



Bishop Keith Cowart “An Ancient Word for Today’s Church” 10/24/2021

Key Verses:

- 1 Timothy 1:3-7

Key Thoughts:

- As Paul is writing to Timothy here, he had learned that there were people in the church at Ephesus that were stirring up “controversial speculations.” We don't know what they were teaching, but what's important is the fruit of the teaching: division.
- These controversies were leading to strife, friction, and division. However, the largest issue is that God's work was not being advanced.
- This describes what we're seeing in the American church today. We're struggling because of this friction and division. We must own and lament this problem so that we can address it.
- The pandemic, race, and politics are the three main things dividing our churches. As a result, they've become anxious systems and the outcome is that God's work is not being advanced.
- **We need to hear Paul's words today for the church at Ephesus. He tells them to love one another, pursue unity, and focus on the advancement of God's work.**
- The advancement of God's work is where the American church has been most distracted. It's critical that we remember that our job as Christians is not to perpetuate Christian culture in America. How can we expect people that don't know our Lord to embrace his values? This has turned people we're called to reach into our enemies. We won't reach the world if we see them as our enemies.
- **We aren't to win people to our values, but to our Lord.**
- It starts with us because right now the world see us not loving each other. We should be bringing something radically different to discussions around the pandemic, race, and politics. In John 17:20-23, Jesus places a direct tie between our unity and the advancement of God's work. He asks God to make us one as the greatest testimony to the world that Jesus is who he says he is.
- When we're not one, our witness is destroyed in the world. Unity is not conformity. It means that when we agree on the essentials, our differences become beautiful.
- For Paul, the aim of putting an end to false teaching is love (1 Timothy 1:5). He doesn't want them to be bashed, he wants to fuel love. *We have to recover the understanding that love is what it means to follow Jesus. If we don't love one another then there's something missing in our love of God.*
- Love is not a feeling; **to love is to give myself for the highest good of another.** We commit ourselves to one another, period. Love doesn't cut off those who disagree, it asks to hear what's going on in your heart and life. Love presses in. Love doesn't run when things get difficult or uncomfortable; it's willing to bear the burden of discomfort in order to be one with you.



- In Philippians 1:21, Paul is writing from prison. When he says, “to die is gain”, he's not saying he'd rather go to Heaven. He's saying that since he met Jesus, the more the longing of his heart is to be in the presence of Jesus. He wasn't longing for streets of gold or mansions; he was longing for Jesus' presence.
- We need to get serious about knowing and loving Jesus and allowing him to transform our hearts.

Discussion Questions:

- One of the biggest takeaways from this message was about our mandate as Christians to love. What obstacles are presently keeping you from loving others well?
- Bishop Keith talked about our job not being to win people to Christian values, but to Christ himself. What are your thoughts on this statement?
- Bishop Keith talked about feeding on media (any site/outlet) versus feeding on the gospel. Which are you feeding on? What effects can you see on your life as a result?