



1 Timothy

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Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, *from* a good conscience, and *from* sincere faith, 1 Timothy 1:5

Paul now gives a contrasting thought to what was given starting in verse 3. It may, therefore, be better translated as “But the purpose...” The word translated as “purpose” *telos*, signifies an end goal. He relates now what the purpose, or “end goal,” of the commandment is. Because of the word, “commandment,” some have taken this to mean “the Law of Moses.” In essence, “The purpose of the law of Moses is as follows...” This is held to by scholars such as John Calvin. The claim is that the false teachers mentioned in verse 3 & 4 were improperly using the Law of Moses to come to erroneous conclusions, when in fact its purpose is what Paul will next describe. This is not the intent.

The false teachers may have been misusing the law, but he was as much focused on the “fables” they were introducing; things with no true relation at all to the law. Instead, Paul’s words concerning “the commandment” are referring to verse 3 where he said, “that you may charge some.” In verse 3, he used the verb form of the noun found in this verse. In the Greek, there is an article in front of “commandment” as is in the English. It is “the commandment.”

Understanding this, the word “commandment” signifies a practical teaching. It is “‘something announced from close-beside.’ and therefore *fully authorized*” (HELPS Word Studies). This is what Paul is instructing Timothy to now accomplish, and it is this charge Timothy is to pursue that has a purpose of “love from a pure heart.” This indicates a heart of holiness, not one which was self-centered, or which exalted one over another. It is comparable to Jesus’ words of Luke 10:27, where He cited the substance of man’s duty given from the law itself –

“‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself.’”

Paul continues that the purpose of the commandment is to be “*from a good conscience.*” This is contrasted to the “other doctrine” of verse 3 which led to “disputes” in verse 4. Only a defiled conscience would submit such heretical and outlandish things. What Timothy was to charge was to be of a sound mind, and in accord with the truth of the gospel; a gospel which is “*from sincere faith.*”

The word “sincere” is used by Paul in connection with “love” in Romans 12 and in 2 Corinthians 6. It will be used it in connection to wisdom in James 3. The word indicates, “without hypocrisy.” The false doctrines of the Judaizers were introduced with false motives. They were intended not to honor Christ, but to bring honor to themselves. This is the polar opposite of what should be the case.

In his charge, a complete contrast to the workings of the false teachers was to be made. Paul expected Timothy to handle this matter in a way which would be sincere and honoring of Christ. Anything else would be unsuitable to the calling in which he stood.

Life application: For the pastor, preacher, or teacher of the word, he is to conduct his duties with sincerity of faith, displaying an attitude which reflects a good and undefiled conscience, and put forth teachings which demonstrate a pure heart towards God, towards the word, and towards those whom he is instructing. Anything less would be contradictory to the calling of the office.

...from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, 1 Timothy 1:6

“From which” is speaking of the words of verse 4 which included “love from a pure heart,” “a good conscience,” and “sincere faith.” It is these “from which some” have strayed. The term, here translated as “having strayed,” is a word used three times, all by Paul, and only in 1 & 2 Timothy. It means specifically, “off target.” It is a deviating from God’s target (a line) by walking off of that line. It further “emphasizes the *divine disapproval* that goes with walking ‘off (God’s) line’” (HELPS Word Studies).

What we are being presented here are true Christians, some may even have been once sound teachers, but they have strayed off of the right path. This must be true because if they were not true Christians, then the elders would have no authority over them. But Paul has told Timothy that he is to correct their ways. The intent is to bring them back to the correct line, and to bring them back to a state of approval in accord with God’s will.

For now though, their departure is that they “have turned aside to idle talk.” Here Paul uses a noun found only here in Scripture, which is well-translated as “idle talk.” It is that which is vain and foolish, like a random babbler. It is the use of words which are unproductive and godless. He will use the adjective form of the word in Titus 1:10.

Paul will further define what this idle talk means in the coming verse. For now, just think of the countless websites and YouTube personalities who make up stuff right out of their own heads, and which have no bearing at all on what is found in Scripture. With these new means of communication, anyone can say anything no matter how unfounded it is. And with a generation of biblically illiterate people who are hungry to be told what to do, there is always a receptive audience ready to swallow their teachings up. This was a problem all the way back at the inception of the church, it is a problem which has continued unabated until modern times, and it is a problem which has literally exploded in scope with the advent of each new type of invention which has arisen.

Life application: Today, there is almost no end to the amount of contradictory information concerning biblical teachings one can choose to listen to. The only way to avoid being completely misled by any of these misguided souls is to actually pick up your Bible and read it – constantly. The more it is read, the less likely one will be duped by crazy ideas which are put forth for public consumption.

...desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm. 1Timothy 1:7

Paul now chastises the group of people to whom he referred to in verses 3 & 4, and who he then referred to specifically again in verse 6. They are those who taught “another doctrine,” and who give heed to fables and endless genealogies. It is they who he now says are “desiring to be teachers of the law.” They have “strayed,” and “have turned aside to idle talk.” This now, unlike verse 5, is speaking of the law of Moses. It refers to a different word than that translated as “commandment” there.

The single Greek word translated as “teachers of the law” is used only three times. First in Luke 5:17 when speaking of the Pharisees. Next it is used in Acts 5:34 when speaking of Gamaliel, a Pharisee of the ruling council. And now Paul uses it to speak of those who would desire to be in such a position, but who are obviously contrasted to them. This is evident from the words, “understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.”

These people were covetous of having the respect and authority of someone like a Pharisee, but in their zeal to obtain such favor, they overlooked what the law was pointing to, and thus its true purpose. The law was given to lead people to Christ, not to be an end in and of itself.

Nor was it to be used as a spiritual map for discerning secrets which God has hidden in it. It is true that the law contains hidden pictures and patterns, but they are all intended to lead a person to Christ, not to magical insights and divinations.

Unfortunately, this is what they were doing. More unfortunately, this is still done to this day. Kabbalists use the Bible to obtain mystical insights, Christians use it in an attempt to determine genetic codes, prophetic codes, rapture dates, and the like. The list of such abuses is almost endless. But the Bible is not for predicting outcomes. Rather, it is there to reveal, after prophetic events occur, that God was in control of those events all along. Only afterward are such things discernible.

But it is a source of pride for people to claim they have special insights into the future, or into the mechanics of God's providential workings in the stream of time, and so they pursue these unhealthy avenues of interpretation without truly understanding "what they say nor the things which they affirm."

It is to be remembered that Paul is speaking specifically of people who have been saved by Christ in these verses, and yet they have gone off the deep end in their theology. Further, it certainly encompasses any misapplication of the law in their teaching. Therefore, it includes those who reinsert the law (or parts of it) as a mandatory part of Christian living. This includes feast days, Sabbath observances, dietary restrictions, etc. In such, these people truly do not know what they say. The law is annulled, obsolete, and set aside. Therefore, such people in the church are to be shunned, not emulated or adored.

In order to show their error, Paul makes another compound word in the Greek. First was *nomodidaskalos*, or "law teachers." In contrast to this he says, *diabebaioomai*, or "they affirm." What they wanted to be is not at all what they were, nor what they taught. Paul's choice of words actually becomes a strong rebuke. He uses the same word once again in Titus 3:8 in a positive sense towards Titus, asking him "to affirm constantly" what is correct concerning belief in God.

Life application: Proper theology will always be Christ-centered. There is never a time that works-based theology will be sound, nor is there any place for using the Bible as a form of mystical insight or divination. Those who proclaim secret codes within the text which can be used for such things are to be rejected. Only when patterns and pictures reveal Christ, and God's redemptive plans which are worked through Him, are they to be considered valid.

But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, 1 Timothy 1:8

Paul stated something similar to this in Romans 7:12. There he was making a point about how sin uses the commandment to deceive a person, bringing about death. In his concluding thought, he then said, "Therefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy and just and good." Here as in Romans, one reason he is certainly giving this statement is as a testimony that he is not an enemy of the law. In Acts 21:21, he was accused of exactly this. But he vigorously defends the law as being good. However, it is the proper use of the law which he defends time and time again.

He will state one particular purpose of the law in the next verse, but for now, a second reason he is introducing this thought is to defend against the improper uses of the law which he has already identified. It is not intended for inane arguments, it is not intended for pursuing "endless genealogies," and it is not intended for stirring up disputes. God has revealed Himself through the giving of the law. None of such things is in accord with this self-revelation. He is God; these uses of the law are ungodly.

As noted, Paul will explain one avenue of why the law was given in the next verse. However, with the coming of Christ, and in the completion of His work under the law, the law is fulfilled and annulled. Above all else, the law was a stepping stone to lead us to the Person and work of Christ. Understanding this, Paul's particular reason for the giving of the law in the next verse will make all the more sense.

Life application: Just because something is good does not mean it is still necessary. If someone wants to get to Paradise Island, he will need a way of getting there. A bridge for this purpose would be considered good. Once he has arrived at the destination, the bridge is no longer needed to get there. It has fulfilled its intended purpose. This is the error of those who cling to the Law of Moses after the coming of Christ. The law is no longer a working bridge. Christ crossed that bridge and then He offered us a new bridge. At the same time, the old has been dismantled. And yet, people continuously attempt to cross by a bridge which is no longer in service. Paradise Island is forever out of their reach because they have failed to properly use the new and better bridge.