

## Real Knowledge in Confusing Times

1 Timothy 3:14-16; Acts 20:26-35

*so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth.*

### 1 Timothy 3:15

#### Introduction:

**What's going on around us? What should we do about it? Why are things changing and seemingly getting worse?**

Two stories flooded our national news this week, and they were unfortunately both sad and too familiar. The most recent was the tragic martyrdom of 9 believers in a Charleston S.C. church, where 9 souls who gathered to study God's Word, 9 image bearers sought the Lord in prayer, and 9 saints welcomed a visitor to sit with them for a 45 minute meeting. This man was filled with sinful hate and confusion and believed this group, though he had no known interaction toward them personally, was a reason for his unhappiness or for the ills of this world or whatever other convoluted reason that went through his mind, decided to gun this group down, killing them in a way that would be known by all, based on the fact that they were a different ethnicity.

Our reactions should be consistent and united: *we are saddened; we feel outrage, sorrow, and indignation.* However, what we should not feel is a sense that this was random or unexpected somehow. Murder of righteousness is nothing new. In fact, Cain killed his brother Able in Genesis 4 because he was moved by anger, thinking that Able was the roadblock to his happiness. This is exactly what **James 4:1-2** says is the source of murder: *"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you **murder.** You covet and cannot obtain, so you **fight and quarrel.** You do not have because you do not ask."*

The second story in the beginning of the week was a confused woman who made national news because, though she was born into a certain ethnicity, self-proclaimed to be another, and for the sake of expediency and pragmatism, lied about her ethnic origins to obtain certain jobs and positions she desired. Her claim was though she was born a certain way, she believed she was really something else, so it should be accepted by all what SHE believed she was, not what she was born into. Compound this with the transgender movement, which makes the same claims, it seems like the world around us is going crazy! But is it anything new? The book of Colossians was written in part to combat a philosophy of teaching called Gnosticism, which basically said the material world is bad and one needed special knowledge to unlock the mystery outside of ourselves. Though movements today may not be as sophisticated, the logic is still the same:

*"The "I am a perpetual victim mentality" fits a central theme of Gnosticism: I am a victim of circumstance, entombed in a body, trapped in a world of matter through no fault of my own. I don't need to be redeemed. I have done nothing wrong. I only need revelatory knowledge (gnosis) about how great I am, hailing from the light world beyond, containing the divine spark, at least equal (if not superior) to the Creator of this world. We live in a semi-Gnostic culture that hates the call to repentance and the demand to lose one's life and take up one's cross." Robert Gagnon commenting on the recent story of Rachel Dolezal*

**If this is nothing new, and these things happened and continue to happen, what should we do?**

### 1. We remember what is REALLY going on

**Ephesians 6:10-12** Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, **that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.** <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against **flesh and blood**, but against the **rulers**, against the **authorities**, against the **cosmic powers** over this present darkness, against the **spiritual forces of evil** in the **heavenly places**.

- **Our enemy wants us to focus on the wrong enemy** - Our main problem is NOT other people who we are called to love, it is the fact that there is an unseen war raging around us. When people are the enemy, we no longer will seek to love but instead respond in kind to the evil toward us. Our enemy is not one we defeat, because he's already been defeated, but one we must stand firm against
- **Our enemy wants us to use the wrong weapons** – Our weapons are not political, military strength, or authoritative power. Our weapon is the Word of God and the declaration of the gospel to change the hearts and minds of people
- **Our enemy wants us to respond in fear, ignorance, and anger** – These responses not only mean we no longer function the way God has called us, but forces us to be **joyless and ineffective** in our time on this earth
- **Our enemy wants us to forget Who has the real power** – Jesus has won! He has already put every enemy under His foot. The one who prowls around like a lion is dangerous because he has nothing to lose and your pain to gain. We are on the winning side, and if we don't taste that here, we will have an eternity to bask in the glory of God's sovereign reign over all the earth

**Ephesians 1:18-23** *having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,* <sup>19</sup> *and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might* <sup>20</sup> *that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and **seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,*** <sup>21</sup> *far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.* <sup>22</sup> *And he put all things under his feet and **gave him as head over all things to the church,*** <sup>23</sup> *which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

When we understand this, we can do what Paul asked for prayer to do: **be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might (Eph. 6:10), to stand (6:11), and boldly proclaim the mystery of the gospel (6:19)**

### 2. We remember that **OPPOSITION TO CHRIST and TRUTH is normative**

**Acts 20:26-31** *Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you,* <sup>27</sup> *for I did not shrink from **declaring** to you the whole counsel of God.* <sup>28</sup> **Pay careful attention** to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, **to care for the church of God**, which he obtained with his own blood. <sup>29</sup> *I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;* <sup>30</sup> *and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.* <sup>31</sup> *Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears.*

**Fierce wolves** will attack the church, and the most savage and dangerous of these will be FROM WITHIN, meaning that they will SEEM LIKE and CALL THEMSELVES fellow believers, but will have a completely different agenda. They will twist the truth and seek to move disciples away from the truth into a

plausible yet destructive version. *Is this happening today? Where have you seen it? Where will you continue to see it?* Every time you hear a phrase: “I know the Bible says \_\_\_\_\_, but since we are called to love, I now believe \_\_\_\_\_,” this is evidence of savagery in our midst. What is the antidote?

- **Declare the whole counsel of Scripture (27)** – we are not to shrink away from any difficult, seemingly offensive, or seemingly incongruent passages of Scripture. We are to declare both God’s love and wrath, His grace and justice, His mercy and holiness.
- **Be aware of ourselves and God’s flock (28)** – We are to understand that those who teach are also sheep, prone to wander and error, and must be sure they do not move toward either. We must be aware of the deception out in the world and walk with constant vigilance in God’s Word.
- **Care for God’s church, both by nourishment and protection (28)** – We must remember the war is raging around us, that there is no let up, and must seek to care by equipping, confronting, nourishing, declaring, and teaching God’s Word.

### 3. We remember God designed the church to thrive in the midst of this

**1 Timothy 3:14-16** *I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, <sup>15</sup> if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth. <sup>16</sup> Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.*

In order to thrive in all that God has called us to, we must **know what we believe, know why we believe it, so that we know where we are going so we can discern how to actually do it and get there.**

This is what Paul wanted Timothy to know in the midst of a broken system, a sinful world, and a relentless enemy. We have to know what we are about to walk with confidence, to stand firm, and to accomplish what God actually has us here for. **We need a robust, practical, full bodied understanding and conviction of the church – her purpose and mission – so that we can properly engage with grace.** This means that we understand the church in terms of a relationship: a new relationship to God because of the work of Christ, a new relationship to each other in terms of a family, and new relationship to the world, whom we are called to not fear but engage with the gracious declaration of the gospel.

This is why we are going to take the next several weeks to unpack why we do what we do here at GBC as part of God’s church. We are not flippant about anything (hopefully), but should give the reasons why we have hope in crazy times and what truths we cling to in the midst of confusing times. We have answers and solutions and put hands and feet to the reality of Christ. We speak the truth and manifest love in a world’s system that is broken and crumbling. As we have different men come and share week to week, they will be unpacking aspects of **6 different values or distinctive qualities that we are committed to and that unite us together in Christ .**

- **The Gospel** (God saves us by Himself from Himself unto Himself for Himself)
  - We focus on the redemptive work of Jesus Christ who brought dead people destined for hell and God’s wrath into a reconciled, loving, worshipful relationship with God through His death on the cross as a perfect, atoning substitute for us. (John 1:29; Ephesians 2:1-3; Romans 3:23-26; 5:8-10; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21). God calls us by His grace to believe

in Christ by faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), to turn from our sin by repentance (2 Timothy 2:25; Luke 24:46-47), to be forgiven of all of our sin (Acts 10:43; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:13-14; Hebrews 10:11-18) and follow Him with our whole life (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; Luke 9:23; Matthew 10:37-39). Our lives are no longer our own, but we live now for His glory, according to the grace that He continues to give us, through the leading of His Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 2:9-10; Galatians 2:20, 5:16-18; Ephesians 5:18; Colossians 3:1-4; 1 Corinthians 15:10-11)

**This sets our course both in direction and breadth**

**This means that we live everyday applying the realities of the gospel in a transformed life**

- **God's Absolute Sovereignty** (God has power and authority over all things)
  - We focus on the fact that God does everything in this world for His glory. He is absolutely sovereign over our salvation (Ephesians 1:3-12), our suffering (1 Peter 3:17) and our lives (James 4:13-17). God was sovereign over Jesus' death on the cross (Acts 2:23) and over His resurrection (Acts 2:24). It is because God is sovereign that we have hope of the future (1 Peter 1:3-5), confidence in our mission (Matthew 28:18), and live without fear toward the Satanic forces against us (Ephesians 1:19-23). We strive to rest in the fact that God does all things in this world for His glory, and in turn, everything is for our good.

**This truth allows us to walk in assurance**

**This truth allows us to walk in confidence with joy**

**This truth means we can have faith in all circumstances**

**This truth frees us to glorify God in all areas of life**

- **The Sufficiency of God's Word** (Including expository preaching/teaching and counseling)
  - We teach, preach, and counsel from God's Word alone, since it is God's Word that is sufficient for every true need, in order to display the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Bible is the means that God uses to bring salvation (1 Pet. 1:23; James 1:18) and growth for every believer (2 Timothy 3:15-16; 1 Peter 2:1-3). We are dependent on the Holy Spirit who guides us into all truth and enlightens our eyes to the knowledge of God (John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13). We strive to teach what God has declared, not our own thoughts and opinions.

**Preaching, counseling, and teaching in an expositional method is the only way to unlock and unleash the power of Scripture in our lives** – The role of the church is to uphold the truth, proclaim it, and equip people in it.

**The Bible is not a coffee table book** – It is not to be read on occasion because we are bored or there's nothing else to do in the living room. It is an essential part of a healthy diet, and when it is neglected, Spiritual apathy and deception follow close behind.

- **Leadership by Shepherding Leaders** (for the nourishment & protection of the body)

- We believe God gives every church all the resources it needs to accomplish its goal of glorifying God (1 Corinthians 1:7-9), including qualified leaders. God has given men of character to lead, know, teach, and protect the people of the church (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4). This is done by loving example and gentle instruction. The goal of the congregation is to submit to their leadership (Hebrews 13:17), support them (1 Timothy 5:17-19) and respect them (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

**These are charged to nourish the Body through the Word by working AMONG the sheep**

**These are charged to protect from people and ideologies from without**

- **Purity of the Body** (including church discipline/restoration)
  - Though salvation by Jesus Christ means we are dead to sin (Romans 6:7) and are no longer slaves to sin (Romans 6:20), we still live in this fleshly body, which means we still struggle with sin every day (Galatians 5:17). This means we need each other in our battle to believe the gospel in every aspect of life in order to please God in trusting Him in obedience (Hebrews 3:12-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 1 John 2:3). This means that there are times we must confront each other on clear sin (1 Corinthians 4:6; Galatians 6:1-3; Matthew 18:15-20) with the goal that each of us would be restored to a proper relationship with each other and God, through the confession of our sin (1 John 1:9). We strive for holiness by grace so that God would be glorified and be useful instruments in His hand (2 Timothy 2:20-21).

**When we are the most pure, we are the most effective**

**When we are the most pure, we are the most joyful**

**When we are the most pure, God's glory is the clear goal**

This means we must always ask the right questions from the right source. God is not working for us. He is not bending Himself to accommodate our whims and feelings. He is calling us to die to ourselves, repent, and follow Him as the greatest satisfaction and joy available.

- **Common Mission of Every Believer** (including local and global mission)
  - We have been given a charge by Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations, teaching and baptizing them (Matthew 28:18-20), calling people to repentance and forgiveness (Luke 24:46-48), proclaiming the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 3:16). This takes place not only locally, but we understand that God has a passion for all the nations, which include people groups all over the world (Revelation 15:4, 21:24). We believe that each person who is part of this church has been given the right and responsibility to intentionally make disciples, and we are committed to sending people out to unreached people groups throughout the world.

This is our relentless pursuit. There is no dichotomy between being the church and lovingly reaching the lost. Any dichotomy seen is one of our own invention, not God's. Being a healthy church means we will inherently seek to love the people of this lost world by declaring the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

**We seek to engage at grace, with grace, in order to give grace to those around.**

**Will you join us?**

