

The Purpose of the Commandment • 1 Timothy 1:1-11

I. INTRODUCTION • Acts 20

A. Farewell to the Ephesian Elders

1. While on his way to Jerusalem at the end of his 3rd missionary campaign, Paul stopped to meet with the elders of the church at Ephesus.
2. Ephesus was the main city of Asia Minor & the key for reaching one of the most important regions of the Roman Empire. So Paul had spent 3 years there.
3. Now he was headed to Jerusalem where God had warned him trouble awaited.
4. There was a good chance he'd never see these men he'd come to know so well.
5. So with great emotion he said – [Acts 20:25–31]

²⁵ “And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I *am* innocent of the blood of all *men*. ²⁷ For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ Therefore take heed to yourselves and to 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. ²⁹ For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. ³¹ Therefore watch, and remember that for 3 years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

6. What anguish gripped Paul as he looked at these men, knowing that some of them would go off into error & take people with them.
7. How could someone who'd sat under the ministry of the Apostle Paul ever turn to heresy? Yet that's what happened.

B. Timothy

1. 1 Timothy is a letter Paul wrote to his young protégé, instructing him on how to lead the church at Ephesus.
2. By the time he wrote it, some of those elders had indeed gone off into error & Paul tells Timothy how to deal with them.

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 1-2 • Greeting

1. The letter begins in the usual way -

¹ Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope, ² To Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, *and* peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

2. All the elements of the usual 1st Century letter are here.
 - a. Who it's from & to, along with a brief greeting.
 - b. What's missing is Paul's usual thanksgiving & commendation.
 - c. It wasn't that Timothy was doing anything wrong.
 - d. It just that the situation in Ephesus was grave & Paul wanted to get right to the point of the letter, which he does in v. 3.

B. Vs. 3-7

³ As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, ⁴ nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.

1. Paul had urgent business in the province west of Ephesus, so he dispatched his assistant Timothy to deal with the trouble-makers in Ephesus.
2. Though not stated outright, it's not hard to figure out the problem came from those elders Paul had warned about.
3. In v. 7 Paul says they “***desire to be teachers of the law.***” Teaching was the ministry of the elders.
4. In 1:18-20 we read -

¹⁸ This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that

by them you may wage the good warfare, ¹⁹ having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, ²⁰ of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

- a. Paul didn't commit the discipline of these guys to the Ephesians elders ***because they were elders.***
 - b. So their discipline had to come from an Apostle, like Paul.
 - c. And that's why he uses such strong words with Timothy here.
 - d. He knows Tim faces a tough challenge & stirs him to it by reminding him of his calling.
5. From Paul's ***repeated*** encouragements we conclude Timothy tended toward the timid & reserved.
 6. He didn't have the same assertiveness Paul showed time & again.
 7. But Paul had every confidence with the proper guidance, Tim would get the job done.
 8. From what Jesus says in Rev. 2, Timothy succeeded in confront the errors that troubled the Ephesian church.
 9. The false teachers had no lasting traction & the church became known for its dedication to Truth.
 10. V. 4 doesn't tell us ***what*** exactly the false teachers promulgated.
 - a. But the mention of fables, genealogies & in v. 7, the law, suggests this was an early form of the heresy later known as Gnosticism.
 - b. Gnosticism was a mash-up of Greek philosophy, Eastern mystery cults, Jewish law, & Christian terms.
 - c. It told wild stories based on obscure names found in the arcane family trees of famous people.
 11. These things made for interesting stories but were distractions from the Gospel of Christ.
 12. The false teachers in Ephesus ***hindered*** believers from growing in faith because what they taught had no power to impart grace or deepen faith.

⁵ Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, *from* a good conscience, and *from* sincere faith, ⁶ from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, ⁷ desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

13. The commandment Paul refers to in v. 5 was his commission of Timothy to remain in Ephesus & deal with the trouble-makers.
 - a. His job wasn't to be some kind of ***hard-nosed bully.***
 - b. Both the motive & goal of all he did had to be love; love for God & love for His people.
14. False doctrine ***hinders*** love. It stokes pride & an arrogant self-righteousness that eclipses love.
 - a. Show me a false teacher & I'll show you someone who's arrogant, superior, & smugly judgmental.
 - b. But – find someone cleaving faithfully to the Gospel of Grace, & you'll discover unfeigned, sincere, selfless love.
15. Don't miss this because we live in an age Jesus said would be marked by ***great deception.***
 - a. He warned these days would see the rise of many false teachers, prophets & messiahs.
 - b. He cautioned that the deception would go so deep, even the elect would stand in peril of being led astray. Listen to it - Matthew 24

⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. ...

¹¹ Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. ...

²³ "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here *is* the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe *it.* ²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ See, I have told you beforehand.

16. One of the most important tests we can apply to anything we hear is to ask: Does this move me to a deeper love of God & others?

- a. Or does this appeal to my flesh? Does it merely offer a way to justify my lust?
 - b. Is this about elevating ***my*** glory or ***God's?*** Who becomes ***bigger*** by this, Jesus or me?
17. Before we go on there's something I want to share with you. Look at 3:14-15.

¹⁴ These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; ¹⁵ but if I am delayed, *I write* so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

- a. Paul urged Tim to go toe to toe with the false teachers because of the danger they presented.
 - b. ***They wanted to side-track*** the church from its mission of loving, serving, & glorifying God thru faith in Jesus, our one & only King.
 - c. There's tremendous pressure on churches today to alter their mission.
 - d. The challenge come from the ailing economy, the threat of a lawsuit, political pressure, & appealing new doctrines.
 - e. Businesses & political parties want to co-opt the church & make it just one more vehicle thru which they accomplish their aims.
 - f. They target the church to market their books, movies, products, & services.
 - g. They press pastors to mobilize their people to elect a candidate or push a political agenda.
 - h. For example, about a year ago there was a major push to get churches to join the "Save the planet" campaign.
 - 1) They urged us to have a ***Global Warming Awareness Sunday***. // 2) "Save the polar bears!"
 - i. I've told you how we regularly hear from movie studios asking us to pitch their newest movie.
 - 1) Now, you can buy companion Bible studies for small groups.
 - 2) ***Sadly***, thousands of churches have been co-opted by the culture.
 - j. But the Church is supposed to be a ***holy*** people, set-apart from the world.
 - k. We're to be a ***prophetic voice*** that ever stands to the ***side of culture***, bearing witness to the truth.
 1. Our success isn't defined by numbers, buildings, programs, & budgets.
 - 1) It isn't how many friends we have on Facebook or hits on our website.
 - 2) The success we ***ought to aim at*** is to proclaim God's word no matter how unpopular because popular or not it's true & does not change with the ebb & flow of this world's fashions.
18. Timothy was to keep the main thing the main thing; to preach, teach & love the Gospel of Jesus.
- a. The false teachers presented a distraction to that.
 - b. They wanted to hijack the church & turn it to their own ends.
 - c. So Tim was to tell those who'd turned from the Gospel to idle speculations to zip it.
19. The false teachers wanted to be ***teachers of the law***.
- a. They'd adopted the Law of Moses as the means by which to be righteous.
 - b. False teachers have to preach something appealing to gain a following.
 - c. Since there's something deep inside us that ***wants to believe*** salvation is a reward for good works, false teachers have consistently used the law & strict rules to gain a following.
20. Paul says – "These wannabe teachers of the law don't have a clue what the purpose of the law is."
21. Look at how he words it –
 desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.
- a. That is, affirm ***strongly & with great confidence***.
 - b. They're like the preacher who can't let on he's uncertain of something, so in the margin of his notes he writes – "Weak point: Look confident, pound pulpit & speak loudly."
22. That's what false teachers do. They cover their shenanigans with bluster.
23. So, if the law wasn't given to make us righteous, why ***was*** it given? V. 8 ...
- C. Vs. 8-11
- ⁸ But we know that the law *is* good if one uses it lawfully, [properly] ⁹ knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for *the* lawless and insubordinate, for *the* ungodly and for sinners, for *the* unholy and profane,
1. He goes on & identifies more flavors of sin. But before we look at them, ***note*** what Paul says here.
 2. The law isn't for the righteous, ***it's for the unrighteous***.
 3. The law doesn't have any power to make us right, only to ***reveal*** we're ***not*** right.
 - a. In Romans 7, Paul does a masterful job of describing how the law reveals the sin that's part & parcel of our fallen nature.
 - 1) We're going merrily along, assuming everything is fine & we're basically a good person.
 - 2) We're ***not*** though. In truth we're dangerous, contagious, sin-infected rebels.
 - 3) But sin has so tweaked us we've come to think our condition is normal, and that normal is good.
 - 4) So God gave the Law so we'd see what true goodness looks like.

5) Now that we can see it, it **provokes** our rebellion.

6) I don't even need to use the 10 Commandments as an example as Paul does in vs. 9 & 10.

7) Let me use a more ready example. "Keep off the grass." "Wet Cement / Paint – Don't Touch" "Fragile – Handle Not!" "For Display Only – Do Not Use."

8) We see these signs & though w/o them we'd have walked by w/o trespassing, touching, or using, now that the prohibition is before us, it's as if, to affirm our humanity, we **HAVE** to!

9) Precisely! It is to **prove** our humanity – our fallen humanity. We do what's forbidden to **renew** our rebellious, perverse nature.

b. God gave the Law so that we'd realize our innate brokenness & that at our core we're at odds with what's good & right.

c. The only power the law has is to **reveal** sin, **not** correct it.

d. It's a mirror that exposes our fallenness, but like a mirror, it has no ability to fix it.

e. Only God's grace can change us. Only Jesus can make us righteous by **giving us His righteous** in exchange for our sin.

f. In Galatians 3, Paul says the law is like a tutor that brings us to Christ. [vs. 19-25]

4. Again - One of the most consistent errors of false teachers is a promotion of the Law as a way to please God & become righteous.

5. But that's not the law's purpose. It's meant to confront sinners with the fact **that's what they are**.

a. Christian Understand the importance of the Law **in the work of evangelism**.

b. All our talk about the Gospel of Grace & how awesome God's love is means little to the average unbeliever who sees him/herself as a good person.

1) He doesn't see himself as lost; so why does he need a Savior?

2) What need has the Honor Roll, Cheerleader, President of the Young Republicans of God's grace?

3) No one claims to be perfect, but they'd hardly call themselves a "sinner!"

c. So the Gospel has little appeal to them.

d. This is why when sharing Christ with people the Law is a good **early** tool. It's a way to dispel the fiction that apart from Jesus they're okay.

6. The law confronts the lost with the brutal reality that, as it says in v. 9, they're lawless, rebellious, ignoring God, sinful, perverted & outside the bounds of what God requires.

7. Paul identifies different kinds of sin, paralleling the 5th thru 9th commandments.
for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers,

a. The 5th Commandment is to honor your father & mother. I guess killing them pretty much dishonors them.

for manslayers,

b. The 6th Commandment forbids murder, which is what the manslayer does; He's a killer.

¹⁰ for fornicators, for sodomites,

c. The 7th Commandment prohibits sexual immorality; which is all sex outside the bounds God has assigned for it, which the Bible makes clear is marriage.

1) The Greek word translated fornication is **all** sexual immorality.

2) The word for Sodomy means homosexual acts.

Off topic • Proud of those taking radical steps of obedience

for kidnapers,

d. That's a really poor word for the Greek – which is **slaver**.

1) This was the person who captured the innocent and sold them into slavery.

2) It was theft of the highest order & violated the 8th Commandment against stealing.

for liars, for perjurers,

e. The 9th Commandment forbids lying, specifically in giving testimony about another.

and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound [healthy] doctrine, ¹¹ according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

10. The Gospel only appears glorious when it's seen for what it is A message of hope & salvation for desperately lost sinners on their way to eternal doom.

11. The Law reveals sin for what it is, but it has no power to effect change.
 - a. Only God can do that, which He does by grace through faith.
 - b. It's when we forsake our own attempts to be good enough & trust in Him Who alone is good that we find what we're looking for.
 - c. And we come back to what Paul said in v. 5 -

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

12. The commandment reveals our need of Jesus & Jesus brings us love.

- a. That love, that unfeigned, sincere pure love does everything the Law requires.

Galatians 5:14 • For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this: "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*"

Matthew 22 • Jesus said – Love God & your neighbor, On these 2 commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

Romans 13:8-10 • Love fulfills the law.

What's love got to do with it? EVERYTHING!