

The Goal Is Love

1 Timothy 1:5-7

“A mother found under her plate one morning at breakfast a bill made out by her small son, Bradley, aged eight—Mother owes Bradley: for running errands, 25 cents; for being good, 10 cents; for taking music lessons, 15 cents; for extras, 5 cents. Total, 55 cents. Mother smiled but made no comment. At lunch Bradley found the bill under his plate with 55 cents and another piece of paper neatly folded like the first. Opening it he read—Bradley owes Mother: for nursing him through scarlet fever, nothing; for being good to him, nothing; for clothes, shoes and playthings, nothing; for his playroom, nothing; for his meals, nothing. Total: nothing.”¹

1 Timothy 1:5-7 NAS:

⁵ *But **the goal of our instruction is love** from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*

⁶ *For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion,*

⁷ *wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.*

Just as there is a world of difference between the level of love shown by the little boy in the opening illustration and that shown by his mother, so there is a world of difference between ordinary human love and the love that God intends for us to have.

Verse 5 of our passage tells us that the goal of Paul’s instruction is love, love that will be demonstrated in specific ways. Many corporations, businesses, and non-profit organizations today have what they call a “*mission statement*.” That is, a brief phrase (which, incidentally often takes them months to develop) that states the reason that organization exists. The mission statement gives the organization’s purposes and goals briefly and to the point. First Timothy 1:5 is a good “*mission statement*” for Christianity. It is a goldmine of thought and practice. Let us break it down.

Looking at it closely, we see that verse 5 deals with how Christianity is to affect a person in his/her emotions, behavior, and thinking. “*The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*” Folks, if we can live like that,

¹ Tan, Paul Lee: *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers*. Garland TX: Bible Communications, 1996, c1979.

people will be flocking into the church to learn more about Christ's teachings.

The first quality mentioned is love. What does that say about the Gospel? It was God's love to begin with that sent Jesus to earth to teach us and to die for our sins. It was love that motivated our Lord to endure the suffering and humiliation of the cross so that we might come into a relationship with Him. It was love that sent the first apostles out as missionaries to tell the world about what Christ had done. Once we have believed in our heart that Jesus is God's Son and that He died for us and came back to life again, and ask Him to be our Savior, we become children of God, and fellow heirs with Christ.² When we have been saved by that glorious love, God the Holy Spirit comes to live within us and then helps us show God's love to others. So we see how our emotions are to be affected: this love is to come from a pure heart.

Look again at 1 Timothy 1:5. "**The goal of our instruction is love** from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." Does that strike a familiar note with what is said in Romans 13:10? "*Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore **love is the fulfillment of the law.***" Put these two verses together and they say that the goal of the Gospel is to teach people how to love as Christ loved and that when that is accomplished the Law is satisfied. Do you recall what Jesus said in Matthew 22:34-40 (NAS)?

³⁴ *But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together.*

³⁵ *One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him,*

³⁶ *"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"*

³⁷ *And He said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'*

³⁸ *"This is the great and foremost commandment.*

³⁹ *"The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'*

⁴⁰ *"On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."*

And John's words in 1 John 4:7-8 (NLT):

⁷ *Dear friends, let us continue to **love one another**, for **love comes from God.***

Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God.

⁸ *But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

Now where is such love to come from? How does a person receive or develop such a capability to love in this way? It must come "*from a pure heart.*" This love that is to be felt for both God and mankind must proceed from a clean, holy, and sincere heart, a heart that has been cleansed by the confession of all sin and by a turning away from that sin, accompanied by a major effort to understand God's Bible from cover to cover.

The concept of a **pure heart** is a rich Old Testament theme. The psalmist asks, "*Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who may stand in His holy place?*" (Psalm 24:3). He then answers his question, "*He who has clean hands and a pure heart*" (Psalm

² See John 1:12; Romans 10:9-10; 1 John 4:19; Romans 8:16-17.

24:4). After his sin with Bathsheba, David cried out in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." Psalm 73:1 exclaims, "Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart!"

A heart washed by regeneration (Titus 3:5), an obedient heart (Romans 6:17), is a pure heart.

Paul says in verse 5: "*The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*" The next quality we see in this verse is behavioral: a good conscience. How do we achieve a good, or clean, conscience? By doing what God teaches us to do in His Word. Now we all know, probably by experience, that when we try to do this all by ourselves it is impossible. That is another reason God sent us the Holy Spirit. Today is Pentecost Sunday, when we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit. This third person of the Trinity is the one who helps us to live as we should live. When we submit to the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we develop the qualities described in Galatians 5:22-23. Some of those qualities affect our emotions, but most of them describe Christian behaviors: patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

A "good conscience" would be the result of living a good and holy life. The Greek word used here for "good" (*agathos*) is that which is perfect, producing pleasure, satisfaction, and a sense of well being. The *conscience* is the God-created, self-judging faculty of human beings. It either affirms or accuses a person (Romans 2:14-15). The mind naturally knows the standard of right and wrong, and when that standard is violated, the conscience reacts to accuse the person and it produces guilt, shame, doubt, fear, remorse, or despair (cf. Titus 1:15). Those with a pure heart (mind) will not be condemned by their conscience. Paul's goal was to maintain a blameless conscience, one free of offense against either God or human (Acts 24:16). Peace, confidence, joy, hope, courage, and contentment are the results of a conscience that is non-accusing, and that will allow love to flow abundantly.³ Carl F. H. Henry has commented, "*The point is, will I obey? I have to make an effort to keep my conscience so sensitive that I walk without offense. I should be living in such perfect sympathy with God's Son that in every circumstance the spirit of my mind is renewed. The one thing that keeps the conscience sensitive to Him is the habit of being open to God on the inside.*"⁴

"*The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*" The final phrase of this verse speaks to our minds, our thought processes, which are to be constantly fixed on God. Faith, which is often referred to as believing, is knowing that God exists, that He is all-powerful and all-knowing, that He keeps His promises, and so much more. Faith or belief is based on an understanding of who God is and what His Word tells us. Faith is taking God at His word. As such, it goes beyond mere intellectual acknowledgement and involves trust--staking your life and eternity on

³ John MacArthur, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary – 1 Timothy*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 17-20.

⁴ C. F. H. Henry, *Christian Personal Ethics*. Grand Rapids. MI: Eerdmans, 1957, p. 509 ff.

what God has said. It might seem risky, but in reality it is the safest thing you can do. The writer of Hebrews tells us that *“Faith is the assurance [substance] of things hoped for, the conviction [evidence] of things not seen”* (Hebrews 11:1).

Therefore, the last ingredient in this recipe in verse 5 is a **“sincere faith,”** a faith that comes from a trust in Christ for the fulfillment of all His promises. So Timothy’s job is to transplant this kind of love, which he feels for God and other people into the hearts of those who are listening to his preaching. He is to help them develop this kind of love by teaching them the absolute truth as God presents it in the Bible. When the heart is prepared by such purifying, one can make every effort, calling on the power of the Holy Spirit, to live a holy life that is filled with goodness and decency. Having such a **heart** and using it to live a holy life will bring a person to the place where they have complete trust in God to do what He says He will do. Does that describe you as a Christian? It is well worth some consideration, is it not?

Now let us move on to the next two verses in this section:

1 Timothy 1:6-7 NAS:

⁶ *For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion,*

⁷ *wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.*

The words that Paul spoke to Timothy in verses six and seven were in order for Timothy to know that his message should be absolutely accurate and based on what he had been taught by Paul. It should not be full of speculation like the things **the false teachers** were preaching. Paul wanted to be absolutely certain that Timothy understood the primary purpose for which the Gospel was to be taught. The objective of the Gospel is for people to understand that **they are to love God and one another from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and a sincere faith** (1 Timothy 1:5). Agape (love) involves self-denial and self-sacrifice to benefit others.⁵

As is all too often typical, there were those in Ephesus who were being drawn to these false teachers. The term, **“straying,”** in verse 6 suggests that they were not focusing on the right goal. The false teachers were intentionally changing the basic teaching of the true Gospel in order to promote their own teaching. Undoubtedly that would benefit them in any number of ways.

As a result of the false teachers intentionally missing the mark of the truth of the Gospel, they had begun to engage in fruitless discussion. The words **“turned aside”** (*ektrepo*) in verse six mean to turn away, to turn away from the original course that was set. The word **“fruitless”** (*mataiologia*) in verse seven means **“vain rattling.”** It speaks of empty talk. It has reference to empty conversation or babbling. The false teachers were talking but they

⁵ John MacArthur, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary – 1 Timothy*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 17-20.

were not saying anything significant.⁶

The false teachers wanted to satisfy their own selfish desires, which included a desire to teach the Law. The word “*wanting*” (*thelo*) speaks of desire. They were not concerned about where God wanted them to be. They chose for themselves where they wanted to be. Their choice sent them outside of the will of God. These false teachers were out of place because they did not have the right attitude for the job. Their motives were selfish and self-centered. They were teaching things they had not understood themselves. The word “*understand*” (*noeo*) in verse seven means to observe, to comprehend, and to feel it in your heart. The false teachers had no genuine feeling about the things they taught.⁷

If we go back to verses 3 and 4, where Paul referred to those who “*teach strange doctrines*” and who “*pay attention to myths and endless genealogies,*” we see some of what these false teachers were doing.

“Commentator J. N. D. Kelly suggests that the ‘*myths and endless genealogies*’ must have had to do with allegorical or legendary interpretations of the O.T. [Old Testament]⁸ centering on the pedigrees of the patriarchs. Much of the rabbinical Haggadah consisted of just such a fanciful rewriting of Scripture; the Book of Jubilees and Pseudo-Philo's *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*, with its mania for family trees, are apt examples. It has also been shown that in postexilic Judaism there was a keen interest in family trees, and that these played a part in controversies between Jews and Jewish Christians.”⁹

Let us see if we can translate what Mr. Kelly said. The reference to “*myths and endless genealogies*” made in verse 4 refers to making a statement by using made-up fictional characters and events that help make the point of the statement. The parables Christ told would be classified as “*allegory*” by these individuals. So verse 4 is making some kind of statement regarding such comparisons. However, Matthew 13:33-34 gives us a good example and an accurate explanation regarding Christ's use of **parables**:

³³ *Jesus also used this illustration: “The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough.”*

³⁴ *Jesus always used stories and illustrations like these when speaking to the crowds. In fact, he never spoke to them without using such parables.*

³⁵ *This fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet: ‘I will speak to you in parables.’ (NLT)*

⁶ George T. Brooks, – *Expositions from the Book of First Timothy*, (Austin, TX: WORDsearch Corp., 2007), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, under: “A Charge to a Young Pastor (2).”

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Brackets added.

⁹ *The Pastoral Epistles* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1987), 44-45.

The reference to **genealogies** has to do with legendary stories about the family history of the patriarchs and often made-up stories about their adventures.

The effect of false teaching frequently is to raise even more questions in peoples' minds. The false teachers' endless questions and speculations contributed nothing to "*furthering the administration of God which is **by faith***" (1 Timothy 1:4). That phrase refers to God's saving plan. Their false teaching was a deliberate attempt to draw potential converts away from the truth of Christ's Gospel.

The basic doctrines of all the religions in this world all boil down to one of two things. Their deity is either a deity that has accomplished salvation without human effort, or it is a deity who requires human good works in order to earn salvation. This second means of salvation requires the performance of good deeds, usually connected with some sort of temple function, along with participation in various ceremonies and rituals. All other religions aside from Christianity fit in one way or another into this latter "salvation by works" category. (Unfortunately, so do some groups that call themselves "Christian.") **The false teachers** at Ephesus, like false teachers everywhere, taught that salvation from God required that they satisfy certain requirements of behavior.¹⁰

Their false teaching could cause people to end up in hell. Therefore, God will not overlook what they have attempted to do. As a matter of fact, there will be serious consequences in eternity for those who have done this.

Galatians 1:8-10 (NASB):

⁸ *But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!*

⁹ *As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!*

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.*

2 Peter 2:1 (NLT):

¹ *But there were also false prophets in Israel, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly teach destructive heresies and even deny the Master who bought them. In this way, they will bring sudden destruction on themselves.*

There was a commercial many years ago that had the line, "You don't want to mess with Mother Nature," and then there would be a big explosion. That is kind of what it will be like for false teachers who dared to mess with the almighty God of the universe.

False teachers have dirty hearts, uncleansed by the Gospel of Jesus. They have guilty, condemning consciences as the result of their impure hearts. Finally, they have

¹⁰ John MacArthur, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary – 1 Timothy*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 16-17.

hypocritical, false faith. That kind of life will never produce love for God. Therefore it is no surprise that Paul adds, “*straying from these things they have turned aside to fruitless discussion.*”

“*Wanting to be teachers of the Law*” (verse 7) would certainly suggest that these guys had most likely been connected at one time with Jewish traditions, and most likely were Jewish by birth. So as “*wanna be*” teachers of the Law they would emphasize keeping the Law unto salvation, practicing the traditions of the elders, Jewish rituals, observances, festivals, and customs, most of which were now insignificant because Christ had become the reality that those observances represented.

These false teachers understood nothing that they said, nor did they understand any of the questions that were raised by what they said. They did not understand anything about the divine Law, nor its application. Their single desire for the most part was to build themselves a reputation as being an authoritative teacher of the Law. They were hypocrites and, as so often happens in our world, we find that such people can very often change the course of nations and empires by lies, promises that are not kept, and appealing to the ignorance of the masses. This is what the false teachers probably had as their goal. Remember Jesus called to the crowd in Matthew 15:10-14 (NLT) to come and hear:

¹⁰ “*Listen,*” he said, “*and try to understand.*”

¹¹ *It’s not what goes into your mouth that defiles you; you are defiled by the words that come out of your mouth.*”

¹² *Then the disciples came to him and asked, “Do you realize you offended the Pharisees by what you just said?”*

¹³ *Jesus replied, “Every plant not planted by my heavenly Father will be uprooted,*

¹⁴ *so ignore them. They are blind guides leading the blind, and if one blind person guides another, they will both fall into a ditch.*”

James warned in James 3:1, “*Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a **stricter judgment.***” The one who really understands the role of a teacher understands that it is not a place for proud people.¹¹

So then a question Betty and I must ask ourselves on a regular basis is whether we are the kind of preachers and teachers that Paul is describing. That is worth some serious additional consideration. What is spoken of here is the kind of responsibility God expects preachers to accept. Such noble goals are not possible by pastors, ministers, priests, or lay leaders who, for whatever reason, preach well-known stories of supernatural happenings along with these genealogies we mentioned earlier, which only fill people's heads with notions and unprofitable questions and that serve to create disagreements and even anger among people. That is not the way to attain the goal that we just talked about. Remember the goal is love not dissension. The **only way** to love is through God’s **truth**. The one

¹¹ Op cit., Macarthur

sure way not to achieve this goal of love is through what we might condense down into a couple of words, “*foolish talk*.” Because that is exactly what false teaching is: foolish teachers teaching foolish people, and all that goes into it or comes out of it is, “*foolish talk*” serving no good end.¹²

According to William Barclay, John Knox, the Scottish Reformer, understood the seriousness of preaching. When he was called forth to preach the gospel, he “burst forth in most abundant tears, and withdrew himself to his chamber. His countenance and behaviour, from that day till the day that he was compelled to present himself to the public place of preaching, did sufficiently declare the grief and trouble of his heart” (William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, rev. ed. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977], 50). The thought of preaching the Gospel was so sobering that Knox was overwhelmed.

“D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the great twentieth-century British preacher, wrote that teaching the Word is such an awesome task that a godly man “*shrinks from it. Nothing but this overwhelming sense of being called, and of compulsion, should ever lead anyone to preach*” (*Preachers and Preaching* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972], 107).¹³

“John Stott added,

I cannot help wondering if this may not be why there are so few preachers whom God is using today. There are plenty of popular preachers, but not many powerful ones, who preach in the power of the Spirit. Is it because the cost of such preaching is too great? It seems that the only preaching God honours, through which His wisdom and power are expressed, is the preaching of a man who is willing in himself to be both a weakling and a fool. God not only chooses weak and foolish people to save, but weak and foolish preachers through whom to save them, or at least preachers who are content to be weak and seem foolish in the eyes of the world. We are not always willing to pay this price. We are constantly tempted to covet a reputation as men of learning or men of influence; to seek honour in academic circles and compromise our old-fashioned message in order to do so; and to cultivate personal charm or forcefulness so as to sway the people committed to our care. (*The Preacher's Portrait*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979], 122)”,¹⁴

So what we are seeing here in 1 Timothy chapter 1 is the apostle Paul emphasizing to his young protégé, Timothy, that it is his job to plant within people the ability to love God and other people by the teaching of the message of the Gospel, and that such a goal

¹² Matthew Poole, *Matthew Poole's Commentary on the Holy Bible*, (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, under: "Chapter 1".

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

cannot be attained by preachers who tell people meaningless stories and fill their heads with questions that cannot be answered. Paul emphasizes that the goal of pastors' instruction should be "*love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith,*" not only in the hearers in the congregation but first of all in the hearts of the pastors and teachers themselves. Beloved, let each of us leave here today with a fresh mission for our lives: to love God and others with a pure heart, to maintain a lifestyle that leads to a good conscience, and to place all our faith and trust in God no matter what.

Save these sections for when you get to future chapters where they fit in:

These "*Doctrines of demons*" (1 Timothy 4:1) were being passed off as God's truth. Paul ridicules them as "*worldly fables fit only for old women*" (John 4:7).

Whatever form this false teaching took, it was contrary to the truth of the Bible. We do not know any of the details about what was taught, but we might be able to piece some of it together from information drawn from other parts of first and second Timothy. According to 1 Timothy 1:7 some of the teaching must have drawn on the Jewish traditions:

"Wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions." (NAS)

It appears from this verse that the false teachers wanted to teach about the Jewish Law.

In 1 Timothy 4:3 we learn that the heresy, which can be defined as a "deviation from the accepted teaching or practice of the Bible,"¹⁵ involved a phony practice of strict self-denial as a measure of personal and spiritual discipline.¹⁶ These false teachers would make it sound for example like the Bible said people should not get married, or that if they crawled on their knees over broken glass for a quarter of a mile they could be saved. They hoped to earn God's favor by depriving themselves of things such as food or some sort of pleasure. Let us give you an example of what Paul had to say about these things in Colossians.

Colossians 2:16-23 (MSG):

¹⁶ *So don't put up with anyone pressuring you in details of **diet, worship services, or holy days.***

¹⁷ *All those things are mere shadows cast before what was to come; the substance is Christ.*

¹⁸ *Don't tolerate people who try to run your life, ordering you to bow and scrape, insisting that you join their obsession with angels and that you seek out visions. They're a lot of hot air, that's all they are.*

¹⁹ *They're completely out of touch with the source of life, Christ, who puts us together in one piece, whose very breath and blood flow through us. He is the Head and we are the body. We can grow up healthy in God only as he nourishes us.*

²⁰ *So, then, if with Christ you've put all that pretentious and infantile religion behind you, why do you let yourselves be bullied by it?*

²¹ **"Don't touch this! Don't taste that! Don't go near this!"**

²² *Do you think things that are here today and gone tomorrow are worth*

¹⁵ Achtemeier, Paul J.; Harper & Row, Publishers; Society of Biblical Literature: *Harper's Bible Dictionary*. 1st ed. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985, S. 383.

¹⁶ Merriam-Webster, Inc: *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. Eleventh ed.* Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003.

that kind of attention?

²³ *Such things sound impressive if said in a deep enough voice. They even give the illusion of being pious and humble and ascetic. But they're just another way of showing off, making yourselves look important.*

Their preoccupation with **myths** and **genealogies** did not result in any growth in their relationship with God, but rather in a lot of arguing and bickering. Let us jump ahead a few chapters to a description of this very problem.

1 Timothy 6:1-10 (MSG):

¹ *Whoever is a slave must make the best of it, giving respect to his master so that outsiders don't blame God and our teaching for his behavior.*

² *Slaves with Christian masters all the more so—their masters are really their beloved brothers! These are the things I want you to teach and preach.*

³ *If you have leaders there who teach otherwise, who refuse the solid words of our Master Jesus and this godly instruction,*

⁴ *tag them for what they are: ignorant windbags who infect the air with germs of envy, controversy, bad-mouthing, suspicious rumors.*

⁵ *Eventually there's an epidemic of backstabbing, and truth is but a distant memory. They think religion is a way to make a fast buck.*

⁶ *A devout life does bring wealth, but it's the rich simplicity of being yourself before God.*

⁷ *Since we entered the world penniless and will leave it penniless,*

⁸ *if we have bread on the table and shoes on our feet, that's enough.*

⁹ *But if it's only money these leaders are after, they'll self-destruct in no time.*

¹⁰ *Lust for money brings trouble and nothing but trouble. Going down that path, some lose their footing in the faith completely and live to regret it bitterly ever after.*

Timothy was instructed to teach them not to quibble over words, which accomplishes nothing, and simply causes more confusion and misunderstanding among those who are hearing the message. 2 Timothy 2:16-18 (ESV) points out those teachers should:

¹⁶ *Avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness,*

¹⁷ *and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are **Hymenaeus** and **Philetus**,*

¹⁸ *who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some.*