

# ~Down-to-earth' Heavenly Ministry

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] to turn to our Bible reading now for this morning, which you'll find in Paul's first letter to Timothy, which we've been studying together. And today we come to chapter 3 and verse 14. And this section from 3 verse 14 through to the end of chapter 14, it is the very center, the very heart of the letter. If you still have one of these little outlines of the letter we had on the first week, you'll see that. If not, there, I think there's still some on the tables outside. Do pick one up as you leave. This really is the center section, the very heart of the letter where so much of Paul's intention is focused. And you'll see as we read that twice he tells us about his desire to come to them. But this letter, which is to urge them what to be doing and how to be living until the apostle once again visits them. So chapter 3 and verse 14. Paul says, I hope to come to you soon, but I'm writing these things to you so that if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave, how one ought to conduct themselves in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth. 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. But the Spirit expressly says that in later times, some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons. Through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it's received with thanksgiving, for it's made holy by the word of God and prayer. If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus. Being trained or better nourished in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed have nothing to do with irreverent silly myths. Rather, train yourself for godliness. For while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. But to this end, we toil and strive because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially, or better, namely of those who believe. Command and teach these things. Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of scripture, to exhortation, to the teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given to you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. Practice these things. Devote yourself to them so that all may see your progress.

Keep a close watch on yourself, on your life, and on the teaching. Persist in this. For by so doing, you will save both yourself and your hearers. Amen. May God bless to us his word.

Do turn with me then to 1st Timothy chapter 3 and chapter 4.

[ 4 : 0 1 ] Now, as we know by now, 1st Timothy is a letter all about rescuing and maintaining the church's healthy message and healthy manner for its heavenly mission.

That means, of course, that the church must have a properly healthy ministry. The problem in these churches in Ephesus was that the ministry, the leadership of the churches, had been corrupted by rivals who were leading the church in a very unhealthy direction.

So the church was no longer displaying the dignity of true godliness to the world, but rather the ungodliness of the church was bringing disgrace from the world.

And that meant that the manner of the church was not serving its mission. Church wasn't growing in outward mission to the world, it was growing in inward mess in itself.

And sadly, the truth is, we have to admit, don't we, that very often throughout the history of the church, that has been the case. And that is why this letter is in our Bibles. That's why it's been preserved for the church to learn from in every age, and of course, from us to learn in our age. So Timothy's task is to steer the church away from the rocks and away from certain shipwreck by reorienting their thinking about the priority of outward-focused evangelism.

[ 5 : 26 ] And of course, on the inward ethics, the lifestyle of the church that will serve that mission to the world. And here in chapter 3, verse 14, to the end of chapter 4, we're at the very center, the heart of this letter.

Paul is telling Timothy, and he's telling everybody else, what he wants them to be absolutely focused on until he comes to them. So verse 14, I hope to come to you soon. But meantime, he says, here's what you're to get absolutely clear about for the mission of the church and the mission of God's saving faith in the world.

Again, in chapter 4, verse 13, Until I come, devote yourself to, well, to the true ministry of the church that will promote that saving mission.

Verse 16, that will save both yourself and the outsiders you're witnessing to. The whole section is about by getting clear what healthy ministry and mission, indeed, what heavenly, glorious, spiritual mission and service in the church, what it is all about.

And the message is very clear all through this letter. The church that will advance the gospel in the world is the church that adorns the gospel in the world.

[ 6 : 44 ] Gospel truth is declared from the lips of all God's people, but it's demonstrated also in the lives of all God's people. That's what's going to lead people to the one who's the savior of all.

And that's how the whole church is to be, of course. So then that is even more importantly how those called to leadership in the church must be. They've got to lead by example. And so Timothy's got to show the way himself, to show everyone how to be a good servant of Christ Jesus, as chapter 4 verse 6 puts it.

Because it's as you do that, that you will find salvation yourself, and you'll be able to share that salvation with other people. But here's the thing.

There's no hidden secret to having that truly heavenly ministry. This is not something that's locked up in rarefied experiences, that's only open to the privileged few within the church.

No, no, no. That's always the mark of a false gospel, not of a true gospel. You need to be very wary of any spiritual movements that are like that, that are prone to elitism, that say, come into our little group and we'll show you the way to truly heavenly ministry and spirit-filled glory.

[ 8 : 04 ] No. What Paul makes so clear in this passage is that truly heavenly ministry is healthily down to earth.

The church's mission is to mirror Christ's own mission. He revealed the glory of heaven where? Here on earth, in the flesh. And he, through his toil, through his labor, through much reproach, much suffering, he became the savior of all who believe.

His lips and his life revealed heaven's saving power here on earth. And ours is a truly heavenly ministry, likewise, as the church of Jesus Christ.

But if we want to understand what that really looks like, we won't find it in super spiritual myths and mysteries, which in fact deny God's universal goodness.

Now, we'll find the secret of our mission lies in something that God has made plain to everyone. It's to be found in lives that display God's universal gospel to all, in down-to-earth, everyday godliness.

[ 9 : 14 ] Living here on earth, so as to share the goodness and the glory of heaven, and so as to point the way to our great Savior. That's truly heavenly ministry for all of us here on this earth.

So let's look then a bit more closely at this passage. First of all, in verses 14 to 16, we have set out so very clearly the mission and the message of the true Savior and his church.

And that is a heavenly declaration that reveals the true God as Savior for all on the earth. And so true spirituality is about the declaration of a mystery which has been revealed to all the world.

It's all about evangelism. That's true spirituality and godliness. Spirituality apparently was a big issue in these churches in Ephesus being talked about.

Perhaps it was a buzzword among these rival teachers. That probably explains the use of this word in verse 16. Godliness. Or spirituality, we could put it.

[ 10 : 26 ] It's a very rare word. Paul uses it just 13 times, always in these pastoral letters. 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. Peter uses it a few times in his second letter.

But nine times Paul uses it in this letter. So the question is, what is real spirituality? That marks out the truly godly.

That marks out those who share in God's great spiritual glory. What is it? Well, for these rival leaders, it was all to do with what they called knowledge.

From all of their esoteric speculative talk. Paul calls that myths and speculation. In chapter 6, he calls it false knowledge. A babble of contradictions.

No, no, no, says Paul. True godliness, true spirituality is quite different. It's nothing to do with speculative myths. It's everything to do with solid Christian morality.

[ 11 : 23 ] True godliness is the visible evidence of your belief. It's all about solid Christian grace and goodness that's rooted firmly in the flesh. In the lives of ordinary Christian people.

In their conduct. In their behavior. Behavior that adorns the gospel of God our Savior. That's why the whole concern of Paul's letter is summed up here in verse 15.

So that you might know how to behave. If you belong to the household of God. If you belong to the church of the living God. His living truth is to be held up by you.

For everyone in this world to see. In your observable godliness. You're to be like a pillar and buttress of truth. Holding this up for all the world to see. Just as apparently the great temple of Artemis in Ephesus.

Was held up by huge gigantic pillars. And could be seen by everybody from miles around. That's what you're to be, says Paul. Showcasing the living God in this world.

[ 12 : 24 ] But what does that mean? Well, he says in verse 16. Great indeed. We confess is the mystery of true godliness. Apparently great is Artemis of the Ephesians.

Was the cry in pagan Ephesus. Those who followed that goddess. And maybe these rival leaders were using a similar sort of slogan. Great is the progress.

The advancement in spirituality and godliness. That we can show you. That word progress or advance. Was perhaps one of their buzzwords as well. You come across it in 2 Timothy 2 verse 16.

And again in 2 Timothy 3 verse 9. Where Paul says that the only advance that these false teachers will bring. Is an advance in ungodliness. Listen to us. And listen to our grasp of the truth.

The hidden mysteries of the law. And we'll be able to teach you real spiritual things. That is such a common claim. Among those who want to see themselves as being very spiritually advanced.

[ 13 : 27 ] It's a great lure sometimes. The new Christians. The young Christians. When people say to them. Oh, we're delighted. You've become a Christian. That's wonderful. But come along to our special group.

Because we can teach you how to really advance in spiritual things. We can teach you to understand the really deep things of prophecy in the Bible. We can teach you the secrets of the millennium that's to come.

Or we can teach you the way to interpret your dreams. So that God can teach you deep things about yourself. Or a whole host of other sort of things like that. But Paul says, no, no, no, no, no.

Great indeed is the mystery of true godliness. True spirituality. But the way to the achievement of that and the advancement of that is not some spiritual secret.

It's just the great mystery of the faith that he spoke of in verse 9. It's the great mystery which has been revealed from heaven and made known to all the world in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 14 : 28 ] And the way on to advance into deeper spirituality, the way on in godliness, can only be found in a greater and greater grasp of this mission and this message.

The message of the gospel. That's why Paul quotes this little section in verse 16, which seems to be part of a hymn or part of a saying that was well known in the church.

Now, vast tracts have been written by the scholars about these six lines. You can hardly believe it. PhDs have been done on the structure of these lines, whether it's two lots of three or three lots of two or whatever else it might be.

Scholars have copious things to say about that. And yet very few of them seem to have the faintest clue about why on earth Paul is quoting it. Well, let me tell you, when a preacher quotes a hymn or quotes something else in a sermon, it's just to make a point.

It's not so you can start a PhD. And Paul's point here is surely absolutely plain. Whether it's two sets of three or three sets of two or whether it's chronological or whether it's thematic, surely the point is absolutely plain to anybody except the sort of people who live in libraries.

[ 15 : 43 ] Paul is making a great contrast, isn't he, between heaven and earth. And he's reminding the church that the great mystery of heaven's eternal glory, of God's eternal plan, is not something that is kept hidden in esoteric myths and hidden spiritualities.

But rather it has come down from heaven to earth. It's been revealed to all the nations of the world in the flesh of God our Savior, Jesus Christ. He came down from the glory of heaven.

He lived and he died in human flesh. He was raised up again to heaven's glory. Why? So that his saving power and glory would be made manifest on earth in the flesh.

And so that it would be proclaimed to all nations. And so that it would bring saving faith in this world. That's why Paul is quoting these words.

He's telling us that the mission of the true Savior was a great declaration on earth in the flesh of a glorious Savior who has come from heaven to save sinners.

[ 16 : 52 ] And so he's telling us, obviously, that the message and the mission of the church is to declare that saving glory on the earth, in the flesh, to all people, to bring belief in Jesus Christ and salvation.

That's what real godliness, what real spirituality is all about, says Paul. Real spirituality is all about evangelism. It's all about sharing that great mystery, the revealed truth of God in Christ.

Sharing it with the whole world. That's his big point. It's obvious. Look a little closer, though, with me just at these six lines. I think there are three couplets.

I think they make great sense symmetrically. Nobody else seems to have suggested that, so maybe there is a PhD in this for me, by the way, after all. We'll see. But look at the first line and the last line.

God's glory manifest on the earth, in the flesh, and then taken up again into the glory of heaven in the person of Christ our Savior. Well, the false teachers were very taken up with glory, with spiritual progress, with advancement.

[ 18 : 00 ] Leaders like Hymenaeus, as we've seen, were teaching that the resurrection for all believers had already happened, that we are living in the world of glory already. And so they were keen to escape the mundane things of the flesh, life in this world.

We'll see in a moment in chapter 4. They were wanting to retreat from merely fleshly things, like marriage and food and so on. But not so, says Paul. Paul is absolutely clear when you come to chapter 6, the proper time for all those things, is in the future, when the Lord Jesus appears again.

But meantime, says Paul, we are living in this present age, on this earth. And the world is where God's glory is to be manifest, in the flesh.

Jesus lived in this world bodily, in the flesh. He engaged in this world of human flesh. He showed the world true godliness, true holiness, true human wholeness, in all its beauty, in all its truth, in all its glory.

And it is exactly that glory, a renewed, wholesome humanity, renewed by the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, that the world needs to see in his church.

[ 19 : 15 ] Not a church escaping from the world into false spirituality, but a church engaging the world in true spirituality. Not a holy huddle, but holy heralds, with a gospel of true godliness.

Look at the second line, and the second last line, another couplet contrasting heaven and earth. He was vindicated, was justified by the Spirit, or in the Spirit.

Doesn't much matter which way you put it, the point is that Jesus' resurrection, and his ascension justified him, in the sight of all heaven. What was the result of that?

Well, says Paul, he was believed on, in the world. The result is that human beings, that sinners, are justified by faith, in the risen Savior.

Jesus' resurrection was his justification. It was his vindication. It was the public declaration, wasn't it? That death no longer has the dominion over him.

[ 20 : 16 ] That he will never die again, as Paul puts it in Romans 6. It was the declaration, that said that he, was the son of God with power.

That he was the firstborn of many brothers, in a new glorified humanity, in life everlasting. Life beyond the realm, of sin and death.

Now Paul is clear, our resurrection, in that public declaration, is not yet. It awaits the appearance, of the Lord Jesus, when he returns. But, now, on this earth, is the great day of salvation.

Christ's resurrection, has ushered that in, for this world, just as the scriptures promised. What did Paul say, to the Galatians, that would mean? Didn't he say, that God proclaimed, in advance to Abraham, that God would justify, would vindicate, the nations, by faith.

And now, he says already, Jews and Gentiles, both, have believed, believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified, by faith. You see what Paul is saying, the great evidence on earth, of the spirit's vindication, of Jesus, is, people believing, in him.

[ 21 : 29 ] Sinners being saved, and coming to a knowledge, of the truth, and knowing, that they at last, will share in his, great resurrection. That they too, will be vindicated, justified, before heaven and earth.

Seen to be those, who will never ever die again, because they're Christ's. You see, for all their talk, of resurrection, and spirituality, and the spirit, for all their super knowledge, and all the rest of it, these leaders, they were advancing the church, only into quarreling, only into controversy.

They were sowing division, in the church, and so they were bringing, just grace, on the church, from the world. How will the people, of the nations of the world, believe a message, that's proclaimed, by a church like that?

How will the message, of the gospel, be vindicated, on this earth, by believers, behaving in that way? Now again, Paul's saying, real godliness, real spirituality, that brings, the spirit, and the life of the spirit, is not, about mystical elitism.

It's about, missionary evangelism. And again, that's so clear, isn't it, in the center, two lines of the hymn, right at the heart. He was seen, says Paul, by angels.

[ 22 : 49 ] The risen Lord, was proclaimed, to the whole host of heaven, as the glorious Lord, of heaven and earth. They cast their crowns, before him, they bowed down, because he is, Lord of all.

All heaven declares, the glory of the risen Lord, as another hymn says. And what was the result, of that? Look, he was proclaimed, among the nations, as Lord of all.

As the savior, of all, who would believe in him, and come to a knowledge, of the truth. Through the witness, of a church, that is a pillar, and buttress, of that truth, in the world.

Again, you can see, can't you, there's such a contrast. These false leaders, were all, taken up, with exalted, spiritual things. Perhaps talking about, angels, and angel worship. Paul mentions angels, again in chapter 5.

The Corinthian church, similarly, were all interested, in the tongues of angels, and so on. But the result, says Paul, of the ascension, of Christ, to angelic glory, was not, that the church, was left, looking upwards, and then navel, gazing inwards.

[ 23 : 59 ] Read the end, of Matthew's gospel. What do you see? The risen Jesus, appears from them, they fell down, and worshiped. What did he say? Go, into all the world, and proclaim the gospel, and make disciples, of all nations.

What did the angels, say to the disciples, when they came, to the empty tomb, and they were, they were dumbstruck, and looking in? What did they say? Stay here, and worship the angels? No. Go, and tell the disciples, he's not here.

He's risen. He's vindicated. The ascended glory, of Jesus, was to lead the church, not into ecstatic worship, but into, its evangelistic witness.

Not for them, endless angelic praise, but active, proclamation, of the saving gospel, of Jesus. Can you see, why Paul quotes, these words, at this point, in the letter?

All through the letter, it's just, as he says here, the mystery of true faith, verse 9. Real gospel truth, leads, to real gospel, godliness.

[ 25 : 09 ] God's revelation, in Christ to the world, leads, to the gospel's revelation, through the church, in the world. In a gospel, of real truth, that yes, is on the church's lips, but a real godliness, of truth, that is seen, in the church's life, in earthly witness, to that transforming power of heaven, changing sinful human beings, visibly, in the flesh, changed lives, of human people.

He, the Lord Jesus, was vindicated by the spirit, he was seen by angel hosts above, he was exalted, to the glory of heaven, so that, he might be made manifest, and proclaimed, and believed on, through the church, here on earth, among all the nations.

You see, Paul's unmistakable, missionary focus, once again, as he's talking about, what true godliness, is all about. The mystery, is revealed, it's the story, of Jesus, and his salvation, it's a story revealed, from heaven above, and the true godliness, of the church, will reveal it, as it holds out, this message to the world, and as that message, is seen, manifest, in the flesh, of Christ's church, here.

Christ's, down to earth, ministry of salvation, is to be mirrored, in the church's, down to earth, ministry of salvation, as we show him, as we proclaim him, on our lips, and our lives, that's, how Jesus will be believed on, in our world, and that's real spirituality, says Paul, it's all, about, evangelism, it's all about, healing, God, our life, and earth.

Last, just as, was true in Ephesus, that has not always been, the church's, key focus, in our world, has it? And the very next word, in chapter 4, verse 1, is better translated, as but, but, instead, of, the mission, and the message, of the true savior, being mirrored, in the church, Paul shows us, in these verses, the myths, and the miseries, of false spirituality, in the church, which he says, are hellish deceptions, that reject, the true God, as the creator, of all things, on earth.

[ 27 : 34 ] False spirituality, he says, is about, the deception, of myths, which are restricted, to just a few, insiders, and that's why, it's all about, elitism, and escapism, false spirituality, and Paul talks here, about a departure, and about deception, and denial, let's start with the denial, verse 3, denial of God's, good created, order, forbidding marriage, and sex, requiring abstinence, from foods, that God created, to be received, with thanksgiving, especially by, Christian people, who believe, and know the truth, I better dare, not joke about, vegans this week, given that the, editor of, the waitress food magazine, was sacked, for daring to do so, but let me say this, if somebody does think, that there is, some kind of superiority, in abstaining, from meat, or indeed from marriage, or from any other, of God's good gifts, to human beings, especially if they think, there's some, moral superiority, or spiritual superiority, then Paul warns them, very clearly here, doesn't he, that is not, something from him, that is characteristic, of a deception, from demons, that's not evidence, of the Holy Spirit, it's evidence, of the deceiving spirit, of Satan himself, and he tells us, to beware, of any so called, advanced, or progressive, spiritual teaching, that restricts, or obscures,

God's good, things, in creation, in this case, as we've said already, the asceticism, is probably something, to do with, a warped idea, of what life was like, before the fall, but Paul explodes this, doesn't he, this kind of denial, and he says, that since we are still, living on earth, God's created gifts, are not to be rejected, they're to be received, and received with thanksgiving, for his goodness, and not to scorn, the common grace, and goodness of God, for our human lives, but you see friends, when people are taken in, by fantasies, by what verse 7, calls silly myths, that usually does, lead to fanaticism, and that kind of fanaticism, has its own brand, of virtue signaling, which forces others, with great pressure, to also follow, their particular ways, and in this case here, it was asceticism, now all, over realized, views of spirituality, all views, that want to bring, what the New Testament, tells us is in the future, is not yet for us, but wants to bring that, into the present, all such views, tend to undervalue, what we do have now, in the present, in the physical, earthly life, and in fact, all kinds of, fantastical, utopianism, tends to be like that, if you take the example, of extreme, environmentalists today, there are people, who are so fixated, on what they see, the future of the planet, to be, that they want, to vastly depopulate, the planet now, of human beings, sometimes even, advocating genocide, all, in order, to bless, these, apparent future generations, of unborn people, yet to come, in the centuries ahead, and it's an extraordinary thing, and it's a very frightening thing, as it is sometimes, when such people, want to kill human beings, in order to preserve, the rights of animals, one of the greatest, ironies of all of that,

I find, is that, among extreme greens, like that, who are so, who are so taken up, with the unborn, of the future, they are among those, who are the fiercest, advocates of abortion, today, who have no care, at all, apparently from the unborn, of the present generation, but that's always the way, with fanatics, and fantasists, if you think about Marxism, that was so happy, wasn't it, to destroy, to kill, to maim, millions and millions, of real living, human beings today, all for the supposed, good of, mankind as a whole, in the future, utterly disordered, thinking, but Paul, listen, is saying, that that kind of, disordered, demonic teaching, can even come, within the bounds, of the Christian church, and it's displayed, in a denial, of the good, created gifts, that God has given us, and that so-called, advanced, spirituality, he says, leads to, diminished humanity, it says, oh you can't eat this, you can't drink that, you can't go there, you can't do that, you can't enjoy, the world's music, you can't go to the theater, you can't enjoy dancing, you can't enjoy, marriage and sex, you want to be, truly spiritual, you go away, from all of those things, you go and, you go and live, in a monastery, you go and live, in a convent, well we know, don't we, that that kind of thinking, over the history of the church, has been so damaging, and if you deny people, the normal, good gifts of God, for their human life, well so often, it leads to disaster, we shouldn't be surprised, should we, about the sexual scandals, that there have so often been, among those, who have been sworn, to lives of celibacy, and so on, well says Paul, the denial of human life, that God has blessed us with, that is not being, really spiritual, in fact he says, it is the opposite, it's satanic, and he explodes these myths, in verses four and five, look, real godliness, he says, receives God's good gifts, with thanksgiving, it rejoices in God, the creator, but this false spirituality, he exposes in verses one and two, it's the deception, of demons, and he says, do you see, it's so corrupted, and so confused, people's consciences, they can't tell, good from evil, they have totally reversed, good and evil, isn't that a terrifying prospect,



I think we shy away, don't we, very often in the church today, from talking about, the devil, and demons, that's because we, ourselves, are scared, of being branded, as fanatics and cranks, and of course, there are fanatics and cranks, within the bounds, of the Christian church, who talk in foolish ways, about the devil and demons, but we're worried, that we'll be branded, as cranks, although, this week, with Halloween, wasn't it interesting, that in the newspapers, so often, there were articles, about the growing trend, of black magic, and witchcraft, as genuine religions, in our country, and the newspapers, think that's a great thing, it's extraordinary, isn't it, how confused, the press can be, but when I look, at the extraordinary, level of confusion, and corruption, today, in the world, that there is, in this whole, realm of gender, and sexuality, for example, the almost, unbelievable, blindness of people, who want to deny, the goodness, of their own, bodily creation, and worse still, sometimes, even in their young children, and instead, mutilate, those bodies, with drugs, even with violent surgery, and people see that, as being, progressive, and advancing, the cause of humanity, when I see that, friends,

I can only conclude, that a massive, deception, of deceitful spirits, is the only thing, that can explain that, adequately to me, but again, what Paul is warning us, here is that, this kind of deception, can come into, the professing, Christian church, and that the reality, that we see, in Ephesus, in the first century, can be just as real today, and I believe it is, and it's these things, these sinister, spiritual realities, often, masquerading themselves, as progressive, advanced movements, it is these things, says Paul, that will lead, to these sad departures, from the church, verse 1, and you shouldn't be surprised, he says, you should expect it, because the whole, New Testament, warns us, that this will happen, through the deceit, and the demonic influence, in the church, of course, these people, don't think that, they think it's progress, in godliness, whether it's, liberal, progressive variety, that we see today, aping the, the deceptions, in the world, and saying, well, we must bring this, into the church, if we're going to be relevant, or whether it's the opposite, whether it's sort of, quaint, sanctimonious, super spirituality, that refuses, completely, anything to do with, so called, worldliness, we don't listen to, its music, we don't want, its medicine, we don't want to listen, to its management, can't eat its foods, or its drinks, we won't have its fashion, we won't have its friendship, all of these things, and we become an, escapist, elitist, little clique, and that too, leads people, to utterly lose, the true gospel, doesn't it, it's all, part, of a hellish, deception, says Paul, deceptiveness, which will lead, to misery, which will diminish, our humanity, and instead of spreading, the gospel, we'll do the very, opposite, but the gospel, says Paul, is about redeeming, the whole, created order of God, especially, especially for us, who believe, who know the truth, we of all people, should rejoice, in God's goodness, and all his earthly joys, even now, as we wait, for the great resurrection, that's to come, what a mess, in these Ephesian churches, confused Christians, they were seeking the way, of genuine spirituality, and godliness, they were wanting, to advance, wanting to make, to make progress, in the spiritual lives, but they were getting it, so wrong, because they were being, led so astray, and the truth is, as we know, that mess, has so often, pervaded, the history, of the Christian church, how then, are those, who want, to follow Christ, how are we, to find the way, of real progress, and advancement, how are we, to be, really good servants, of Christ Jesus, instead of, falling into the trap, and becoming, stooges of Satan, well of course, it's the job, isn't it, of leaders in the church, of everyone, who leads others, in the church, whether they lead many, or a few, it's the job of leaders, to show the way, and that's what Paul, turns to in verse 6, to Timothy, he says,

[ 38 : 30 ] Timothy, you are to show everyone, the model, and the ministry, of true service, for the church, and to show, the healthy devotion, that redeems, true godliness, for all Christians, on earth now, in the light, of heaven, that is to come, true service, he says, is about devotion, to a ministry, that will rescue, both yourself, and others, for God's, true salvation, it's all about, encouragement, isn't it, to strive, to toil, verse 10, for the world, to come, because we're the people, who hope, in God, the Savior, and, to strive, for a world, round about us, to join us, in coming, to salvation, through God, the Savior, to save ourselves, verse 16, but also, to save others, all who hear us, and these verses, they're wonderful verses, because, they show us, so clearly, just, how simple, real godliness is, true spirituality, true service, as a good servant, of Jesus Christ, is so simple, it just means, living in, and living for, the way, of true salvation, salvation, for ourselves, and for others, that's what our whole life, is striving for, because, verse 10, we are those who hope, in the only God, the living God, who's the only Savior, for all who believe, don't get confused, by that word, especially there, it is confusing, isn't it, but it would be better, to translate it, namely, it's the same, in verse 8, of chapter 5, and verse 17, of chapter 5, it's a word, that just gives, specific definition, to the general statement, that goes before it, so what Paul's saying, is plain isn't it,

God is the Savior of all, in other words, I mean of course, of all who believe, he's been clear, all the way through the letter, you believe, for salvation, and eternal life, but he wants to emphasize, that this is for all, that's what we're about, living so that all, will come to know this God, what Paul's saying, is that God our Savior, is the only hope, for all of us on earth, all who believe, ourselves, who already believe, but also all of these others, that we want to come, to our knowledge of the truth, and that's how he divides, this passage up, you see verse 16, look at the end, he's talking about, saving yourself, you who already believe, and others, who don't, verses 6 to 10, is about us, persevering in salvation, and verses 11 to 16, is about us, leading others to salvation, as we do that, that's real spirituality, that's what it means, to be a good servant, of Jesus Christ, it's that simple, it's wonderfully down to earth, isn't it, what a relief, for any Christian disciple, what a relief, for any Christian leader, how to be a good servant, of Christ Jesus, lead yourself, in the way of truth, and lead others, in the way of truth, and it's the same, for all of us, whatever our responsibilities, whether they're great, or small, whether they're in the church, whether they're within our families, wherever they are, look at verses 6 to 10, what is a good servant to do, well he or she is, to train themselves, better nourish themselves, in true gospel doctrine, avoid silly myths, verse 7, all these stupid controversies, and quarrels, that blow up in the church, and cause people, to get so upset, and confused, just ignore those books, ignore those blogs, what a relief that is, when I was a young student, at university,

I spent so much time, agonizing, and thinking, about all sorts of issues, that kept coming up, and people would get all taken up, with all the rest of it, the sort of things, that students in CU's, get fixated about all the time, and Paul says, ignore all that rubbish, nourish yourself, where in the place of truth, verse 8, train yourself, for godliness, that's what really matters, not all that bodily training, all that engaging, and all of these things, that are going on, the words gymnasia, what he's saying is, it's not spiritual gymnastics, you need to be faithful, it's just, sincere godliness, that's what God wants, another great relief, because, there's always going to be others, aren't there, who are so much more able, than we, to talk in a wonderful way, to do wonderful, impressive things, now just make sure, you're nourishing yourself, in God's truth, and you're training, to live by God's instruction, and he says in verse 8, that will fill your life, with promise, now here on earth, and with great promise, for the world to come, trust me, he says, it's a trustworthy saying, this is the simple truth, that we've got to catch hold of, and be taken up with, that's what real spirituality, is about,

I find that so encouraging, don't you, it's not beyond any one of us, and it's that kind, of lived out, balanced, biblical Christianity, that Paul says, is so worth striving for, because we know, don't we, that the living God, leads us in that path, and he will be the savior, of all who will believe, and come to a knowledge, of the truth, as we show them the way, God's word, he's saying, must be heard by us, in our own lives, to nourish us, and to train us, if God's godliness, is going to be seen in us, by others, it's obvious, and it's when that godliness, is seen in us, that other people, will be able to hear, God's word from us, that we'll be able to teach, remember chapter 3 verse 2, that we'll be able, to lead others, to the savior, and that's what, a good servant of Christ, Jesus must do, that's what Paul's saying, in verses 11 to 16, do you see, come on, teach these things, by your example, verse 12, by your conduct, and your love, and your faith, and your purity, real purity, of course, not false piety, not restrictive humanity, but wholesome, attractive,

Christian witness, live that way, and people will look up to you, he says, they won't despise you, or look down on you, even if you're young, godliness must be seen, in us, if it's going to be heard, from any servant, of the church, but of course, verse 13's true, it must be heard, you must devote yourself, to reading, and exhorting, and teaching the scriptures, God has given his servants, gifts, and those gifts, bring responsibility, we can't neglect that, he says in verse 14, God had gifted Timothy, for the task, of teaching, and proclaiming the scriptures, the church, had given him that task, when the council of elders, the presbytery, had laid their hands on him, so Paul says, well over verse 15, you've no choice Timothy, you've got to do it, you've got to be devoted to it, that's a challenge, isn't it, to pastors, people like me, and others, it's sinful, as he says, back in verse 4, it's sinful, for Christian believers, to reject the gifts, that God has given us, in the natural world, it's sinful too, to reject the gifts, that he's given us, for the service of the church, in this case, for Timothy, preaching and teaching, but it's a challenge, to all of us, isn't it, because we've all, to be good servants, of Christ Jesus, in whatever sphere, we find ourselves in, whether you're, teaching a Sunday school class, or teaching a youth group, or teaching a home group, or teaching your children, at home, or teaching your friends, at work, we're all to practice, and devote ourselves, to working hard, at living the truth, and at sharing the truth, verse 16, watching our lives, and watching our teaching, paying attention, to what we exhibit, to others, in our godliness, that it's true godliness, and then what we explain, to others in the gospel, that it's the true gospel, and do that, verse 15, and what will you see, real progress, advancement, real spiritual advancement, that other people can see, pursue this, verse 16, and what will happen, you'll save yourselves, persevering, and saving faith, and you'll save others, you'll live in a way, to lead yourself, in the way of salvation, that's real spirituality, that's real advancement, and you'll lead others, in the way of truth too, and you do that, very simply, as you are nourished, in the truth, as you train yourself, and as you are shaped, by the plain truth of God, for plain, truth filled, godly living, in this world, it's not rocket science, is it?

[ 47 : 18 ] There's no spiritual sophistication, about all of this, it's just plain, solid, real Christian belief, and real Christian behavior, nothing super spiritual, just balanced, biblical faith, lived out, in front of other people, so they can see, it's real, so that when you do speak, and have the opportunity, to speak to somebody, you can talk the talk, because they know, that you walk the walk, that was very important, for Timothy, and all these others, who have to formally, lead the church, in teaching, and preaching, and so on, of course it is, but it's true also, for all Christ's servants, and we're all, to be good servants, of Christ Jesus, those of you, who were at the, West of Scotland, Gospel Partnership Conference, last week, will have heard, Ray Evans saying, that the most important thing, that always comes up, in surveys, when people ask, how somebody came, to Christian faith, even when, they finally come to faith, because they've been brought, to church, and they've heard the gospel, what is the most important thing?

Well, it's not, the preacher, or what he says, from the pulpit, it's their friend, who's a Christian, and their life, and their witness, and what they've shared, with them, so don't look to me, I've got a job, but we've all got a job, we're all Christ's servants, but isn't it wonderful, that truly, heavenly ministry, of saving sinners, forever, is so healthily, down to earth, it's so simple, not easy, of course, Paul says, doesn't he, we toil, and strive for this, all the time, it's hard, but it's not complicated, it's just watching, our lives, and watching our lips, for Jesus sake, and it is, absolutely crucial, says Paul, it's a matter, of heaven and hell, it's verse 1, apostasy, and denying the faith, or it's verse 16, salvation, for ourselves, and for many others, so friends, let us, keep one another, really down to earth, for this heavenly ministry, make sure, make sure, make sure, we are, for ourselves, and for one another, being nourished, and trained, in the truth, striving for our lives, and striving for our lips, to lead, to the living God, to save us, and to save many others, who will believe, and trust in him, that's our task, as good servants, of Christ Jesus, let's pray, heavenly father, we thank you, that your word, is so clear, it is so simple, in how you instruct us, to live, but it is such a struggle,

Lord, for us, because we battle, against the flesh, we battle against, our own sinful thoughts, our sinful hearts, and we have an enemy, the evil one, who would love, to lead us all, completely astray, into myths, and confusion, and corruption, help us, we pray, as we help one another, to set an example, to one another, of what it means, to be the household of God, your church, your family, help us, to help others, find in you, that wonderful, everlasting life, that Jesus Christ, your son, has won for us, for we ask it, in his name, Amen.