

Sunday, July 2, 2023 am

SOUND IN THE FAITH

I have always been fascinated with the word “sound” in the New Testament. I use the NKJV for my teaching and the word “sound” is found some 47 times. Sometimes it is a reference to sounds that are made (Matthew 6:2 - in giving do not “sound a trumpet”, Acts 2:2 – “there came a sound from heaven...”), in this sense, the word is found about 32 times. Twice it has reference to a nautical term – Acts 27:28 where they were measuring the depth of water. It is its OTHER usage that I want to focus on in this lesson – a soundness that we need to pursue if we are to be pleasing to God.

I. Soundness

- a. The Greek word, ὑγιαίνω (hygiainō), is a word that means to be healthy. Our English word, “hygiene” is a derivative of this word.
- b. **BDAG** defines the word as: 1) To be in good physical health; 2. To be sound or free from error, be correct; **Thayer** defines it as, “to be sound, to be well, to be in good health.” “It is used of one whose Christian opinions are free from any admixture of error... of one who keeps the graces sound and strong,... “true and incorrupt doctrine”.
- c. **Used of health –**
 - i. Luke 5:31, Jesus said, “*Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick*”;
 - ii. Luke 7:10 – where Jesus from a distance healed a centurion’s son. As Jesus spoke, the servant was found “well”.
 - iii. Luke 15:27 – in the prodigal son, when the ungrateful brother heard commotion he asked what it was about, “*Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.*”
 - iv. 3 John 2, John’s prayer was “*that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.*”
 - v. 2 Corinthians 5:13 speaks of being of a sound mind, as if to say one is sane and in possession of his mental faculties.
- d. **Spiritually healthy –** one who is in a healthy state where God is concerned. This describes one who in his standing before God is not spiritually sick. He is free from corruption and compromise. The majority of texts that use the term in this way are found in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus. This will be our focus.

II. Sound in faith

- a. **Sound doctrine –** The word, “doctrine” is a word that simply means teachings or instructions. It is what we learn. Typically, in scripture it has reference to a system of teaching, or a particular belief. We addressed this term a few weeks ago as we discussed “the doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9).
 - i. There are many false doctrines – doctrines of demons (1 Timothy 4:1), Pharisees and Sadducees – Matthew 16:12; the commandments of men – Matthew 15:9, Mark 7:7, etc.
 - ii. Sound doctrine would be that which is healthy. It promotes a healthy relationship with God, our Lord and with one another. It makes us spiritually healthy.
 - iii. The term is found 4 times in the “pastoral letters”
 1. 1 Timothy 1:10 – which notes that law is good (consider “law” here as the gospel or truth) – as it identifies those who are acting “contrary to sound doctrine”. It is that which will endanger their souls and does NOT promote godliness.
 2. Titus 1:9 - in describing the qualities of an elder’s work, they must be able, “by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”

3. Titus 2:1 – Titus was admonished to speak things which are proper for “sound doctrine.” These are things that promoted healthy faith and beliefs. A preacher (and other teaching leaders) is to build up brethren in the truth.
 4. 2 Timothy 4:2-3 – where Paul admonishes Timothy to preach the word, “in seasons and out of season” because a time was coming when they will not endure sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they would rather they would heap up for themselves teachers who would tell them what they wanted instead of what they needed. This is the equivalent of a doctor telling his patient what he WANTS to hear instead of what he NEEDS to hear.
- iv. The point of each of these passages is that our teaching needs to be “sound” or healthy. James 3:17 describes the wisdom that is from above as “first pure, then peaceable.” NOTICE the priority of purity. God’s word must be both undiluted and unpolluted. Everything else hinges on the purity of His word. Matthew 5:8, Jesus noted that it is the “pure in heart” that will see God.
- b. *Sound mind* - 2 Timothy 1:7 – *God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of “a sound mind.”*
- i. In a text where Paul is facing his earthly end, he encourages Timothy to remain faithful no matter what happens.
 - ii. The Christian ought not to be living with timidity, uncertainty, and cowardice. Rather with boldness, confidence and courage, he stands up for truth or “sound doctrine”.
 - iii. Paul reminded Timothy of resources he had at his disposal – God’s power (a reminder of who He is and that He is on our side – Romans 8:31, His gospel – Romans 1:16-17, Hebrews 4:12, etc.), our uncompromising love (often it is love that causes one to take bold actions to protect and defend, whether family, country or faith) and “a sound mind” – a healthy confidence.
 - iv. Many people have many fears in this life, but we cannot let such things paralyze us from doing what we should be doing. We sometimes hear the expression, “face your fears”. God wants us to do that. Addressing our fears begins with a “healthy mind” or mindset. A healthy mind is one that is properly taught and grounded in truth. A healthy mind gives you the confidence you need – doubts are removed because you are informed, cf. 1 John 4:18 – *there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.* 2 Corinthians 7:1, *Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*
 - v. You see Paul’s “sound mind” in the verses that follow – cf. 2 Timothy 1:12.
- c. *“Sound in the faith”* - Titus 1:13 – after giving instructions for elders to spot and challenge false teachers, idle talkers, etc., they are tasked with sharply rebuking those who need it, *“that they may be sound in the faith.”* The expression in this text is pointing toward the truth of God’s word.
- i. We sometimes speak of “the faith” as descriptive of the life of a Christian based upon the teachings of our Lord (e.g., “sound doctrine”).
 - ii. When I make reference to “faith” as an all-inclusive term (everything involved in us doing our part -e.g., Ephesians 2:8 – saved by grace through faith), this is what we are pursuing. Our “system of belief” needs to be “sound” or healthy! That means it CANNOT be based upon anything OTHER than the truth of God’s word.
 - iii. Jude 3, we contend earnestly for *“the faith once for all delivered to the saints.”*
 - iv. Being sound in the faith, they will not *“give heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth.”* Titus 1:13-14. Ephesians 4:11-14 – leaders given to bring us to *“the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man...”*
- d. *Sound in faith, love and patience* - Titus 2:2 – older men are called to be “sound in faith.” Titus 2 finds Paul’s instructions to Titus to give directions to various groups of people (all are included) – older

men, older women, younger women and men, as well as servants. We ALL have 1) instructions to apply to all of us; and 2) instructions specifically directed toward us depending on our situation and status.

- i. Older men are called upon to be sober (serious), reverent, temperate and “sound in faith, love and patience.” This is descriptive of a healthy spiritual lifestyle. And while the expression is not found in the other relationships, it is implied that such is something they are pursuing.
 - ii. “Sound in faith” here means personal faith. It is contrasted with the previous verse. We need to have a healthy belief (trusting God and believing Him). 2 Peter 1:5 – it is the foundation upon which our lives and growth will be built. Hebrews 11:1 – it is “the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.” (NASB – assurance and conviction). 1 John 5:4, *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.*
- e. *Sound words* - 2 Timothy 1:13 – hold fast the pattern of “sound words.”
- i. In this we find WHERE our soundness is found. It is in the word of God. Acts 20:32, Paul commended the elders to “*the word of His grace which is able to build you up...*”
 - ii. NOTE: Paul calls for Timothy to hold fast to the “pattern” – a word that indicates there IS a standard or “outline”. The mantra of so many today is, “As long as you are sincere that is all that matters.” As Paul instructs these young preachers, it is SO MUCH MORE than that! We have a pattern we are expected to follow and by which we will be judged in the final day – Revelation 20:12.
 - iii. **1 Timothy 6:3** – a warning to those who “teach otherwise” and do not consent to “*wholesome words.*” “Wholesome is the same Greek word as “sound”. It is also further emphasized by the expressions: 1) even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and 2) the doctrine which accords with godliness – that which tends toward proper reverence for Him.
- f. *Sound speech* - Titus 2:8. Our final phrase brings us back to Titus 2 and the various relationships addressed. This time young men are exhorted to be “a pattern of good works, in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility” and “sound speech that cannot be condemned.”
- i. In this we find how sound doctrine will be reflected in what and HOW we teach. As Christians, our conversation needs to reflect godliness and righteousness. We speak the truth in love – Ephesians 4:15. Colossians 4:6 – our speech is to be with grace, seasoned with salt. 1 Peter 3:15 – sanctifying the Lord in our hearts, we give a defense for the hope that is in us, “with meekness and fear...”
 - ii. It cannot be condemned, at least with honest integrity. When you speak the truth, the ungodly WILL condemn it. IT has always been that way. But for the “good and honest heart” and one with integrity, truth will be accepted as truth – whether they agree with it or not.
 - iii. The point is that our conversations need to be healthy. Our answers need to be truthful, well thought out and within proper context.

And thus, we can see what it means to be “sound in faith.” It means our spiritual pursuit is healthy as we are relying to God’s word to guide us in what we do and what we say. It is reflected in our faith and interaction with others. It is holding faithfully to God’s word, without compromise, even in a world that seeks to water down His message in so many ways.

So how do we ensure that we are “sound in faith”? Simply stated, we must read and study God’s word – 2 Timothy 2:15, 3:16-17, Acts 17:11, 1 John 4:1. We need to apply what we have learned – James 1:21-25. Finally, find and associate with others who are striving to be sound in the faith – cf. 2 John 9-11.

What about you? Are you sound in faith? Think about it!