

Text: 1 Timothy 3:14-16¹
Series: Living as Gospel People
Title: Behaving as Gospel People
Date: October 25, 2009
Place: First Baptist Church, Olds, AB

Over the next several months we're going to study Paul's First Letter to Timothy and this morning I want us to orient ourselves to the letter by reading something we find almost in the very centre of Paul's communication with Timothy. Paul stops about mid-point through his letter to tell Timothy why he was writing to him. This is crucial information. As we make our way through First Timothy in detail, I want us to keep the verses we're going to read this morning at the forefront of our thinking. What we're about to read is the "why" of First Timothy.

Here it is. Paul wrote to Timothy...

1 Timothy 3:14 I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, ¹⁵ if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. ¹⁶ 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.**

Before we get into a close examination of this passage I want you to notice one, very dominant truth concerning which Paul wrote to Timothy. Actually, I should say, that God wrote to Timothy because by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Paul was writing as God's inspired, authoritative, inerrant spokesman. Whatever we read in this letter is God's Word to Timothy, not just Paul's word or Paul's ideas. And furthermore, Paul wasn't only writing to Timothy, he was writing to you and me, too, because God also had us in view when he inspired Paul to write this letter. This is God's Word for you and me today. This is God's letter to us.

The dominant truth that I want us to notice is contained in verse 16 which in all likelihood was a hymn that the believers in the first century sang together. It was a doctrine song and it sang the Gospel! It sang the story of Jesus! The "He" of verse 16 can be none other than Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God who became flesh, who died on the cross, who rose again on the third day, who

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission, All rights reserved.

ascended into heaven and who now sits at the right hand of the Father, awaiting the day when the Father will send him back to judge the world and usher in eternity. I've entitled this series, "**Living as Gospel People**" because at the heart of this letter is the Gospel of Jesus Christ and we will encounter the Gospel again and again as we unfold this letter together in the coming months.

We're going to see that the Gospel touches every area of our lives as believers. The Gospel of Jesus Christ isn't only the truth that gets us to heaven when we die; it's the truth that brings God's reign into our lives every day of our lives as we await the return of Jesus Christ. Paul connected the Gospel to the way we live our lives when he wrote to Timothy...

"I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God" 1 Timothy 3:14-15

In these central verses we encounter the union of belief and behaviour. As believers in Jesus Christ we have a Gospel story that lies at the heart of who we are and what we do. The story we tell is one that involves changed lives. Christian belief leads to Christian behaviour. It must. It's not an option. We can't claim to truly believe the Gospel if our lives continue to deny it. And in this letter to Timothy, Paul is calling us to...

Behave as Gospel People

Paul is talking about transformed living that comes about because the living God is alive in us! It's a theme you find throughout his letters. To the believers in the city of Corinth he wrote about changed lives in Christ...

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God...." 2 Corinthians 5:17-18

To the Christians in the city of Philippi he wrote about transformed living by the power of the living God...

"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." Philippians 2:12-13

And to the saints in Ephesus he wrote about abandoning our old way of life and living in a new way that evidenced the presence of God. He wrote ...

"you have heard about [Jesus] and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of

your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” Ephesians 4:21-24

When Paul told Timothy that the purpose of his letter was to inform him on how people “**ought to behave in the household of God**” he didn’t mean that his concern was about how people should behave at church. His concern wasn’t how we should behave **at** church but rather, how we should behave **as the** church of Jesus Christ! And as Paul’s exposition of Christian behaviour unfolds in this letter, we clearly see that being the church of Jesus Christ is a 24/7 proposition.

The Gospel touches every area of our lives. Let me give you a glimpse at some of the things we’re going to look at in the months ahead. **Behaving as Gospel people means...**

...That we’re discerning about the kinds of things we think about. The Gospel affects our minds. Paul has a very real concern about “**false teachers**” who were leading people away from the purity of the Gospel. Behaving as Gospel people requires us to develop an educated discernment about the content of spiritual truth.

Paul told Timothy to...

“charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.” 1 Timothy 1:3-4

There is a proliferation of spiritual teachers in the public arena today and I’m often surprised at the degree to which people are led astray by what they see on television or what they read in something they bought at Chapters. The other day at Chapters I took notice of how many titles they carry on “spirituality.” There were some writers whose work was built on the truth of God but the vast majority of writers were in what Paul would call the “speculative” category. As Gospel people we need to learn to distinguish what is truth from what is “speculative.”

You might expect Paul to be concerned about truth and doctrine. But behaving as Gospel people isn’t only a matter of good theology. Good theology leads to Gospel living and it gets very practical.

For example, behaving as Gospel people also means...

...That our identity as men and women is shaped by our faith in Jesus Christ. Paul wrote to Timothy,

“I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling;” 1 Timothy 2:8

Paul challenges men to be very intentional and public about their spiritual lives. It's not something that men find easy. You'll find many churches in our world today that are kept alive because women keep them alive. But men are called by the Gospel to be spiritually active, not passive, not absent. And they are called to be men of self-control, not chest-thumping, yelling, screaming, fighting beasts who make themselves the centre of attention and get what they want because they are more aggressive than the other males. Their identity is to be found in “holiness” not machismo.

And Paul has a word for women. In fact he connects it to his word to men. He wrote...

“likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.” 1 Timothy 2:9-10

Please understand that Paul is not obsessing about little matters of earrings and makeup. What he's concerned about is our understanding of who we truly are. The Gospel challenges women to find their identity in Jesus Christ, not in fashion or in the affirmation they receive from being attractive. Godly character is to be their defining virtue.

I'm not going to go deeply into this morning but as Gospel people we need to ask ourselves: where do we get our sense of self? What shapes our mental image of what it means to be a man or a woman? Oprah Winfrey? Brent Sutter? Or Jesus Christ?

We are to behave as Gospel people.

Behaving as Gospel people means that...

...The Gospel effects the way we relate to our families. Paul wrote...

“But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” 1 Timothy 5:8

In the weeks just before I graduated from Bible school I got a knock on my dorm room door. It was a man who had been given permission by the administration to talk to graduating students about life insurance. He suggested that life insurance was a good way to provide for our loved ones and in our discussion I happened to mention that there was a verse in the Bible that encouraged us to

take care of those we love. He suddenly seemed very interested, “What was that reference?” he asked me. I read this verse for him. I later learned that he used it with every other student as part of his sales pitch. I hadn’t intended that but the point that Paul makes in 1 Timothy is that the Gospel effects the way we view our relationship with our families. Caring for our family is to be one of the highest priorities in our lives and it flows directly from the Gospel. And by the way, this isn’t just a word to men. Paul also directs women to care for their widowed mothers and mother-in-law.

Paul also tells Timothy to select his church leaders from men who demonstrate that the Gospel is being lived out in their home life. He wrote that a church leader...

“must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?” 1 Timothy 3:4-5

I just want to give you a sense of the many ways in which the Gospel is to be lived out in our lives as Gospel people. **Behaving as Gospel people means that...**

...The Gospel shapes our view of wealth.

“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.” 1 Timothy 6:10

Behaving as Gospel people means that...

...The Gospel influences our relationships with the generations.

“Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.” 1 Timothy 5:1-2

It means that...

...The Gospel directs our enjoyment of the good things of life.

Paul was concerned about certain false teachers...

“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 is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.” 1 Timothy 4:3-5

And behaving as Gospel people means that...

...The Gospel speaks to physical fitness as a part of our Gospel-driven lives!

Paul encouraged Timothy to...

“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.” 1 Timothy 4:7-9

Money, marriage, diet, exercise, family, self identity ... the Gospel speaks to them all, and to much, much more! In the coming months we're going to discover how much more.

Here in this central declaration of his purpose in writing this letter, Paul connects Christian behaviour with **three central principles**. Behaving as Gospel people isn't about rule keeping. Each one of the three principles that Paul gives us is rooted in the person of God himself. You see, believing the Gospel of Jesus Christ brings us into a personal relationship with God and everything in our lives is to flow from that relationship.

First of all...

Our behaviour is to be an expression of the fact that through faith in Jesus Christ we have become children in God's family

Paul wrote to Timothy about...

“how one ought to behave in the household of God” 1 Timothy 3:15

The word translated as “household” is used a few verses before this one and it's likely that Paul is using the word in the same sense in both instances. Just a few verses before, Paul wrote that a leader, in the church...

“must manage his own household well” 1 Timothy 3:4

Prospective leaders were to be people who were found to be...

“managing their children and their own households well.” 1 Timothy 3:12

What Paul was saying was that the quality of leadership and care that a man gave to his family was a significant criterion for evaluating whether he should be given leadership responsibility in the church.

“Household,” as it’s used in this passage and throughout the Paul’s letter to Timothy, refers to “family.” Let me just stop here and make the point that this letter from Paul was written to those who are in God’s family. We’re not born into God’s family; we must be “reborn” into God’s family. We have to be “born again” in order to become a child of God. The Apostle John tells us that when Jesus Christ came to this world, he came to invite us to become members of God’s family. Many people refused his invitation.

“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” John 1:12-13

Let me invite you today to become a member of God’s family, just as Jesus did 2000 years ago. If you believe “in his name” you will become a child of God. To “believe in his name” means to accept everything the Bible says about him: that he is the Son of God come in the flesh; that his every word is the Word of God; that his life was without sin; that he died on the cross to take your punishment for sin; that he rose from the dead and wants to give you the power to live a new life; that he’s coming again one day to take you home to live with him forever. If you’d like to know more about becoming a member of God’s family, I’d love to talk with you after the service today.

If we’re going to behave as children in God’s household, one of the most important questions we need to ask of the choices we make is simply...

Is my behaviour consistent with being a child in God’s family?

And remember, this is God’s household, not mine or yours. It’s God’s. We need to settle the matter that this is God’s family. A couple of weeks ago I told you a story from the movie, “Remember the Titans.” It’s the true story of the racial integration of a football team in the southern United States in the 1960s. The coach of the team had to face down a rebellion led by the team captain. As the team was about to leave for training camp, the team captain issued an ultimatum to the coach about how the team was to be run. The busses were pulled up curbside, the team was milling around waiting to board them, the parents were standing off to the side watching. You remember the dialogue. The coach asked the captain of the team...

Coach Boone: Are your parents here?

Bertier: There's my mother.

Coach Boone: Good. [*he nods his head at Gary's mom*] You take a look at her. Cause once you step on that bus you aint got your mama no more. You got your brothers on the team and you got your daddy. You know who your daddy is, doncha? Gary, if you want to play on this football team, you answer me when I ask you who is your daddy? Who's your daddy, Gary? Who's your daddy?

Bertier: [*Bertier drops his head and quietly says*] You.

Coach Boone: And who's team is this, Gary? Is this your team? Or is this your daddy's team?

Bertier: Yours.

Coach Boone: Now get on the bus.

(<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0210945/quotes>)

Whose family is this? Is this your family? Is this my family? No, this is God's family. As we move through this book we're going to find that the Gospel will touch aspects of our life that we will struggle to surrender to God. There may well be times when we're going to try and tell God how to manage his household. Let me suggest that we decide once and for all "Who's our Daddy?"

Second, Paul wants us to understand that...

Our behaviour is to be an expression of the fact that we are members of the church of the living God

Paul wrote to Timothy about...

"how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God" 1 Timothy 3:15

The word translated as "church" has the root meaning of "gathering" or "assembly." In the New Testament, the word "church" means the gathering of God's people for worship and service.

How is "the living God" present when we gather together?

One of the ways he is present in the church is when we gather together to hear him speak to us as His Word is taught and preached. Last week I had planned to begin this series on 1 Timothy but instead, for a variety of reasons, I spoke from the first chapter of Ruth. I've lost track of the number of people who've spoken with this week to tell me that the message from Ruth was exactly what they needed to hear last Sunday. On Wednesday night I lead a Bible study that is going through a book entitled, "The Pursuit of Holiness." After the study, one of the folks talked to me about how glad they were that they had come that night because God spoke to them. Many of you have had the same experience in your small group Bible studies. God is present. He speaks in through His Word.

The living God was speaking last week through His Word. I always get a thrill hearing that little phrase: "God spoke me to in what you said." It thrills me; it awes me; it humbles me; it fills me with wonder. The living God is among his people as they gather together to listen to Him.

I've been thinking about this question:

Does my behaviour reflect the presence of the living God?

One Scripture to which my mind always turns when I think about this question is found in the First Epistle of John. The Apostle John wrote...

“No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.” 1 John 4:12

Do you catch what John is saying? God is invisible. People may say: “Where’s this ‘living God’ you claim to believe in? I don’t see him!” To which John says, if we love one another with the love God has given us, then as we express to others the love of God, God is made visible in our love. Our love for others is a visible expression of the living God.

I was thinking of that truth when I opened a card addressed to the church a week ago. I was from the Poland family, thanking you for the kindness you had shown them in helping them get back on their feet after their house burned down several weeks ago.

I was thinking of the visibility of the living God when I spoke this week with a woman who had had supper the previous night with a friend of hers who is going through a very serious time of trial in her life. Where’s the living God? He was at that supper table as one friend shared in the struggle of another.

I could multiply examples from the life of this church but I won’t. Let me tell you, brothers and sisters, the living God is among you! How does our behaviour give evidence of His presence? **“If we love one another....”**

Thirdly, Paul wants us to realize that...

Our behaviour is to be an expression of the unchangeable, exalted truth of God

Paul wrote about...

“how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.” 1 Timothy 3:15

A pillar lifts up. It raises up. It holds up. The pillars of a building give the building elevation. The church is to hold up the truth, to lift it high and exalt it.

Gothic church buildings are full of pillars. They hold up the roof but they do much more than that! When you walk into a Gothic cathedral the first thing you do is lift your head and gaze in wonder at the ceiling! The designer intended that you should do just that – to lift your eyes heavenward and be awestruck!

Our task as a church is to hold up and exalt the truth of God. We lift it and we live it! And there's no better way to lift the truth of God than to live it.

In a Gothic church, what enables those pillars to lift up the roof and draw our eyes heavenward? It's the foundation. It's the buttress that holds the pillars solid.

Our task as a church is hold firmly to the truth of God and not be moved. We love it and we live it! We cherish the truth of God as precious and refuse to let go of it!

Last summer when Ruth and I visited England we toured several ancient churches. Several times we worshipped in churches that had been in place for well over a thousand years and I got a thrill whenever they would tell us that for over a thousand years prayer had been offered in that place to God. Solid. Unmovable. Faithful. That's how we are to "behave" with God's truth.

What truth do we uphold? What truth do we hold to? As Paul wrote about God's truth he immediately broke into a song...

**“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.”
1 Timothy 3:16**

It's a song about Jesus. Jesus is the truth we proclaim and truth we defend. He is "the mystery of godliness." **Jesus is the mystery of godliness personified.** Paul wrote to the believers in Colosse...

“in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily...” Colossians 2:9

And Jesus is also **the mystery of godliness communicated.** Paul continued...

“and you have been filled in him” Colossians 2:10

The One who is the fullness of God has been given to us and as the Apostle Peter tells us, he gives us everything we need for life and godliness. (2 Peter 1:3) Our conduct and behaviour is transformed because Jesus is alive in us by His Spirit. We hold to and proclaim the One who said...

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” John 14:6

We hold to Jesus Christ and we hold to the Book that tells his story, the Bible. And so we need to ask of ourselves...

Does my behaviour mirror the truth of Jesus Christ revealed in the Bible?

In Jesus we have been given everything we need in order to behave as Gospel people. That's why Paul breaks into a song of worship as his mind is enraptured with the One who is the truth.

Robert Webber, was a noted authority on Christian worship. He recounted an incident in which he had the opportunity to hold up the truth of Jesus. He wrote...

I was traveling on a plane from San Francisco to Los Angeles a few years ago. I was sitting next to the window, reading a Christian book. The man next to me, obviously from the Eastern hemisphere, asked, "Are you a religious man?" "Well, yes," I said. "I am too," he responded. We began talking about religion. In the middle of the conversation I asked, "Can you give me a one-liner that captures the essence of your faith?" "Well, yes," he said. "We are all part of the problem, and we are all part of the solution."

We talked about his one-liner, a statement I felt was very helpful. After a while I said, "Would you like a one-liner that captures the Christian faith?"

"Sure," he responded.

"We are all part of the problem, but there is only one man who is the solution. His name is Jesus." © PreachingToday.com Robert Webber, Who Gets to Narrate the World? (IVP, 2008), p. 26

[Invite worship team forward]

As I thought about how to respond to the truth that Paul unfolds for us here my mind was also drawn to worship. I thought about songs that enable us to declare the truth of the person and ministry of Jesus Christ and invite us to respond to that truth. I thought about songs such as...

“Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne...”

“In Christ alone my hope is found, he is my light, my strength, my song...”

“Lord I lift your name on high...”

But I finally decided on the one we're going to sing this morning because after considering who Jesus is and what he did for us on the cross, it brings us to a point of commitment where we declare that he is our God. A few minutes ago I said that as we begin our study through this book we need to settle the issue of

our submission to God and his truth as it touches every area of our lives and I invite you to do that this morning as we sing to Jesus...

**“Here I am to worship,
Here I am to bow down,
Here I am to say that you’re my God....”**

Invitation to Prayer

Final Song: Here I Am to Worship

Benediction