The Fruit of False Teaching

Family of Faith, 1 Tim. 6:3-10

Introduction

- Many people are familiar with the Parable of the Sower, but fewer are familiar with the parable that comes next - the Parable of the Wheat & the Tares (Matt. 13:24-30)
  - A man sowed good seed in his field, and his enemy came along at night and sowed bad seed in the same field.
  - In time, the seeds sprouted, & his servants noticed tares growing among the wheat.
    - Wheat is one of the oldest & most popular cereal grasses of all time.
    - Tares look very similar to wheat, but as they mature, they become purple instead of golden, and their seeds become bitter and toxic.
  - The man commanded his servants to wait until the time of the harvest, so the difference between the seeds would be clear.
- Teaching is like a seed.
  - Good teaching produces good fruit in the life of the student.
  - Bad teaching produces bad fruit in the life of the student.
- And in 1 Timothy 6:3-10, the Apostle Paul examines the bad & bitter fruit of the false teaching in the Ephesian church.
  - Apparently, there wasn't much content to push back against, but there was a clear distortion of the gospel message.
  - This distorted gospel was affecting the beliefs & behavior of the false teachers and their followers.
- Like Timothy and the other believers in Ephesus, **we must avoid false teaching, or we will share in its bitter fruits.**
- Personally, I like a lot of fruit and vegetables. As I was preparing for this message, I thought about all the fruits and vegetables I've eaten & there's only 1 that I really don't like – radishes. I'm sorry if you like them, but I don't. And I can't blame anyone else if I eat one.
- In God's Word, we learn today that **believers must avoid false teaching, or they will share in its bitter fruit.**
  - Here, Paul uses an if/then statement to describe the 3 fruits that spring from a distortion of the gospel.
  - We must keep these bitter realities in mind as we evaluate the preaching, teaching, and instruction that we engage with in the Kingdom of God.

Body

I. Mental Confusion (v. 4a)

A. Wanting to be respected for their clarity, they communicated nothing.

B. Looking for content, they hyperfocused on speculations and minutiae.

C. The lessons taught by the false teachers in Ephesus may have sounded like our modern-day political debates, complete with hairsplitting details, talking points, and rhetorical "dunks." I've never walked away from one of our televised debates and thought, "I think I have a better grasp on the issues."

D. We owe it to God and to ourselves to articulate "the faith."

1. To share our testimony and explain the gospel we believe.

2. To trace the basic steps of the plan of redemption from OT to NT

3. To defend the basic tenets of Christianity like the Trinity, the deity of Christ, and the authority of Scripture. (FYI: We cover these in Catalyst)

II. Multiplied Division (v. 4b-5a)

A. Various types of division come from this confusion:

1. Envy and strife

2. Abusive language and evil suspicions

3. Constant friction between people who think in perverse ways and who have lost touch with the Truth.

B. Negativity grows where positivity is absent.

1. If a church doesn't have a positive identity, it'll have a negative one.

2. If a church doesn't have positive theology, it will be negative

3. If a church doesn't have positive direction, it will have a negative one.

C. Occasional division in a church is probably normal, but continued & widespread disunity is probably a sign that the church has lost sight of the gospel. The thing that draws a church together has been eclipsed by the things that pull it apart.

III. Misplaced Passion (v. 5b-10)

A. Some thought their "religion" would help them get rich.

B. This was only half right; their "religion" was a means to something great when combined with contentment. (Paul shares 2 sayings).

C. "Money love" is the seed from which all kinds of evil grows.

1. It's the reason many have wandered away from the faith.

2. No one gets lost in a single missed turn. It takes a series of missteps and recalculations to go from knowing where you are to becoming totally lost. The same thing can happen spiritually.

3. It's the reason some have impaled themselves on many griefs.

4. One study of lottery winners suggests that 70% eventually go bankrupt. Why? Because of incessant requests for money, predatory schemes, strained relationships, and "sudden wealth syndrome," where everything is easy and satisfying – many griefs.

D. From a distance, wealth can look like wheat, but up close it can be the bitter, toxic tare that grows out of a misplaced passion for the wrong thing.

Conclusion

- I've heard sermons my whole life about avoiding false teaching, but I don't remember hearing 1 about "why?" Why is false teaching so dangerous?
  - As we've seen in 1 Tim, false teaching distorts the gospel/hinders our sanctification.
  - As we've seen here, it produces bitter fruit, and **believers must avoid it, or they will taste that fruit.**
- Imagine you visiting a local farmer's market. Imagine one of the vendors has a sign that reads, "Worst produce in town – looks bad, tastes bad, and loaded down with chemicals." Would you choose that one?