

Titles of the Church (#4)
The Pillar and Support of the Truth
Sermon by Pastor Sylvia Chan

Today we are going to study another title of the church:

^{NASB} **1 Timothy 3:15** ¹⁵ but in case I am delayed, *I write* so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. (1Ti 3:15 NASB)

Here Apostle Paul says that the purpose of his letter is to help Timothy know how to conduct himself in the household of God, the church of the living God Yahweh, the pillar and support of the truth.

Last time we studied the first part of this passage “The household of God”; please refer to the last sermon. Today we are going to study the second part: “The pillar and support of the truth”.

Biblical Meaning of Truth

First of all, what is truth? I am not talking about the dictionary definition of truth, but the biblical meaning of truth; how does the Bible define truth? The meaning of truth in the Bible is vast and deep; we need to look into both the Old and New Testaments.

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew; the original Hebrew word for truth is “ אֱמֶת ” (*emeth*). The New Testament was written in Greek; the original Greek word for truth is “ ἀλήθεια ” (*alētheia*).

1. Yahweh God is the God of truth

^{NASB} **Psalms 31:5** ⁵ Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have ransomed me, O Yahweh (LORD), God of truth.

This is the verse that the Lord Jesus quoted when he was about to die on the cross.

^{NASB} **Isaiah 65:16** ¹⁶ “Because he who is blessed in the earth will be blessed by the God of truth; And he who swears in the earth will swear by the God of truth; Because the former troubles are forgotten, And because they are hidden from my sight!

These two passages Psalm 31:5 and Isaiah 65:16 show that Yahweh God is the God of truth.

2. The word of God is truth

^{NASB} **John 17:17** ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

This is a verse in the prayer of the Lord Jesus to Yahweh God. Here the Lord himself says that the word of God is truth.

3. The Lord Jesus is the embodiment of truth

^{NASB} **John 14:6** ⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me.”

Here the Lord Jesus says that he himself is the way, the truth and the life, and only through him can we come to God.

4. The Holy Spirit guides us into all the truth

^{NASB} **John 14:16 – 17** ^{“16}And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷ that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.”

This passage John 14:16 – 17 shows that the Spirit of truth is our helper.

^{NASB} **John 14:26** ^{“26} But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. (Joh 14:26 NASB)

This passage John 14:26 shows that the helper is the Holy Spirit.

These two passages, John 14:16 – 17 and John 14:26, together show that the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth; He guides us into all the truth.

5. Righteousness, holiness and truth are linked together in our new life

^{ESV} **Ephesians 4:24** ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (Eph 4:24 ESV)

Here the new self is simply the new life. At baptism our old life died; then we are given a new life in the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

6. Ungodliness and unrighteousness suppress the truth

^{NASB} **Romans 1:18** ¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, (Rom 1:18 NASB)

This passage says that people who live in ungodliness and unrighteousness suppress the truth. If we live in ungodliness and unrighteousness, we wouldn't want to hear about truth, we wouldn't want to have anything to do with truth, we would also suppress the truth.

7. Lying is against the truth

^{NASB} **1 John 1:5 – 6** ⁵ And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him and *yet* walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;

When we lie, we certainly do not practice the truth; lying is against the truth.

After we have looked at the general meaning of truth in the Bible, let's now study a little deeper the meaning of truth.

The Church is the Pillar and Support of the Truth

The passage 1 Timothy 3:15 that says the church is the pillar and support of the truth. A pillar is an upright column to support the building, yet the word "pillar" has a special meaning in the Bible.

1. Biblical meaning of pillar and support

^{NIV} **Galatians 2:9** ⁹ James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. (Gal 2:9 NIV)

This passage says that James, Cephas (Peter) and John were esteemed as pillars. We know they were spiritual leaders of the early church. Therefore the word "pillars" here doesn't mean a physical column, it means a leader, a spiritual leadership.

2. The pillar and support is weak

In a physical building, the pillar and the support are to uphold the building. If the pillar or the

support is strong, the building stands firm. If the pillar or the support is weak or broken, the building collapses.

The church is the pillar and support of the truth. If the church is strong, the truth stands firm. When the church is weak or broken, the truth collapses. Unfortunately, that is exactly the situation today.

The reason why the church is weak is that she doesn't live according to the truth. When the church doesn't live according to the truth, she only talks about truth on a superficial level, and doesn't teach the biblical truth. As a consequence of that, many Christians know very little about the biblical truth and they don't live according to it.

When the church doesn't live according to the teaching of truth, she has no moral authority to point out the sins in the world. The people would not listen to the church, and would even ridicule the church (this is exactly what's happening right now in the world). As a result of that, the world doesn't know what is right, what is wrong, they even see the right things as wrong, and the wrong things as right. As a consequence of that, sin, lawlessness, injustice are rampant.

The Church Has To Live According To The Truth

What can we do? We cannot simply condemn the world for their sins, because they do not know Yahweh God nor the teaching of God; plus when the church doesn't live according to the truth of God, we have no authority to rebuke the world. Therefore we have to start with ourselves.

1. Repentance leads to the knowledge of the truth

^{NASB} **2 Timothy 2:25** ²⁵ with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,

Here it says repentance leads to the knowledge of the truth. The Greek word for knowledge here is “ἐπίγνωσις” (epígnōsis). It is not intellectual knowledge, but moral knowledge; it is a transcendent and moral matter. Here it speaks of “repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth”, which means that when we as Christians repent. Then we will know what is right, what is wrong, and can preach the truth to the world.

2. To live in the word of the Lord Jesus

^{ESV} **John 8:31 – 32** ³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Please notice the word “abide”; the Lord Jesus says we need to abide, or live in his word, which means that his word is part of our lives, and we don’t simply study it.

3. To obey the truth

^{NASB} **1 Peter 1:22** ²² Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,

This passage says that obedience to the truth can purify our souls; then we will have sincere love for our brethren as well as the people in the world, and we can help them to repent.

The Church Has To Proclaim The Truth To The World

Only when we live according to the truth, will we have the moral authority to proclaim the truth to the world.

1. We don’t speak according to the wisdom of the world

^{NASB} **1 Corinthians 1:21 – 24** ²¹ For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to* know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. ²² For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

We don’t speak according to the wisdom of men. People in the world follow the teaching of this philosopher or that scholar; they use different ways to speak, but we speak the biblical truth from the word of God.

2. We speak the truth in love

^{NASB} **Ephesians 4:15** ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into him who is the head, *even* Christ,

We should speak the biblical truth with an attitude of love. In all these years of serving God, I always ask God to help me to love the people; I make sure I speak the truth with love in my heart. If we don’t have love for the people, we should just keep quiet, we should not speak.

But on the other hand, we don’t try to please men.

^{NASB} **Galatians 1:10** ¹⁰ For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

We have to point out the sins of people if necessary, but we do it with love in our hearts.

3. We will be persecuted

We see that truth is the opposite of lying and unrighteousness. When we speak the truth, the world would not like it, people would persecute us.

^{NASB} **2 Timothy 3:1 – 5** ¹ But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. ² For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

^{NASB} **2 Timothy 3:12** ¹² Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

This is exactly the situation of the world today. This was prophesied two thousand years ago; all these things are in God's foreknowledge, He is in control.

4. Do all things without grumbling

Even though we are persecuted, we continue to speak the biblical truth and live a life of truth without grumbling or disputing.

^{NASB} **Philippians 2:14 – 15** ¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or disputing; ¹⁵ so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,

People in the world tend to complain about almost anything. When we do all things without grumbling or disputing or arguing, we are truly different from the people of the world. We would stand out in this crooked and perverse generation, we would shine as lights in this world.