. That doesn't mean he's got everything figured out; but he does have confidence in what God has clearly revealed in his word.

There's a correcting part to teaching, too; did you see that? An elder must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. The word "rebuke" here is a strong word; it carries the idea of shaming or admonishing someone in error. Sadly, sometimes we can get stuck in pride and insist our way and our beliefs are right no matter what. And when that happens, elders are to provide some strong correction. But it doesn't always have to be that way. We might contradict sound doctrine unknowingly with a heart ready to be corrected. Humility, obviously, is

an important quality at this moment. Do we want correction? Will we welcome a loving rebuke? This is the task of an elder; and of course, if he is a loving, kind shepherd like our Lord Jesus, he will be sensitive to the receptiveness of a church member for correction. To those eager for correction, the word of instruction should be soft and encouraging. If someone is stubborn, the rebuke might need to be stronger. And the correction also will depend on the nature of the error. If it's a minor error on an issue that's not central, again, a soft and compassionate word is appropriate. If the error is egregious and possibly even is leading other astray, it needs to be stronger and swift.

There once was a gentleman who came to FBC. He was seeing a woman who came here who has since moved away. I always tried to give him a warm welcome and call him by his name; he introduced himself as Mark. So, Sunday after Sunday when I would see the two together, I'd say, "Good morning, Mark; how was the week?" If I saw him around town I'd say, "Hello, Mark." Eventually, he stopped coming and I asked his friend, "So, you and Mark are no longer together." "Nope," she said. It didn't work out. And right when I was leaving she says to me, "Oh, and his name isn't Mark." I was shocked. I said, "What? I've been calling him Mark this whole time! How come you didn't tell me?" "Oh, it was no big deal. It was something funny we all laughed about."

I needed to be corrected, rebuked with the truth. I think I would have been open to that as embarrassing as that was. I want to ask you: would you like to be corrected? Would you like to be rebuked if your thoughts and beliefs about God are not in accordance with sound doctrine? Do you think that you've got pretty much everything figured out, or do you rightly and humbly see that you're like everybody else in the family of God; still in progress and still in need for correction? How you answer this question (would you like to be corrected?) will determine the kind of growth you'll experience as a Christian and it also will make an impact on the kind of relationship you have with the elders of your church.

I would submit to you, my brothers and sisters, that you receiving teaching from the elders and teachers of your local church is as important to your spiritual development and growth as your own Bible reading. That's a big claim. We champion Bible reading here at FBC, don't we? We pass out the reading plans; we encourage it often. God has shaped me in highly significant ways over the years from my own Bible reading. But in addition to that, we need the teachings and corrections of others. And do you know why? Because we are so susceptible to self-deception. We are so blind to our blind spots. We just can't see them. And here's what that means: when we read the Bible on our own because of our blind spots we not able to apply the truth where we need to. We can so easily just read the word without feeling it's convicting power; or we read a passage and interpret it in such a way that suits our desires.

When we receive teaching from others, they are able to help us see the truth in the scriptures in ways we are not always able to see it for ourselves. The key verse for this is Heb. 3:12-13, which says, "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart,

leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

You can see all the elements of what I just said in this passage, right? We need to be careful about falling away from God. That happens when sin deceives me; when sin deceives me my heart gets hard. What's the remedy? The exhortation and teaching of my brothers and sisters in Christ. I need someone other than me telling me the truth. Now, in this passage we are all to do that for each other. You don't need an official title to do this. But if we need this from one another, how much more do we need this from the elders who are given the specific responsibility to teach sound doctrine to the church?

So, what do these things mean for you? Look for the teaching of God from elders and teachers in your church. Put yourself under their teaching. That's both a mindset and an action, right? It's a mindset in that you come to services, SS classes, bible studies and things like that ready to be taught. You're looking for it. If you're scratching your head a tad thinking, "But, Brian, what do you think I'm doing here?" There are all kinds of attitudes we can bring to times of teaching. We might come looking to be amused. If it doesn't have funny jokes or emotional stories the teaching's no good. Good teaching includes some humor and effective illustrations and examples, but what's your mindset? Some people come to critique. I confess, this one is hard for me. I'm a teacher and preacher and when I hear other people doing it it's hard for me not to think, "Oh, I would have said it this way. I don't know if I agree with that." So, I have to tell myself, "Brian, be a learner," otherwise, I'm tempted to critique. Some come to be stroked. Tell me what I already believe and know to feel better about myself.

We ought to come to times of teaching ready to be taught and to learn. We should have these thoughts: God, show me where I might be off. Help me see where I'm mistaken. God, correct my attitude; change my desires. Help me see something about you and about myself that I've been missing. God, if I hear things today that I already know, help me see how important they are in my life with you. Thank you, God, for the reminder of these things again. That's all attitude, isn't it? When we come like that we are ready to learn.

Secondly, you have to take the right action steps, too. Meaning, you have to do what's actually required to learn. You have to come. How can you be taught if you don't come? How can you glean from the wisdom of our elders and benefit from their teaching if you don't call on them, go out to lunch together and say, "I could use some help with...?"

You need to listen and be attentive. You can't surf on your iPhone while Pastor Tim is teaching; you can't day dream about the Packer game. It even helps to have your own Bible on your lap during SS or during the sermon. These things make a difference. Tim and I, as the vocational elders here at FBC have recommended books to read. I know there are good books out there that we haven't read, but the one's we have found we believe will really serve your souls well. I want to encourage you to read them; if you're a bible study leader, we encourage

you to go to the list... not our sake, but for your sake and for the sake of those you will soon teach.

Let 1 Timothy 4:16 ring in your hearts and minds, "Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers." God uses sound doctrine to save his church. The task of teaching sound doctrine primarily is given to a church's elders. Therefore, God, make me eager for the words of teaching from my elders in one-on-one discipleship, marriage enrichment times with my spouse, small groups or Bible studies, Sunday school and Sunday sermons. And when we do, we'll experience God's saving power for his church.

Key verse: 1 Timothy 4:16 ~ Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers

#### Questions for the week

- Has your consideration and value of sound doctrine changed at all today? If so, in what way?
- What hinders you from seeking the teaching and encouragement from FBC elders?
- What change do you want to make to more regularly hear and receive teaching from your elders?