

**Southport Presbyterian Church**  
**Rev. Kevin Bausman**  
**April 18, 2010**

**What is Happening to Truth?**  
**2 Timothy 4:1-5**

**“<sup>1</sup>In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: <sup>2</sup>Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. <sup>3</sup>For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. <sup>4</sup>They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. <sup>5</sup>But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.” (2 Timothy 4:1-5, NIV)**

What is happening to truth in our culture? Over the last decade or so there has been a disturbing trend of truth being twisted, at times even suppressed. The way to discover it is even being hindered, too.

The preliminary reason for this is the rise of the politically correct movement which has led to the oppression of any view different than those that are PC. Les Parrott III, professor of psychology at Seattle Pacific University and fellow in medical psychology at the University of Washington, wrote several years ago: “Those who are PC,... require you to think ‘correctly’ about affirmative action, animal rights, radical feminism, bilingualism, censorship in the pursuit of tolerance, gay rights, non-European origins, and so on. In some places, the consequence of being ‘incorrect’ has led to public humiliation, ostracism, or even a disciplinary hearing.

“... In PC land, the middle ground disappears. Either you are pro-gay rights or you are homophobic. Either you are fighting for feminist causes or you are a chauvinist.

“...PC followers attack not just the opinions of their critics; they are fighting the right of their critics to disagree. That is dangerous. It is dangerous not just because free speech is guaranteed by our country’s Constitution, but it endangers the human heart. Buried thoughts and feelings have a high rate of resurrection. And they almost always emerge unexpectedly and uglier than ever before” (“Questioning PC Orthodoxy”, Les Parrott III, Christianity Today, Feb. 10, 1992,p. 17).

News reporting has gone from reporting of facts to interpretation of events. Selected words and photos are used to slant a story. An extreme example is cited of a movement in order to paint all members of the movement as being this way. Speakers are not allowed to speak at an event because their view is not held by “the powers that be” who are in charge of the event.

Whenever I come across such suppression or twisting of truth, the words of the apostle Paul come to mind in **2 Timothy 4:3-4: “For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.”**

In the New Testament the Greek word for truth has three shades of meaning as it is used in the Gospels and the Epistles. The meaning for truth in this passage from Second Timothy is: “Truth in the absolute sense of that which is real and complete as opposed to what is false and wanting ...” (TWBP, p 1301)

Truth is what is real, not what is false. Paul “warns Timothy that the day is coming when people will refuse to listen to sound teaching. They will follow teachers who will tell them precisely the easy-going, comfortable things which they want to hear.

“In Timothy’s day it was tragically easy to find such teachers... They wandered from city to city, offering to teach anything for pay... They would teach a man to argue subtly and to use words cleverly until he could make” the worse situation appear better than it really was.

“... Men [people] in the days of Timothy were beset by false teachers... Their deliberate policy was to find arguments and teaching whereby a man [person] could justify himself [or herself] for doing what he [she] wanted to do.” (William Barclay, The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon, pp 237-238)

Things haven’t changed much in 2000 years have they?

So what do Christians do when living in a society which has elements within it that avoid any truth, that is uncomfortable to them, especially biblical truth, and conflicts with their own personal opinion or views?

The apostle Paul in this passage in Second Timothy and the apostle John in his first epistle, have insights on how to deal with this.

The first is that Christians need to be champions of truth - not falsehood - in all areas of life. God said in **Exodus 20:16**, “**You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.**” **Exodus 23:1** says, “**Do not spread false reports. Do not help a wicked man by being a malicious witness.**” We also must remember that God is the God of truth as **Psalms 31: 5** states. Truth is His very nature. He therefore acts truthfully in history, and He expects His people to be people of truth who champion the cause of truth.

This means, first of all, within our own ranks. We should always be sure that the truth is being proclaimed, taught and lived within the Body of Christ, that wherever Scripture is unclear on a point there is loving disagreement among Christians. It is clear, for example, that the New Testament is not anti-Semitic, although it has been twisted to be such by some misguided folks. We need to confront those who twist it so.

Outside Christendom we as Christians need to uphold the pursuit of truth in all areas of academics, media reporting, moral and political issues. We should be careful that statistics are not twisted to reflect a view not represented in the results, but rather represented in the bias of the interpreter.

We should also be certain that different viewpoints are fairly represented and heard. As Christians, we are responsible for discerning truth. Therefore, we need to carefully study the Bible and read thoroughly and widely so we are informed and can discern the truth.

This is why the apostle Paul tells Timothy in **2 Timothy 4:5** to “**keep your head in all situations.**” Barclay writes here in this sentence: “The Greek word... means that he is to be like an athlete who has his nerves under self-control... the word describes a mental state... where every faculty is at full command, to look at all facts and all considerations deliberately in the

face.' ... Stability is the badge of the Christian in an unbalanced and often insane world.”  
(William Barclay, The Letters Timothy to Timothy, Titus and Philemon, p 238)

An insane world is often this because of confusion and conflicting views that make it hard to discern the truth. For example, in 2006, conflict broke out in Lebanon. As Mary Jane and I were watching it on the news, she turned to me and said, “Do you understand all this?”

I said, “Well it’s very complicated and confusing because of the history involved, and I believe the evil one has made it so. He has done this so it becomes difficult to understand and to find the truth in what is happening in Lebanon.”

Brothers and Sisters, the only way we can make sense out of confusion or conflicting views, such as Lebanon, is to be determined to find the truth, to find reality. But to do that when things are so confusing, we need to ask God for help. He is the God of truth, and if we ask Him to show us the truth, He will, no matter what the issues are before us – whether political, business, economic, health, personal or other issues.

But one thing we need to remember is that the truth He shows us whether from His Word or from reality, we may not like,. Or we may feel uncomfortable with the truth. It may go against what we believe philosophically, politically, and even theologically. But God’s truth stands in judgment over all these areas.

In the midst of truth twisting Christians are to be stable and remain faithful to the truth.

Second, we need to be fair and honest with ourselves and others. It’s only in an atmosphere of fairness and honesty, without fear and condemnation, that truth can be pursued. Openness and honesty facilitates acknowledgement of the good and bad of all sides. Seeking to listen, to clarify, to understand and to build bridges of communication allows an atmosphere of freedom to search and question freely and honestly.

One thing also to keep in mind in exploring for the truth is - that if there is even a hint of darkness or deceit or the twisting of facts in a position or a news story - beware. Even a hint of deceit means falsehood is lurking. Remember the evil one, the Father of Lies. Don’t dance with darkness. Dance only with the light and the truth. For God is the God of truth and light.

This latter point is extremely important. Christians should never fear open pursuit of knowledge and truth. We have nothing to fear. For one of the things I discovered in college is that everyone who searches with an open heart and mind will find the Truth with a capital “T” - Jesus Christ.

I remember reading the late Dr. Francis Schaeffer telling parents they should allow their children to ask questions. Parents are not to tell their kids, “Don’t ask questions. Just believe.” That type of response not only reveals a parents’ insecurity but also contradicts the clear biblical teaching that we are to love God with all our mind as well as all our heart and soul.

Dr. Schaeffer said: “It is not more spiritual to believe without asking questions. It is not more biblical. It is less biblical and eventually it will be less spiritual because the whole man will not be involved.

“Consider the ministry of our Lord Jesus himself. He was a man who constantly answered questions. But someone will say, ‘Didn’t He say that to be saved you have to be a little child?’ Of course, He did. But did you ever see a little child who didn’t ask questions?...” (cited in Leighton Ford, Good News is for Sharing, p15)

When people can ask questions and find out for themselves, they take ownership of finding truth. If they decide on following Jesus, He is theirs because they choose to follow Him not because He was forced on them.

This openness and honesty in pursuit of truth is critical. Paul tells Timothy to do the work of an evangelist in **2 Timothy 4:5**. An evangelist is “a bringer of good news.” (Barclay, p 239) In order for people to hear and receive the Good News, there must be an atmosphere of openness and honesty which allows for the sharing of the Good News, for questions about the Good News, and for people to receive the Good News.

Christians must stand for openness and honesty in pursuing truth.

Finally, Christians must also be people who live the truth, people who are like the God of truth that they love and worship. We must be people of integrity who uphold and exhibit the unconditional love of God, which as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13, rejoices in the truth. We are to seek to live ethical lives, and though we fall at times, we have a God who loves and forgives us, picks us up and helps us move on.

Living lives that reflect moral truth or uprightness, which is one of the other shades of the Greek word for “truth” in the New Testament, is what John calls us to do in 1 John 3:7 where he writes: “Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, ...”

The importance of living a life of truth is, also implied, I believe, in Paul’s words to Timothy in **2 Timothy 4:5** about discharging all the duties of his ministry. This is because as Christians who follow Him Who is the Truth with a capital “T”, we are called upon to reflect truth in our lives and in our ministry. As a result, of being truth bearers, we can expect to endure hardship which Paul tells Timothy here in **2 Timothy 4:5** as well. Anyone who stands for truth will experience the pressures of the world to sell out.

This past Thursday I heard former President, George W. Bush, at the Central Indiana Life Centers Celebration of Life event. During his speech he made a strong point that I believe everyone should hear and make note whether a politician, a pastor or a layperson and whether they voted for President Bush or not.

He said that what guided him in his administration were principles. For example, he believes what Jesus said, to whom much is given, much is required, and that principle guided him to provide aid to Africa to combat the plague of AIDS.

He said, “Principles should guide us, not polls or popularity.” Great words of wisdom for all of us.

The biblical principle of Truth needs to guide us in our decision-making as Christians – not what other people think or what will make us popular.

Back in September 2001, shortly after the 911 terrorist attacks, some pastors in speaking to the media said that Christians, Jews and Muslims all worship the same God. That is not true. You cannot support that view either from the Bible or the Koran or from reality. Yet these pastors made such statements, rather than speak the truth, to please people and what they wanted to hear because they are probably more concerned about being accepted and acceptable, about being popular with the community, the media or their own congregation, rather than to state the truth. They were teachers who said what people’s itching ears wanted to hear – that we worship

the same God rather than different deities. People were turning their ears aside from the truth and were turning aside to myths.

We need to stand for the biblical principal of truth not what will please people's ears.

In addition, many times false rumors, especially on the internet, are propagated by Christians, by people who are to uphold truth and who worship the God of truth. Remember what **Exodus 23:1** says **"Do not spread false reports."** Some of us may have even been involved in spreading these rumors and were unaware of their falsehood. It behooves us as Christians to always check these things out.

Otherwise, we not only look paranoid and foolish to the world, but we are a real disappointment to God. We also lose any credibility with non-Christians about the truthfulness of our Gospel message.

In addition, in all we do as Christians in the proclamation of truth, we are always to do it in love. "Speak the truth in love", Paul says in Ephesians. Regardless of what an issue is, we Christians have a responsibility to speak the truth in love both in choice of words and tone of voice. Otherwise, we have not proclaimed the whole truth.

Evangelical write, Ron Sider, writes the following about Christian conduct that can bless debates in our nation. "... we need both truth and love, both vigor and respect, in political debate...

"One significant Christian contribution to political life ought to be a demonstration of integrity and fairness in debate. We can resolve to forgo distortion, half-truth, slander, name-calling and hate tactics. We can demonstrate that one criterion of honest debate is stating an opponent's views in such a way that he or she says, "Yes, that is what I mean."

"Both truth and love must characterize Christian political debate. That does not [mean we do not condemn error. We do!] preclude forthright condemnation of error. [But] The debate should flow fast but not furious, vigorous but not vicious." (Ron Sider, Completely Pro-Life, pp 201-202)

Brothers and Sisters, of all people, Christians must support and champion truth, honestly, openly and lovingly. The God of truth we worship demands it. We cannot stand for anything less.

Amen.