

I Timothy 1:3-7

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“As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus, in order that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith. But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, 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.”

Introduction

Turn to I Timothy 1:3-7. We continue in our study that we began in I Timothy and we are going to talk about this morning, guarding the simple truth; keeping what are the straightforward doctrines of faith.

Have you guys ever heard of Michael Drosnin? He wrote a book a few years back called *The Bible Code*, a New York Times best-seller. Let me read you an excerpt from the inside cover which comes from a letter written by Drosnin to former Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin. “An Israeli mathematician discovered a hidden code in the bible that appears to reveal the details of events that took place thousand of years after the Bible was written...” My letter to Rabin stated, “The reason I’m telling about this is, is that the only time your full name, Yitzhak Rabin is encoded in the Bible, the words ‘assassin will assassinate’ was across your name.” And on November 4, 1995, came the awful confirmation—a shot in the back from a man who believed he was on a mission from God; the murder that was encoded in the Bible 3000 years ago.

That’s one of the greatest hidden things found in the Old Testament Hebrew text according to Drosnin. How does he come to that? He gets to that conclusion by this mathematical technique called “Equidistant Letter Sequencing.”

I want you to understand that the original Hebrew didn’t have any vowel pointings. It does now, so we can read and make sense of it, but the original Hebrew would have been like reading a letter or book without any vowels. If someone wrote you a letter and omitted all the vowels, you would read it and kind of figure out what it says because just the vowels are missing.

That’s kind of how the Hebrew text is. You take a page of Hebrew text and Equidistant Letter Sequencing looks at every 6th letter to see if it spells out a word some place; then you look at every 7th letter, then 12th letter, etc. whichever one. You just kind of go through it and see if it says stuff. So on one page of Hebrew text, it said the full name “Yitzhak Rabin.” Maybe that was every 13th letter. If you looked at every 25th letter, it might have said “assassin.” If you look at every 4th letter, it might say “shot” or something to that effect. The idea is that these words were all on one page “discovered” by Drosnin.

Naturally, people criticized Drosnin and his method. I would criticize that because it is literally saying that in a random sequence, you could find enough letters to put together words even though the vast majority of the text was just gibberish. That process was so arbitrary that people initially criticized Drosnin. But in a *Newsweek* article in June 9, 1997, this is what Drosnin stated, “When my critics find a message about the assignation of a prime minister encrypted in *Moby Dick*, then I’ll believe them.” In other words, he’s saying, “Are you kidding me? This stuff is real. It’s from the Old Testament Hebrew text. If they could find the “randomness” in *Moby Dick*, then I’ll believe them.”

So you know what, some people actually did just that. There’s a website—if you’re curious about that look up <http://cs.anu.edu.au/~bdm/dilugim/moby.html>. They used the same kind of letter sequencing to see what kind of things could be written there. Let me give you a list of what you can find in *Moby Dick* concerning possible prophecies concerning the assassination of a variety of world figures: Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, President Renee Moawad (President of Lebanon for 17 days in 1989), Leon Trotsky (Soviet exile), Martin Luther King, Jr., Sirhan Sirhan, and even President John F. Kennedy. Some people have actually gone to that website and thought “Wow, not just the Bible, but *Moby Dick* also!” Exactly the opposite of what we should be getting from that.

The point of the why people did that was to show the ridiculous nature of looking for things so intently and by doing so, you could inevitably find something. That's true. And always have been true. If you need to find something so desperately in the Scriptures, you will find it. If you're looking for justification for things in the Scriptures for something, you can find it. But if you approach the Scriptures in the just the plain text and its simple truth, you can be transformed.

That's the message we hope to get across this morning—that doctrine and the things that the Scriptures speak about count. And that the Scriptures will tell us plainly and in simple terms about how we ought to think about something, what we ought to do, why we ought to do it, and how we ought to do it.

I like what A.W. Tozer says about doctrine.

"It would be impossible to overemphasize the importance of sound doctrine in the life of a Christian. Right thinking about all spiritual matters is imperative if we would have right living. As men do not gather grapes from thorns, nor figs from thistles, so sound character does not grow out of unsound teaching."

If we want to be men and women characterized by just attitudes, character, nature; those who would desire, know, and please the living God; that doesn't happen just because we talk about nice things or find assassinations from every 14th letter in some text. It happens because we actually believe that the word of God speaks truthfully and plainly to us and we are gathering in the knowledge of the doctrine of the things of the Lord. That's how important doctrine is to us.

So this morning, we look at a charge from Paul to Timothy to guard this simple truth—the plain truth of what Scriptures would teach us. So let's pray and ask the Lord that He would instruct us and help us to understand what He would have us to learn this morning. Let's pray:

Heavenly Father, as we gather together, we thank You for Your kindness to us. Not just by way of salvation and the blessing of loved ones and the things that we possess, but more specifically today, Lord, as we read Your Holy Word, we thank You for the Scriptures.

We thank You that You have given to us not some verbal body of oral tradition that can easily be changed and altered, but have given to us instead, Lord, the written Word of God.

We thank You for it. We appreciate it. We know that because it is written, we have a place to go to; to rely upon—that it does not change.

From that Lord, teach us to understand its plain teaching, the sound doctrine that is there. That we might learn to walk rightly with You.

We thank You for all of Your blessings and ask that Your Holy Spirit would instruct us through the power of Your Word and make us transformed.

We give You this time and ask that You would bless it according to Your purpose in us.

In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

There was a recent study I was sharing with our flock this past week. Remember the whole Roswell incident? Supposedly, the government is hiding aliens. People testified that they saw certain things. Interestingly, *The Discovery Channel* had this show that examined how individuals could say things that were not accurate and actually pass a polygraph test.

What they did is that they got a number of people who were hikers and they staged a scene to look like a plane crash, complete with a person who looked like a military policeman securing the area. What's interesting is that these people had helmet cameras, so you could see what those people actually saw on video. So they go up, kind of investigate the scene, and leave.

Afterwards, they interact and talk about what they saw freely to one another. Then, about a month later they are interviewed individually about what they saw. What's curious is how everyone's story is different and how much the story had changed from what they seen.

There was one particular lady, who said that she had seen *two* armed men (there was only one) and that at one point one of the armed men actually pointed a rifle in her direction. She was so convinced that was what had happened that if you gave her a polygraph test, she would pass it because she was certain in her memory and recall. Curious enough, her camera shows that she had not even gotten a clear glimpse of even the one individual that had the gun! She had put that information together from some of the things that other people had talked about to her. She didn't realize that, but that's what she had done.

What does that mean? It means we ought to be thankful that the Word of God is given to us in a literal, verbal, and inspired text because that doesn't alter. That's the beauty of that. In your recollection, you may think to yourself, "I remember this particular incident etc..." about a phenomenon that is absolutely a fact *in your mind*. We are capable of

altering some of the details of our memory to the point that we sincerely believe that's what had actually happened—that we were there for this and that.

For instance, for every major sports event (if you listen to sports radio) everyone who calls into the station say that they were there at that event and after a while, you start thinking about it in terms of the percentage of people who call in and there's no way 5 million people could have been there when the stadium only sits thirty thousand people. It doesn't make sense. Some of them are sincere, but they are sincerely mistaken—even about things they think they are eyewitnesses.

That's curious to me and I think that's important to us to remember because here in I Timothy, Paul is charging Timothy to guard just the simple reality of whatever the Scripture says on its face value. That's why he's guarding simple truth and guarding doctrine; because doctrine is exactly that—plain and simple.

The term for “doctrine” just means “a set of teachings concerning a certain belief.” The doctrines of the Christian faith are not highfalutin (yes, theologians add too many big words to everything; it's their attempt to be as clear as they can). If you get rid of the vocabulary, they are talking about things that are just plain in Scripture. If we read it, we would know that these things are true.

Do I have to prove to you that the Word of God tells us that God is a holy God? Well, I could. All I have to do is open a few passages. Do I have to explain to you that we are sinners that need forgiveness? I could try to convince you, but then I could just open the Word of God and show you and let you read a few passages. That's the beauty of the Word of God to us. That's how come we need to carefully guard doctrine or simple truth—the things that are given to us in plain instruction.

I. Danger in Straying from Sound Doctrine (vs. 3, 4)

The first point (if you are taking notes) is that there is danger in straying from sound doctrine. The danger of straying is given to us in [I Timothy 1:3, 4](#). Read that with me, it says:

“As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus, in order that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.”

Paul says as he is going to Macedonia, “I want you, Timothy, to remain on in Ephesus for a particular charge.”

“I urge you” is a great translation. Sometimes, we translate it “I admonish you” and sometimes “I encourage you”. It's this idea of *parakaleō* (παράκαλεω), “to call to side of” which has this idea of a personal appeal (and I think rightly so). That's why many of the translators translate that word as “I urge you.”

He's saying “Timothy, this is of personal appeal to you. You need to do this.” This is particularly important because Ephesus is the mission control center for the outreach to the Gentiles. Its strategic location made it the principal port from which everyone was trained and everyone was sent out. Paul spent two to three years in Ephesus, most of which is covered in Acts 19-20.

In [Acts 20:28-29](#), he says good bye to these Ephesian elders and he's crying over not seeing them again. He says *“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.”* Paul continues on in verses 30 to 31 and says *“and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.”*

Paul is saying “Timothy, I beg of you (it's a personal appeal) that you stop the false teachers.” And remember we said last week that these false teachers were certain individuals that were actual leaders in the church. This is no longer an issue of those that have come from outside the church. It's not an issue of people coming in and saying, “I accept the Lord and by the way, can I offer a different idea of these things concerning what faith ought to be?” It's not outside individuals. These are leaders from within the church that are leading their own astray, just as Paul in Acts 20 said would happen.

“I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus, in order that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines”

Why do I see certain these certain men as being elders in the church? For a few reasons:

1. Because according to I Timothy 1:7, they presume to be “teachers of the law.” In other words, they were teachers of the Old Testament text. It would be unusual for some weird, heretical, “outside” individual to come in and be considered a teacher, especially in light of I Timothy where the teaching ministry is closely associated with the leadership and the elders of the church. This is very clear in I Timothy;
2. Later on at the end of this chapter in verse 20, Paul names two of these false teachers, Hymenaeus and Alexander, who Paul basically “delivered over to Satan.” In other words, Paul came and excommunicated these men. You may think, “Why didn't they handle that amongst themselves?” Church discipline was understood all

- the way from the establishment of the church that if a member sinned, they would discipline them. Why did Paul, himself, have to do this? Most likely, Hymenaeus and Alexander were leaders of the church. In I Timothy 5:20, it says very clearly that if an elder sins and you try to church discipline him and he doesn't repent, then that requires an open and public rebuke. Why? So that the church would be afraid of sin. So Paul calls these men out. Does he do that to any individual who sins? No. Remember the individual who was sleeping with his stepmother in the Corinthian church? He doesn't name him. They go through church discipline, but he is never named. He names these men probably because they were leaders in the church; because they were elders or at least some considered them elders;
3. There's an emphasis in I Timothy on the qualifications of an elder (Ch. 3), on how to discipline and even how to replace an elder (Ch. 5). Why are all these instructions necessary, unless false teachers were actually in the church? This is what's crazy here. Paul leaves Timothy specifically because there were false teachers amongst them, not infiltrated from the outside but actually part of the leadership in the church in Ephesus.

Paul says, "I make a personal appeal to you not to let these individuals teach any different or strange doctrine." In other words, "This is what we oppose. This is why I left you, my son of faith, so that you would oppose those who teach strange doctrine."

The term "**strange doctrine**" encompasses one huge Greek word, *heterodidaskaleō* (ἑτεροδιδασκαλέω). There are 18 letters in this one word. It's a compound word that comes from the words *hetero* (ἕτερος) which means "different" and *didasko* (διδάσκω) which means "to teach." They were teaching something different. Now, if doctrine is a body of truth by definition, a different doctrine is not really doctrine, but error.

In other words, if doctrine, sound teaching, and the simplicity of what the Scriptures say is correct and I teach something that is different, then by definition I am not teaching true doctrine. I am teaching a different, strange doctrine or error. It is no longer about the straight truth. It is me making up what I think ought to be said about any particular thing.

He says, "**Instruct [these] certain men not to teach [these] strange doctrines.**" They're saying wrong stuff and some of what that encompasses is given to us in the next verse "**nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies.**"

Now, it's curious because we don't know exactly what Paul meant by "**myths and endless genealogies.**" Whatever the false teaching was that had come up from within the church from the elders in the church of Ephesus (it's not clear what that teaching was), it involved an attention to myths and endless genealogies. It says very specifically that the words being used here say (in some translations) "nor to devote themselves to myths and endless generations"; that is, to give mental meditation and attention to. These guys were using their mental energies to think about things that had to do with myths and genealogies.

The term "**myths**" is a familiar idea and we forget that it always involved error. Do you guys realize that? Do you know why they call it Greek mythologies? They call it mythologies because by definition, a myth is fictitious—it's not true. It's just a made up thing; made up for fun, possibly; made up for an explanation; made up for whatever. A myth is something that is incorrect and untrue, but that is a popular or fanciful idea and makes a good story.

"**Genealogies,**" on the other hand, are actual things. They list genealogies throughout the Old Testament Scriptures, but I have no idea what these teachers (who think themselves teachers of law of the Old Testament) were doing with the genealogies. Maybe they were doing "Bible code" like Drosnin (see introduction). Maybe they were saying, "Hey, if you take every 4th letter from this genealogy, look what it says, 'Paul is not really an apostle'". I don't know what they were doing, but they were taking genealogies and using them to speak of things that were not true and not plainly found in Scripture. They were teaching not doctrine, but some fanciful mythology based on some endless genealogies that were found in the Word of God.

The particulars of just what they taught are not given, but it was enough to stray them from the truth and true doctrine into something that was deeper; "hidden" truths. There is maybe a basis that this was part of an early form of Gnosticism about a century from the time of I Timothy. In other words, this is possibly an early inception of this Gnostic idea that there is a "deeper knowledge."

Imagine these teachers at the Ephesian church and you come in on a Sunday to gather around for the preaching of the Word and they say "Let's turn to this genealogy" and they start talking about "You don't know who this individual is, but I think that I might be able to tell you about him..." And you kind of go, "Wow, I didn't read about him anywhere." They may say, "I know, but its interesting isn't it?" Or perhaps they'll say, "And they had green skin and they're from outer space..." and they're giving you this weird stuff. And you're thinking what are they talking about? What happened to just reading the regular Scriptures and talking about what the Scriptures say? They had wandered from that they wanted something deeper than that and they're paying attention to things that were endlessly foolish by nature.

Both Paul and Peter use this term "**mythology**" or "**myth**" on a number of occasions. Let me read you some of those verses, so you can kind of catch what they were trying to convey:

I Timothy 4:7 "Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness;" (ESV)

Titus 1:14 “not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.” (ESV)

II Timothy 4:4 “and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.” (ESV)

II Peter 1:16 “For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.” (ESV)

Peter says, “We are not making stuff up for the fun of it.” That’s the accusation many critics and skeptics have for all who believe in the Word of God. They believe Christianity is a compilation of mythologies, a religion created by a few men—in particular Paul. They believe Paul was crafty and intelligent and that he created this very elaborate scheme or myth of what Christianity was supposed to be and that all the disciples and apostles just chimed in and added to his creation. But if you read the Scriptures and know Church history, that theory just makes no sense.

Where L. Ron Hubbard may have made himself a millionaire a few times over in the establishment of his own religion, what did Paul get? Well let’s see—he got killed. Peter got crucified upside-down. Every apostle was killed, martyred in one form or another except for John the Elder who was banished to the island of Patmos, who eventually died (according to church history) as an old man in the church of Ephesus. They really got what they were after. It makes no sense. Why would they die for something that you made up? For mythology? They would not. Myths are clever falsehoods that amounted to nothing important. It was foolish talk. It was interesting only in its fancy and silliness.

I like what R. Kent Hughes says about the whole idea of these false teachers and elders.

“It was not so much that they set out to be heretical. They simply wanted to go deeper into the scriptures. They wanted to go beyond the simple exegesis of Paul and by giving people an event allegorical meaning; simple stories would reveal fantastic truth. They did not set out to abandon the Gospel, doctrine, and salvation by faith alone, but in fact, the progressive accretions (a piling on) smothered the gospel.”

There are individuals even in the church that need to be careful not to do that. They will interpret everything allegorically. For example, one pastor-friend of mine told me that some friends he knows run amuck in talking about the word “rock.” They believe that anytime you talk about a “rock” in the Bible, regardless what kind of rock, it represented Jesus Christ. But unless the Scriptures tell us that you need to back off a bit.

Understand that in these particular cases, our minds can put fanciful thoughts together. What the Scriptures say *plainly* is sound doctrine. What we say in our fanciful imagination is not sound doctrine.

Not to say that we desire to be heretical, but we can easily go that route if we are not careful. How easy is it for us to wander from sound doctrine? How easy is it for us to daydream? It’s that simple. We need to be aware of ourselves and to be aware of this kind of foolishness.

If not, we might find the assassination of Nam Park in *Moby Dick*! Then what am I going to do? Fanciful imagination, mythology, endless genealogies—that is not what we should be about. The question that we ought to ask ourselves then is what happens to individuals that are in the pursuit of fanciful imaginations and understandings of the things of God. In other words, what happens when the plain truth is not enough? We’ll look at the rest of verse 4.

It says we are not **“to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.”**

Useless speculation is the idea here. **“Mere speculation”** is foolish controversies. II Tim 2:23 says, “*But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels.*” I Timothy 6:4 says, “*He is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions.*”

In other words, if one person pretends to have some deeper knowledge of something and another person says that they have a deeper knowledge of this and neither person goes to the text to see what the Scripture plainly say, then what happens is that they point fingers at each other. What results is not the natural harmony of saying “This is the Word of God and let us bow and worship Him.” There is a natural inclination for pride. It becomes a “You’re wrong and my speculation is better than yours” argument. What results is a natural rivalry and abusive language thrown across the board at each other. This is exactly what happens when you get a bunch of unbelievers together to administrate the Kingdom or any political organization for that matter.

Have you guys ever seen C-Span and see how our legislative branch of government works? It is incredibly boring. There is just endless droning. It is more interesting across the pond in the English parliament, the epitome of eruditeness and civility, or at least one would think. You know what happens there? The opposing political factions just yell at whoever is speaking. In fact, there is this one infamous episode where the opposition party to Margaret Thatcher (former Prime Minister to Great Britain) was chanting an obscene gesture to her while she was addressing the Parliament. That’s the normal process of government there. And that’s the picture that Paul gives to us in the Word of God.

What happens if you are dependent not on the Word of God for instruction, but on your opinions? On your fancy? What if you come to me and you ask me if this issue is right to participate in and I say, "Well, let me think. Remember the genealogies how the first letter of the names of each generation was..." and I gave you something like that for advice, what would be the end result? In the end, we would become savages amongst each other. There would be no harmony. We would not get along with one another; we would not encourage one another. There would be strife. It would be like two sides separated by one short walkway, yelling across the way at each other because all we would do is get into our political factions because our mythologies hold a little bit better than their mythologies.

That's why, as far as we are able, in this church (IBC) our commitment is to try to explain to you what the Scriptures say; not what we think or what we would like the Scriptures to say, or the fancy of what we can create—it's about the plain Scriptures; what the doctrine has for us. The rest is useless speculation that ends up being intellectual "busybodiness".

Paul says these **"give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith."**

He uses this term, **"rather than"** which means "the direct opposite." In other words, this is what should be happening, but it is not—it is foolish speculation. He goes on to say **"than furthering the administration of God which is by faith."**

We talked a little bit about this word **"administration"** and gave the illustration of the English Parliament. It's this idea of proper management and stewardship of God's things—the proper stewardship and management of His Word, how to take care of His church, His people, how to preach the Gospel, how to give purpose to living. These absolutely essential concepts are made clear to us in the Scriptures that this is how we are to manage God's stuff; His **"administration."** The term literally comes from the words that mean "house rules." It is how we are to manage the stewardship of life according to God and His purpose for us.

Ephesians 3:2 talks about the administration of God's grace. *"If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you."* What's spoken there is how we dispense or rather, how we properly use God's grace; the administration of the ministry of the church. Ephesians 3:9 says *"and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things."*

Again, how do we bear out the stewardship, the responsibility of taking the truth of the church and making that real and making that alive for people? That's what we are ought to be doing, but foolish speculation doesn't allow us to further the Kingdom, the ministry of the things of God. It does the opposite. It kills any kind of spiritual truth. The responsibility of leaders is to fulfill the stewardship of managing the truth of salvation, the church, Christian living, and the knowledge of God.

Paul is saying, "What a shame. That's why I had to kick out Hymenaeus and Alexander. They went the byways and the truth was not enough for them. They wanted to go with mythologies and speculate on all this foolishness and the end result was that they took us away from things that we really needed, the things that God had entrusted in our care for His administration."

Verse 5 then gives us the positive look of stuff. And if to this point you think to yourself that you are not that interested (you may say to yourself that you aren't that interested in the genealogies and mythologies), that's ok. But you have to care about verse 5.

II. The Goal of True Doctrine (v. 5)

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

The word **"goal"** is from the word **telos** (τέλος), which means "the final," "the complete," or "the end product." He's saying "the final, complete, end product" of our **"instruction."** This word for instruction we can translate as "our doctrine;" what we teach, that is the plain things that Scripture teach—that is the goal and the final product of that goal is love. This stands in direct contradiction to what is the end result of foolish speculation; people making up fanciful ideas that the Scriptures don't clearly say is accurate. Those guys start getting mad other guys who are not as smart as them. And there is this kind of conniving, intellectual snobbery, a kind of pushing each other around, trying to see who's smarter or more clever than the other person. In contrast to that, Paul says **"the goal of our instruction is love."**

Think about what Jesus said to his own disciples in John 13:35, *"By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."* That is the proof of your true discipleship to our great Master—that you love one another. The Lord makes it very clear that it's not this emotional kind of love. And understand that when we say "the goal of our instruction is love," as soon as you say that, people think of something emotional, romantic, or maybe something that you do.

There are so many different ideas about love. Let me give you some examples. Let's say that you got saved in the Sixties and you heard this statement that "the goal of our instruction is love." What would "love" mean to you? I don't know, but it would mean something different from whatever it means to us today. In the Sixties, they were into "free love" (sex) and all kinds of weird things. What if you were brought up in a strict Muslim background where the Koran told you how to do everything? What would it mean that "the goal of our instruction is love?" What would "love" mean to you there? If you were raised in a well-intentioned, theologically liberal background, where you thought that a loving God would never send

anyone to hell and it said “the goal of our instruction is love.” What would it mean to you there? We could go on and on if it is left to us to make an arbitrary, cultural definition of love.

Jesus makes the clear application of what is meant by “love” in [Matthew 22:37-40](#). The teachers of the law come to Jesus and ask him what the greatest commandment was. He answers *“YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.”*

Some people will say that they love him emotionally, psychologically. However, Jesus says to love God with “all your heart, your soul, and your mind.” In other words, with all the energy that you have to love God carefully, in whatever you do in your life. That is the great and foremost commandment. *“The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”*

Christ is saying that should love God to where you would never seek to disappoint His reputation, to drag His character through the mud; that if you call yourself a Christian, you would live in such a way to honor Jesus Christ, to honor him in all things, and that if you did these things you wouldn’t need all the prohibitions of the Law.

Last week was Mother’s Day. Can you imagine if we tried to pass laws concerning moms? For example, “You should not poke your mom in the eye. You shouldn’t kick her in the shin. You shouldn’t hit her with a truck or a car.” This can become endless. The prohibitions of what you ought not to do become endless. But we can make one law instead—you should really seek to love your mom. Then all the prohibitions are unnecessary for the one pursuit. That’s what the Lord does, He says, “Listen, let’s forget about all the prohibitions against and fixate on the purpose of what the Scriptures say, ‘to love the Lord.’ This is the context of what love is—to obey, to serve, to seek with our hearts, our minds, our souls; to do everything we can to love God and make His honor known, to make his glory known. That is love.”

But even in this context, the phrase in verse 5 is not **“but the goal of our instruction is [just] love.”** It is a love that comes from three sources, **“from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”** Let’s look at this very closely because I think this is excellent word of instruction for us.

“The goal of our instruction is love.”

The word **“love”** comes from the term *agape* (ἀγάπη) which means “a sacrificial, selfless form of doing” love. That’s the goal of our instruction. The word **“from”** is *ek* (ἐκ) in the Greek, which is a preposition that means “out of” or “sourced from”. This is important. Let me read it to you this way so you can get the idea of it. “The goal, or purpose, or the final end result of our doctrines that we teach is *agape* love that comes out of a pure heart; that comes out of a good conscience; that comes out of a sincere faith.” So if we are still stuck on this emotionalism—that the goal of instruction in the Scriptures is “to be nice to one another; loving to one another in a general sense”—we’d be absolutely mistaken.

It gives us very clear instruction here. It is love that can only come first, **“from a pure heart.”**

The word *kardia* (καρδιά) is defined **“heart”** and the term **“pure”** comes from *katharos* (καθαρός), the same term we get the word “catharsis” which was first developed through the Greek tragedies. The idea was that everything is going wrong in the protagonist and the gods were angry at the protagonist and in the end, everyone dies which brings about a cleansed feeling. The idea of a cleansing of the heart resulted in a purity of heart. This is where the source of Christian, *agape* love should be—a heart that is pure, where the cleansing is complete.

The heart is the control center of who we are. It’s where we think; where we formulate our intentions. It’s the place where we can genuinely worship because although we can worship with our mouths, our hearts can be far away from Him. That was the message of Isaiah—that we can do things externally what we don’t do in the heart. From the heart can flow out sins, from the heart flow out love, or hate. The heart is the central issue. It’s who we are. In the Scriptures, it talks about this idea that the Son can cleanse us; that He could cathartically move and purify us in the heart.

Only a pure heart can love the way that God intended us to love. Stop and just think about the application of that for yourself. Every one of us here has relationships, whether it is our spouse, friends, or family. We all have human relationships—and we would like to love those individuals that we care about. May I tell you that according to Scripture that the goal of doctrine is not only to teach you how to love, but to do it from a pure heart; it’s not to be mingled it with an attitude of “I’m going to love you, but in return you need to give me this. I’m going to try to love you, but I’m holding this list against you. I’m going to do my best...”

There is this funny bumper sticker that says “Jesus loves you. I’m trying.” That’s hilarious, but inaccurate in relation to the purpose of sound doctrine—it’s to love from a pure heart, a cleansed heart. Cleansing is probably the best way of looking at it. According to [1 John 1:9](#), *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from unrighteousness.”* The thinking here is that if we are men and women submitted to the things of God and purity; to the point where we seek His cleansing, we go before Him and humble ourselves and say, “Lord, I am unclean and these are the things that I have done.”

Think about Isaiah. In Isaiah chapters 1-5, he was preaching and railing against the sinfulness of Israel. He’s wasn’t a guy who was not commissioned to the ministry yet. He was already involved in it. He was a prophet of God calling people away from their sin. In chapter 6, he sees a vision of God in His throne room and what does he say? “I am a man of

unclean lips who serves a people of unclean lips.” Why does he say that? He says, “Lord, here are the angels gathered around You crying out ‘Holy, holy, holy.’ I don’t have a right to even speak of things that I see concerning You. I don’t have a right to speak on Your behalf. I am of unclean lips. And our people, Your people, who ought to represent You, how dare they even talk about the living God. They are people of unclean lips.”

The beauty of a cleansed heart is the idea of going in humility before the Lord, confessing our sins, seeking to remove that rot that is within us that hates the things of the Lord; and from that cleansing, that righteous purification of going and confessing our sins and finding ourselves cleaned, we are capable of love that only the Scriptures can clearly give to us; that only the Lord can administer to us.

Agape love that come from a pure heart, that’s the goal of our instruction. The opposite of that would be an idolatrous sin-filled heart, an unconfessed heart, a heart that is saturated in sin—and the biggest sin of all is pride. We tell ourselves, “We don’t need God to cleanse us; we don’t need to seek Him out for confession. Why? We aren’t that bad.” There is a foolishness and pride that needs to be mortified, killed. We cannot let that happen. This kind of love that the goal of the teaching of the Scriptures it comes from a cleansed heart.

The second thing agape love flows out of is “**a good conscience.**”

The term “**good**” comes from *agathos* (ἀγαθός) not good as in an aesthetic good, but a philosophical good, perfection, excellence. If we can have an excellent or good or pure or fine or idealistic conscience, then we are able to agape love; and that’s what the goal of doctrine is, to love out of a good and excellent conscience. Let me read you a note from *The MacArthur Study Bible*.

“God created man with a conscience as his self-judging faculty. Because God has written His law on man’s heart, man knows the standard right and wrong. When he violates that standard his conscience produces guilt, which acts as his mind’s security system that produces fear, guilt, shame, and doubt as warnings of threats to the soul’s well-being. On the other hand, when a believer does God’s will, he enjoys the affirmation, the assurance, the peace and the joy of a good conscience.”

Remember the story of Adam and Eve? After they had sinned and God comes into the garden, He asks, “Where are you guys?” Where were they? They were hiding. They had made fig leaf coverings for their loins. They were ashamed of their nakedness. Shame, fear, and all of that rushed in all at once because sin had entered their hearts. What Scripture is telling us is that if we walk rightly, our conscience will provide a moral confidence.

By the way, our conscience can be wicked. It is not dependable. I Corinthians 8:7-13 says that our conscience can be weak, fragile, easily broken. Our conscience can be seared (I Timothy 4:2). Our conscience can be defiled, meaning that instead of feeling wrong when we sin, we like that feeling. Our conscience can be wrong, but it can also be good and when it is good, it means that it is right. There is a moral confidence with a good conscience.

Listen—there is power in a good conscience. If you know that you are right with God in your heart and in your conscience, then you are clean. You don’t bear guilt even though Scripture condemns us as sinners. The goal of our instruction and doctrine (even the goal of instruction concerning sin; that we can never save ourselves that we are that filthy and wrong) is not guilt. It is to lead us to the path of love, and a love that comes only from a good conscience.

Then why do we need to know about sin? Not so that we would feel guilty. That is why I think that world completely misunderstands us whenever we talk about sin and hell. It’s not to scare somebody; to try to force them to do something. No, it’s to explain the truth, which says that because of our sin and our depravity, we ought to humble ourselves, so that we would go to the Cross and seek the Lord for forgiveness of sins. And every time we mess up, we should go to the Lord. How often does the Lord want to receive us? Every time. And if we go to Him and we would find the moral confidence that comes with a good conscience.

In the Old Testament, David says to Saul, “Let the Lord judge between you and me” (that’s a great phrase that occurs from the Old Testament in a number of different stories). What is he saying? He’s saying, let the Lord judge between us, whether I am right or you are in this matter. Why can men and women of God say these things? Because they have moral confidence, security, courage, and boldness from a conscience that is right before the Lord.

In other words, they do not do things for their own sake, nor to feed some sinful nature in their heart or for the idolatry of their soul. They do things because they are the right things before the eyes of God. Men and women who live that way—they are capable of agape love. And the men and women who don’t—do not understand love the way as the Scriptures define what love is.

What is the opposite of a good conscience? It is guilt, doubt, the pain and the uncertainty of a sinful heart. That’s what we don’t teach. That’s not the goal. The goal is love that flows out of an excellent, right standing so that our moral compass is set directly north to the Lord. And we are glad for it.

The author of Hebrews says “I beseech you to come and draw near to the living God.” Not to faint, not to fall away from the living God because He is too holy. This is the same author that tells us that God is a consuming fire and yet, he is saying to draw near. Why? Because you can be right, your conscience can be cleaned, you can find forgiveness of sins through the cross of Christ and you can actually, with a good conscience, go into the presence of the Holy God. That is

wonderful. No wonder it is called the Good News. If you want to love out of a good conscience, only the Lord Jesus Christ can give that to us. The only thing agape love genuinely flows out of is a good conscience, a clean heart. Now, let's look at the last one.

Love that flows out of **“a sincere faith.”**

Literally, it says “a faith without hypocrisy.” The Greek word for hypocrisy, *hupokritēs* (ὑποκριτής) originally meant “an actor.” I like how the old dictionaries would define that word as not “to impersonate,” but “to personate;” to put on a personality not your own—to fake it. You've heard in commercials where an actor says, “I'm not a doctor, but I only play one on T.V. And I use...” How ridiculous is that? Because you are an actor on television, what you say would have meaning for us? In that same way, people say that about those who are pretending, to play the part.

God talks about these types of people in [Isaiah 29:13](#). *“And [they] honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote.”* That's a very instructive portion of Scripture where God says “You know what their problem is? They can speak. They can sing. They can do it with their lips, but their hearts are far away from Me. And so their reverence for Me, what does it amount to? Just rote, tradition. Things that they have memorized.”

If you recite the Lord's Prayer, God bless you. That's great. Unless you just do it and its just words to you, then that's terrible. If you've memorized large portions of Scripture—fantastic. God honor you for that. Let that be a blessing to your soul. But if you've memorized it and now its just words to you—shame on you. These are the words of life and they become nothing but memorized things that you spew out. That's hypocrisy. That's “putting on face,” or pretense.

A sincere or non-hypocritical faith—a love that flows out of a sincere, not hypocritical, not pretentious faith—is the goal of our instruction; that you would exercise the love of God and the love of saints and that it would come from a heart that is not filled with hypocrisy or “putting on face,” but is real, genuine, and excellent.

The opposite of this is the pretentious, the non-genuine, the pretending to trust the living God when we do not. This characterizes those mentioned in [James 1:5-8](#) which says, *“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”*

The term “double-minded” or literally, *dipsuchos* (διψυχος) means “double-souled”—unstable in all its ways. Instead of that, the goal of doctrine is that you would agape love God, your neighbors, and people; that you would do that because of your sincere faith, your trust in God, and your genuine faith; not just pretense. There's no room for love that comes out of a pretense faith. That's not genuine biblical love. The final point in your outline is the result of false doctrine.

III. The Result of False Doctrine (vs. 6, 7)

“For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, 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.”

By swerving from these things, they have wandered away into something else. It says, **“For some men, straying from these things”** and you have to ask what “these things” were that Paul was talking about.

Well, we had just discussed about a love that comes from a clean heart, a good conscience a sincere faith. In other words, instead of having that as the major thing that they are pursuing in what the Scriptures teach them—that they would agape love God and agape love one another, and that they would do it from a sincerity of faith, a cleansed heart and a good conscience—they go to speculation and fanciful, “intellectual” snobbery. This is the stuff that they are pursuing. They've strayed from these things and they have wandered into vain, empty discussions. The idea is that they are no longer interested in the things of a pure heart. They are more interested in philosophy and the fancy of the mind.

They are asking themselves, “What do you think would have happened if God didn't really make this... and let's say what if God wasn't real...” They are in the fancy of this kind of foolishness. It led them down the path of denying sin, even though people said the Scriptures say that we ought not to do this; that it's against the reputation of God. They say “Are you certain the Scriptures say this?” Individuals in their snobbery and intellectualism can argue away the plain truth of what the Scriptures teach. It's a lack of conviction to live out what the Scriptures teach in plain language.

Verse 7 says that they **“[wanted] to be teachers of the Law.”**

That was their desire. They want to be teachers of the law. They wanted what that meant. They wanted their doctorate in the Law **“even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.”** They wanted to be experts of the Mosaic Law. But the Scriptures say that their mental understandings, their mental capacities, in their minds they did not understand what they were saying nor did they appreciate what these things they were making firm or confident assertions about. They talked so confidently. It tells us

both that they were incompetent (they did not know what they were talking about) and that they were men of error. They were confident in what they did not know what they were talking about.

How many bad theologies have been based on speculation? I'll give you one example. Many liberals will take the Gospels and take John apart from the other Synoptic Gospels (i.e. Matthew, Mark and Luke), and say "Do you notice something? Mark speaks of things in both Matthew and Luke; and some things in Mark are only found in Luke and others, only in Matthew. But rarely is there something that is unique only to Matthew and Luke. Liberals would say, "Do you know what that tells you?" Here's where the speculation comes in. "Matthew and Luke must have read Mark and borrowed his stuff, but then, there are a few things that are in Matthew and Luke that are not in Mark." Where did that come from? Well, German theologians decided that there must be another source and they called that source, "Q." And let it be known that there has never been any historical document that even suggests an inter-literary dependence among the Gospel writers or all the writers of Scripture anywhere, at any time. Let alone that there is no document that can actually come close to being this "Q" source.

The "Q" source theory is a complete fabrication and yet it swept the nation of Christendom and Christian thinkers. And you think where in the world did doctrine like that come from? It came from some intellectual sitting around and thinking, "You know what I thought of today?" And it caught on like wildfire. Where did all the errors in theology come from? It came from guys sitting around with their Bibles closed, saying you know what I thought of today? If that's the way you think you draw close to God, then you are incredibly mistaken.

Conclusion

This particular portion of Scripture, Paul's charge to Timothy, tells us clearly that there is only one thing toward the path of virtue—plain doctrine. What Scripture teaches that's what we speak because that is the only way to do us good, everything else is foolish speculation. No matter how much they couch it in love, no matter how much they couch it in confidence in intellectualism—foolish speculation.

I like what Francis J. Sheed (a 20th century Catholic apologist) said,

"A virtuous man may be ignorant, but ignorance is not a virtue. It would be a strange God who could be loved better by being known less. Love of God is not the same thing as knowledge of God; love of God is immeasurably more important than knowledge of God; but if a man loves God knowing a little about Him, he should love God more from knowing more about Him: for every new thing known about God is a new reason for loving Him."

We need to increase in our understanding of doctrine; plain Scriptural truth. And that's how we increase in our love for God.

Heavenly Father,

We thank You that as we look at this idea, this charge to Timothy to guard against foolish speculation that we might learn to be all careful ourselves.

Lord, help us to preserve the purity of what the Scriptures teach—to desire to know what the doctrine of the Word of God is; that which is the simple and plain teaching of the text.

There is so many fanciful ideas, Lord may we not be captive to those but instead may we take every thought captive by the power of the Scriptures and the ministry of the Holy Spirit according to the plain truth of what the Word of God says.

We thank you that you are so gracious to give us the written Word of God, so that we may not alter that we may not change it that we may just look to it and understand and learn and that the goal would be love—love from a cleansed heart, a good conscience, a sincere faith; that we may live out the things that we learn of You.

Praise You for that. Praise You for Your holy Word and for the instruction of Your Holy Scriptures.

In Jesus name, we pray.

Amen.