



The Danger of False Teaching

1 Timothy 1:3-4 (NKJV)

As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, ⁴ nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.

Introduction: Why Doctrine is a matter of Life and Death?

The first command Paul gives Timothy in this letter is not about prayer, evangelism, or church growth strategy. It is a command to guard the teaching of the church.

Before Paul instructs on anything practical, he insists on something doctrinal. ***The church must be protected from the poison of false teaching.***

This is not because Paul is a cold theologian more interested in ideas than people. It is precisely because he loves people deeply that he fights so fiercely for truth.

Wrong doctrine produces wrong living, broken relationships, shattered hope, and ultimately eternal ruin. The stakes could not be higher.

We live in an age that prizes

- experience over doctrine,
- feeling over theology, and
- unity over truth.

The popular church culture often suggests that disagreements over doctrine are merely academic disputes that should not disturb the fellowship of well-meaning believers.

Paul disagrees fundamentally. He does not merely caution Timothy about false teaching. He commands him to charge the false teachers to stop. This is not optional. **This is the first item on the pastoral agenda.**

Historical Setting.

This letter does not fit within the chronology of Acts. Acts end with Paul imprisoned in Rome (**Acts 28**).

On his release, the likely sequence is:

1. Sails toward **Ephesus**, visiting **Colossae** on the way fulfilling his promise in **Philemon 22**
2. Meets Timothy at **Ephesus** (Timothy coming from Philippi) together they deal with **Hymenaeus and Alexander** and survey the situation.

3. Paul departs for **Philippi (Philippians 2:24)**, leaving Timothy behind.
4. Not long after, he writes back this letter to strengthen Timothy's courage *and* his authority before the people who would hear the letter read.

To understand why Paul begins here, we need to understand Ephesus.

It was the **fourth largest city in the Roman Empire**,

- Home to the **Temple of Artemis** (one of the **Seven Wonders of the Ancient World**),
- A centre of magic, sorcery, and occult practice (**Acts 19:19** records that new converts burned their sorcery books, which were worth fifty thousand pieces of silver), and
- A cosmopolitan crossroads where religious syncretism flourished.

Into this environment, the Gospel had come, the church had been planted, and now false teachers had infiltrated it.

I. The Situation in Ephesus

A. Paul's Relationship with the Ephesian Church

Paul spent more time in Ephesus than in any other single city during his missionary journeys.

Acts 19 records that he spent three years there.

Acts 20:31, *Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.*

First teaching in the synagogue for three months, then in the **School of Tyrannus** for **two years**, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

Acts 19:10, *And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.*

The Ephesian church was not a minor mission post, but a major strategic centre for the spread of the Gospel throughout Asia Minor.

Paul had an intensely personal relationship with the Ephesian elders.

Acts 20 records his farewell address to them at **Miletus**, which is one of the most emotionally charged passages in the entire book of Acts.

He spoke to them of his three years of ministry, his tears, his trials, and then he warned them.

Acts 20:29-31, *For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the*

disciples after themselves.³¹ Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

Note the two fronts:

- **Wolves from outside**, and
- **Perverse men from within.**

What Paul feared was already happening by the time he wrote 1 Timothy.

Paul's remedy is in **Acts 20:32**, "*I commend you to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up.*"

Paul's vocabulary for these men.

- **2 Corinthians 2:17**, *kapēlos*, "hucksters" or peddlers of the Word those who corrupt it for gain.
- **2 Corinthians 4:2** — those who "*handle the Word of God deceitfully.*"

It is no real threat to the church to teach what is openly and recognizably anti-Bible, anti-Christ, anti-God. The grave danger is teaching that ***appears biblical.***

False teaching handles the Word of God and misrepresents it. That subtlety is what pulls away unwary souls.

A great history, a great beginning, and an apostolic founder did not make Ephesus unaffected. Neither does any heritage make us impervious.

B. Who were the False Teachers?

Paul does not identify the false teachers by name in **1 Timothy 1:3-4**.

But their names were **Hymenaeus and Alexander**.

1 Timothy 1:20, *of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.*

From the content of his warnings throughout the letter, scholars have pieced together a profile. These were likely Jewish Christians who had combined their faith in Jesus with elaborate speculations drawn from **Jewish apocalyptic traditions, angelic hierarchies, and proto-Gnostic** ideas about hidden knowledge.

They were not pagans attacking the church from outside. They were insiders who had subtly drifted.

This is the most dangerous kind of false teaching. An outright attack from paganism is easily identified and resisted. But a teacher who uses Christian vocabulary, who knows the Scriptures, who can cite the patriarchs and expound the law, but who has mixed the truth with error in ways that are hard to detect. This is the wolf in sheep's clothing that Jesus warned about in **Matthew 7:15**.

The profile matches what we know of later Gnosticism, which reached full flower in the second century but clearly had early roots in the first.

An emphasis on special knowledge (gnosis), a complex mythology involving divine releases and spiritual hierarchies, a downgrading of the physical world, and a claim to superior spiritual insight available only to the initiated.

The false teachers in Ephesus were the seed from which this poison tree would grow.

II. The Command: Remain and Charge

A. Remain in Ephesus

Paul's opening instruction to Timothy is both practical and pastoral: remain in Ephesus.

This simple command contains a profound principle.

Faithful leadership does not flee difficult situations.

Timothy was about **35 years old** and had been with Paul roughly **20 years**.

Timothy had every reason to want to leave.

- The false teachers were established and influential.
- The congregation was divided.
- The opposition was fierce.
- Timothy was young and perhaps temperamentally inclined to avoid conflict.

But Paul says to Timothy stay.

The shepherd does not abandon the flock when wolves appear, but he stands between the wolves and the sheep.

This is what Paul himself modelled.

When the silversmiths of Ephesus rioted against him, his disciples urged him not to enter the theatre where the crowd had gathered.

Acts 19:29-30, *So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theatre with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions.³⁰ And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him.*

Paul's instinct was to go in anyway. The faithful minister does not manage risk by abandoning his post.

This principle is countercultural today. Ministry mobility has become standard practice. Pastors move on when things get difficult, when conflict arises, when the growth plateaus.

But deep, lasting ministry is almost always the product of long, patient faithfulness in one place.

Timothy is called to stay not because Ephesus is comfortable, but because Ephesus is where God has placed him. **The hardest post is often the most important post.**

B. Charge — Parangello

The **Greek word** charge ***Parangello*** is used in the Greek New Testament in **military and legal contexts**. It denotes a command issued from a person of authority that is binding on the recipient.

It is not a polite suggestion or a pastoral recommendation. It is a direct order.

Paul uses this word **five times in 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy** combined, always in the context of firm pastoral instruction.

In the ancient military context, ***Parangello*** was the command passed down the chain of command from the commanding officer through the centurion to the soldiers.

The authority did not originate with the one who delivered it. It was delegated from above. Paul is telling Timothy that this is not your opinion versus theirs. This is the apostolic command, passed down by divine authority, which you must now deliver to these teachers.

This matters enormously for pastoral ministry. The pastor who corrects false teaching is not acting on personal preference or institutional authority.

He speaks on behalf of the apostolic tradition, which speaks on behalf of the risen Christ. When he says to a false teacher

you must stop, he is not merely speaking for himself. He is echoing the commandment of God.

III. Problem: Heterodidaskaleo

A. The Meaning of Different Doctrine.

The **Greek word *Heterodidaskaleo*** is a compound word, ***Heteros*** (different, another of a different kind) plus ***Didaskaleo*** (to teach).

Paul is not addressing teachers who make minor errors in biblical interpretation. He is addressing those who are teaching something categorically different from the apostolic deposit. This is not a shade of theological difference, but a departure from the foundational message.

The word ***Heteros*** in Greek is distinct from ***Allos***. Both can be translated other or different, but they carry different nuances.

- ***Allos*** means another of the same kind.
- ***Heteros*** means another of a different kind.

When Paul says ***Heterodidaskaleo***, he is saying that this is not a different version of the same Gospel. It is a different kind of thing altogether. It does not belong in the same category as apostolic teaching.

Galatians 1:6-9, *I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a*

different gospel,⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

Galatians provides the most dramatic illustration of Paul's response to ***Heterodidaskaleo***. Paul pronounces a double anathema on anyone who preaches a different gospel.

This is not harsh but appropriate.

If the Gospel is the only word from God that can save a drowning person, then someone who replaces that word with a different word is not being innovative or progressive. They are removing the lifeline.

B. The Content of the False Teaching

Paul identifies two specific elements:

- Fables (mythoi) and
- Endless genealogies.

The fables were likely elaborated **Jewish legends** expansions of Old Testament narratives that speculated about angelic beings, the hidden activities of the patriarchs, and the spiritual significance of genealogical lines.

Works like **Enoch, Jubilees, and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs** give us a window into this world of Second Temple Jewish speculation that went far beyond what the biblical text actually says.

The genealogies were probably not merely lists of ancestors but theosophical genealogies that traced the origins and relationships of divine or semi-divine beings, the kind of elaborate spiritual cosmology that would later feature prominently in full Gnostic systems.

They were called endless not because they were long but because they led nowhere. They had no conclusion, no resolution, no redemptive centre. They simply generated more speculation, more discussion, more questions without answers.

In **Jewish apocalyptic literature**, genealogies were used to trace the origins of spiritual powers and to explain the structure of the heavenly realm.

The false teachers in Ephesus were applying this framework to Christian teaching, producing a kind of theological complexity that looked profound but was spiritually hollow. It was the religious equivalent of junk food. It consumed intellectual energy without producing spiritual nourishment.

C. The Effect: Disputes rather than Edification

Paul identifies the fruit of false teaching with devastating precision.

It produces disputes (**Ekzeteseis**) rather than godly edification. The word **Ekzetesis** means controversial investigation, the kind of restless intellectual chasing that never arrives at settled truth. It is perpetual theological tennis with no net and no court boundaries.

Compare this with what sound doctrine produces.

Throughout the Pastoral Epistles, Paul describes the fruit of healthy teaching.

Love from a pure heart.

1 Timothy 1:5, *Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith,*

Godliness.

1 Timothy 4:7-8, *But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. ⁸For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.*

Contentment.

1 Timothy 6:6, *Now godliness with contentment is great gain.*

Knowledge of the truth.

2 Timothy 2:25, *in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,*

Sober mindedness.

Titus 2:2, *that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience;*

These are the marks of a church built on sound doctrine. A church consumed by false teaching produces none of these. It produces controversy, division, intellectual pride, and ultimately the shipwreck of faith.

The Simplifying Formula: Two Religions

There are only **two religions** in the whole world.

1. **The religion of divine accomplishment.** God in Christ accomplished salvation apart from any effort of man. *This is the Christian gospel.*
2. **The religion of human achievement.** Man, by something he does, attains unto salvation. *Every other religion in the world, in one form or another, falls here.*

Wherever false doctrine strikes at the gospel, it will always in some way propose that man of himself attains to the level of pleasing God.

The Same Pattern Today

- **Mormonism** — "Yes, we believe the Bible" but the Bible must be strained through their own documents, which misrepresent, misinterpret, and confuse.
- **Christian Science** — "Yes, I believe the Bible, but I cannot understand it without *Key to the Scriptures*."
- **Any system** where people cannot grasp the simplicity of the Word unless their particular teacher reinterprets it according to the fanciful musings of minds both human and demonic.

The Apostolic Verdict

Galatians 1:8, *"Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be **accursed**"*

Anathema, devoted to destruction.

False teachers are not to be dealt with lightly. Their error is inevitably a blow struck at salvation by grace through faith. It is not a trifling matter.

The church in Ephesus was in danger of becoming a debating society rather than a community of transformed disciples.

Paul's urgency is not that of a theologian protecting an academic tradition. It is the **urgency of a physician watching a patient consume poison *when medicine is available***.

IV. Sound Doctrine — The Positive Standard.

A. What Is Sound Doctrine?

The phrase sound doctrine in **Greek *Didaskaleo*** appears **15 times in the Pastoral Epistles** and is one of Paul's distinctive theological markers in these letters.

The word ***Hygiainouse*** means healthy, from the same root as our English word hygiene. Sound doctrine is teaching that produces spiritual health.

This is a remarkably practical criterion. Doctrine is not sound because it is ancient, or because a respected theologian endorses it, or because it feels spiritually satisfying.

Doctrine is sound when it produces the fruit that the apostolic Gospel is designed to produce repentance, faith, love, holiness, hope, and the transformation of character into the likeness of Christ.

The measure of theology is ultimately anthropological.

What does it produce in the people who believe it?

Conversely, false doctrine is recognized not merely by its content but by its fruit.

V 4 says the false teaching produces disputes rather than godly edification.

If a teaching generates endless controversy without producing holiness, if it puffs up knowledge without building up love, if it creates factionalism rather than unity around Christ, these are diagnostic signs that something is wrong at the doctrinal root.

B. The Apostolic Deposit

The standard against which all teaching must be measured is what Paul calls variously,

the tradition (**2 Thessalonians 2:15**),

the sound words (**2 Timothy 1:13**),

the faith once for all delivered to the saints (**Jude 3**), and

the word of truth (**2 Timothy 2:15**).

This is the apostolic deposit the fixed body of teaching given by God through the apostles and prophets, now inscripturated for all generations in the New Testament.

- ✓ The church does not create doctrine
- ✓ The church receives and guards' doctrine.

This is the genius of the **Reformation slogan: *semper reformanda secundum verbum Dei*** (always being reformed according to the Word of God).

The church is not the source of truth, but the steward of truth.

Church's authority is entirely derivative, dependent on its faithful transmission of the apostolic message.

When the church departs from the apostolic deposit, it loses its authority, however loudly it may continue to claim it.

Jude 1:3, *Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*

C. The Cost of Guarding the Truth

Faithful doctrinal guardianship is not comfortable. It means confronting people who may be well-liked, popular, and persuasive. It means risking the accusation of divisiveness, of being unkind, of privileging doctrine over relationships.

It means being willing to be misunderstood by those who value peacekeeping over truth-keeping.

But Paul gives Timothy no exemption from this responsibility.

To fail to guard the truth is to fail the sheep. The pastor who refuses to confront false teaching because he fears conflict is not being pastoral but being cowardly.

True love for the flock means protecting them from what will damage them, even when the protection requires uncomfortable confrontation.

Charles Spurgeon, speaking to a generation of ministers tempted toward doctrinal softness, warned: *Brethren, if you must err, err on the side of too much doctrine rather than too little. The congregation that has never heard sound theology is a congregation that is easily led astray. The congregation that has been faithfully taught will recognise the false shepherd when he comes, and they will not follow him.*

V. The Ephesian Context and Its Modern Parallels

A. The Temple of Artemis and Spiritual Competition

The **Temple of Artemis** dominated Ephesus both physically and economically. As one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world, it was **four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens** and drew **pilgrims from across the Mediterranean**.

The religion of Artemis combined **fertility cult** practices with a complex mythology and a massive economic ecosystem of **silversmiths, traders, and temple officials**.

When the Gospel came to Ephesus and people were genuinely saved, it disrupted this entire system.

Acts 19:18-19 describes new believers publicly burning their sorcery books, an act of repentance that represented a massive economic loss to the city's spiritual-industrial complex.

The riot of **Acts 19:23-41** was triggered not by theological dispute but by economic fear. If people keep turning to Christ, the trade in Artemis idols will collapse.

The false teaching Paul is addressing in **1 Timothy** was partly a church response to this cultural pressure. By mixing Christian faith with the mythological and esoteric traditions of the surrounding culture, the false teachers were making Christianity more palatable to Ephesian sensibilities.

They were reducing the offence of the Gospel by diluting its exclusivity. The result was a hybrid that had the form of religion without the power of the Gospel.

B. The Modern Equivalent

The parallels to the contemporary church are painful and precise. The pressures of a secular, pluralistic culture push constantly toward the dilution of Christian distinctives.

- The exclusive claims of the Gospel (*Jesus is the only way*. **John 14:6**) are reframed as narrow or intolerant.
- The Bible's teaching on human nature, sexuality, and ethics are treated as cultural artifacts to be updated.
- The doctrines of sin, judgment, and hell are quietly dropped from preaching because they produce conflict.

The result is exactly what Paul describes: *endless speculations rather than godly edification*.

Churches that have replaced the apostolic deposit with cultural accommodation do not become more spiritually productive. They become less so. They lose their prophetic voice, their evangelistic urgency, and their transformative power.

They become, in **Revelation 3:16**, "*I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.*"

Neither hot nor cold and God say He will spit them out.

VI. The Fruit of False Teaching. What it Produces?

A. Speculative Controversy.

Paul's diagnosis of what false teaching produces is controversial investigations that never arrive at settled truth.

The false teachers in Ephesus were not people who had found profound spiritual insight and were sharing it. They were perpetual seekers who mistook the seeking itself for the destination. Their conversations were energetic, their debates animated, their speculations elaborate and they produced nothing of lasting spiritual value.

The contrast Paul draws throughout the Pastoral Epistles is stark.

- Sound doctrine produces love, godliness, contentment, and transformation.
- ***Heterodidaskaleo*** produces controversy, pride, faction, and spiritual emptiness.

You can tell the health of a church community not only by what it believes but by what its beliefs produce.

A church that is always arguing about speculative matters but shows little evidence of transformed character has a doctrinal problem at its root, even if the arguing is conducted in theological language.

1 Corinthians 8:1, *"Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies."*

The Corinthian church provides the New Testament's most detailed case study of this failure.

Paul spends the first four chapters of 1 Corinthians addressing a church divided into factions Paul's party, Apollos's party, Cephas's party, Christ's party.

These were personality cults dressed in theological clothes.

The result was a church simultaneously proud of its knowledge yet embarrassingly immature in conduct.

Paul's remedy is the same as his remedy in 1 Timothy to return to the Gospel and let the Gospel produce what it is designed to produce.

B. Oikodome — Godly Edification.

The positive counterpart is ***Oikodome*** building up, edification.

Paul uses this word extensively to describe what sound teaching, exercised in love, is designed to produce.

1 Corinthians 14:3, *But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.*

Ephesians 4:12, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

The ministry gifts Christ gives are for the equipping of the saints, for the building up of the body of Christ.

Romans 15:2, *Let each of us please his neighbour for his good, leading to edification.*

The metaphor is architectural.

The church is being constructed, stone by stone, believer by believer, as the Holy Spirit applies sound doctrine to human hearts.

- Every faithful sermon, every honest testimony, every act of loving correction, every patient explanation of Scripture contributes to the structure.
- Every act of false teaching, every speculation without grounding, every doctrine divorced from life, contributes to deterioration.

The pastor who asks after every sermon:

Did this build up?

Did this produce love?

Is asking the right question.

VII. The Ephesian Church — Past, Present, and Future.

A. Revelation 2:1-7 — Thirty Years Later

Revelation 2:1-7, written around **AD 95**, gives us a sobering postscript to the Ephesian church.

Christ commends them.

Revelation 2:2-4, *“I know your works, your labour, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;³ and you have persevered and have patience, and have laboured for My name’s sake and have not become weary.⁴ Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.*

The Ephesian church had managed to guard the deposit without maintaining the love that Paul said was the very goal of the deposit.

They held the doctrine without holding onto first love. This is the second great danger for doctrinally serious churches: making doctrine an end in itself rather than the road to love.

Paul's balance in **1 Timothy 1** warning about false doctrine, then affirming love as the goal is the balance the Ephesian church ultimately failed to maintain.

B. Ephesians 4:14-15 as the Vision Threatened

Paul's positive vision for what the Ephesian church could become like what he had written.

Ephesians 4:14-15, *that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—*

The false teaching in 1 Timothy represents precisely the threat this vision warned against: *the winds of doctrine that toss immature believers off course.*

Every church in every generation faces this same wind. The specific content of the false teaching changes Gnostic speculation in the first century, rationalist liberalism in the nineteenth, moral revisionism in the twenty-first but the mechanism is always the same.

Departure from the apostolic deposit, dressed in language sophisticated enough to deceive the theologically under-formed. The safeguard is always the same too!

A congregation grounded in Scripture, led by pastors who take **1 Timothy 1:3** seriously enough to act on it.

VIII. The Responsibility of the Congregation

The Bereans of **Acts 17:11** are commended as more noble than those in Thessalonica because they received the word with all readiness and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

The responsibility of guarding sound doctrine does not rest with pastors and elders alone. The congregation bears responsibility to know its Bible well enough to recognise when the teaching has gone off course.

This does not mean a spirit of perpetual suspicion toward preachers. It means a biblically literate congregation that loves its pastor, prays for him, submits to his leadership, and also knows Scripture well enough to fulfil the Berean obligation.

The congregation that accepts everything it is taught without personal engagement with Scripture is vulnerable to the first plausible-sounding false teacher who comes along. The congregation that is too suspicious destroys the trust that makes genuine ministry possible.

Paul describes what happens when congregations abdicate this responsibility.

2 Timothy 4:3-4, *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up*

for themselves teachers; ⁴and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

The congregation gets the teaching it demands. This is why doctrinal health in the congregation is not merely the pastor's project, but it is the whole community's responsibility and the whole community's blessing.

Conclusion:

*In 1880, a well-educated young minister named **Charles Augustus Briggs** was appointed to **Union Theological Seminary in New York**. He was brilliant, personable, and widely admired. Over the **next two decades**, he gradually introduced into his teaching a form of higher biblical criticism that undermined **the authority and inerrancy of Scripture**. He did not do this with dramatic announcements; he did it through the accumulation of small departures, each one seeming scholarly and reasonable.*

*By 1891, when he delivered his inaugural address as a professor, he openly denied the traditional **authorship of several books of the Bible**, questioned the **historical accuracy of much of the Old Testament**, and argued that the church's doctrinal standards needed to be revised in the light of modern scholarship. His address was received with enthusiasm in academic circles. The popular press hailed him as a progressive voice for a modern age.*

*What followed was one of the most revealing church trials in American history. The **Presbyterian Church***

tried **Briggs** for heresy, and despite the support of many colleagues, he was suspended from ministry. **Union Theological Seminary**, rather than back down, **severed its formal connection with the Presbyterian Church to protect its professor.**

Over the following decades, the seminary that had trained orthodox ministers for generations became a centre of liberal theology. The denomination that had failed to enforce its doctrinal standards gradually lost its confessional identity.

The story of **Briggs and Union Seminary is not unique.**

It is a pattern repeated across mainline Protestant denominations throughout the twentieth century. What begins as a small departure from sound doctrine, tolerated in the name of academic freedom or intellectual open-mindedness, leads over time to the abandonment of the apostolic deposit.

The church that will not charge the false teacher to stop is the church that will eventually be unable to identify true teaching at all.

Paul knew this. That is why the very first command he gives Timothy is not about programmes or growth or community engagement. It is about truth. Guard the deposit. Charge the teachers. Remain at your post. The church's most important responsibility is not to be impressive or relevant or growing. It is to be faithful to

the Gospel that God has entrusted to it. Everything else depends on this.

APPLICATION FOR DAILY LIFE

1. This week, read your church's statement of faith or doctrinal position. Could you explain it to another person? If not, make it your study goal for this month.
2. Practise being a noble Berean (**Acts 17:11**). **For the next four Sundays, take your Bible to church and follow along with every Scripture reference. Does what you hear align with what the text actually says?**
3. Identify one teaching you have heard in Christian media or social media in the past six months that seemed off. Look it up in Scripture. What does the Bible actually say?
4. **Pray for your pastor/leader this week specifically for the courage to guard sound doctrine even when it is unpopular. Thank God for his willingness to preach the truth.**
5. **Jude 3** calls believers to contend earnestly for the faith. In what one area of your daily life are you called to stand for biblical truth against cultural pressure? Commit to it in prayer.
6. Read **2 Timothy 4:1-8** and note **Paul's final charge to Timothy about preaching the Word**. What

does it mean in your context to preach the word in season and out of season?

- 7.** Consider a family devotion this week on **Psalm 119:9-16**. **How does immersion in God's Word protect against the drift toward false teaching?**