

Imago Dei: Winning Image-Bearers, not Arguments – 2 Tim 2:24-26

Imago Dei and the Battle for Humanity - #6

Introduction – The goal of this series is the glory of God expounded in light of our immoral cultural decline, particularly in the rejection of the Imago Dei. But God's glory is not expounded with truth as though truth were simply an abstract statement. Truth is a Person (John 14:6) and this Person was sent because God so loved the world (John 3:16). Truth and love, rightly understood, go together like flesh and bone, making people whole. How do we learn to speak the truth in love? For if we are to win image-bearing men and women lost in the darkness and lies of this culture, we must.

“Speaking the truth in love...” (Eph 4:15) – God has given the gift of teaching and preaching to the church (Eph 4:11-12) and used rightly, it keeps the church from being tossed to and fro (v14). The *truth* of the doctrines of our faith must be clearly proclaimed, taught, explained, and applied. They must be done out of *the love* of Christ, *His love* for His beloved, and *the Father's* love for His children. And this means we must teach the truth of Christ with the love of Christ. Truth without love is like a dry skeleton; love without truth is like a flabby jellyfish. Truth in love is like a mature man, backbone and flesh. The church must mature in her ability to speak the truth in love, and so must her children.

Rules of Engagement (2 Tim 2:24-26) – We are not at war with unbelievers. We are at war for unbelievers. We are seeking to win the man, not the argument. With this in mind, Paul instructs Timothy in the rules of engagement. A servant of the Lord must not quarrel (an intensely bitter conflict). He must be gentle to all, able and ready to teach, and patient. He should correct those in opposition, but with humility. He does so knowing he has found himself in this conflict as a God-ordained plan; it may very well be that God intends to grant them repentance. And opposed to a Jonah style attitude, we are to long for that, so that they may know the truth. That truth will bring them to their senses and they will escape the snare of the devil to whom they have been captive to do his will.

Avoiding Quarrels – Remember that many times people do not want answers to their questions. The good news is that if you don't have all their answers, it doesn't matter. And if you aren't convincing them, it doesn't matter. Are you sowing seeds of Truth? Are you doing so with genuine love for the lost person? Are you doing so with faith that God is at work? This passage shows us that what makes the power of the cross effective is in some ways connected to our demeanor in presentation. Truth is Personal. You are a person and they are a person and Truth is another Person. Think of introducing them to a Person.

Loving Truth, Loving Persons, Releasing Captives – We are to love the truth (propositions) and uncompromisingly. We are also to love persons, not as people to win an argument from but to release from their captivity.

Gospel Clarity and Relational Clarity – Paul teaches us that the church is the pillar and foundation of truth (1 Tim 3:15). John teaches us that they will know that we are the true church, disciples of Jesus, if we love one another (John 13:35). It seems that love is the great eye-opener, and preaching the truth is the great light giver (Acts 26:18).

Are You Willing to Speak the Truth in “the Context of Love”? – What does the Gospel demand of someone whose whole life is wrapped up in a homosexual lifestyle? What will it cost them to leave that? Just a change of mind from false to truth? And while Jesus does tell us to take up our cross, to die and follow Him, are we prepared to struggle with someone in their turmoil over such a decision? It is true that Jesus teaches that life with Him will always be better than anything you leave behind (Mark 10:28-30) but do we realize the “family” we are requiring someone now deny and leave? What if a friend told you that they were gay? Shouldn't the first thing you do is thank them for being so open and entrusting something so personal with you? Shouldn't they immediately hear your assurance that any fear of rejection by you is unfounded? Certainly they will hear (probably already have) that you do not approve of such activities, but that doesn't mean you cannot accept them as a person, a friend, someone created in the image of God who needs to be restored – just like you if only in different ways. Will they sense your empathy for what it will cost them, how hard it might seem to trust God and obey?

We Are All Sinners (Rom 3:23) – This is who we are. We are all in need of rescue from the grip of sin and the evil one.

Grace is Always Greater (Rom 5:20-21) – There is a way out of every evil trap. Even the ones we have built ourselves. You know that. God's grace is always greater. Speak and live with this confidence (Rom 1:16).

Gentle to All, Able to Teach, Patient, In Humility Correcting (1 Tim 2:24-25) – Test yourself in your attitude about these sins we are addressing. Can you turn to confront them with the demeanor Paul charges?

Trust God Alone for the Results (1 Cor 3:6) – Some plant, some water, but God is in charge of the increase.