

Sunday, March 7, 2021 | Standalone Teaching

1 Timothy 1:1-7 | The Church Moving Toward Love

Announcements:

- Saturday, March 20 from 10-12 - Jessica Cooper baby sprinkle - They would love to have diapers, wipes, or gender-neutral onesies and socks for Cooper baby #3!
- Easter – Two services: Sat., April 3, 11PM; Sun., April 4, 11PM. Expecting an influx of visitors and limited space. I need dozen people to commit to coming April 3.

Rather than go straight into another series, I wanted to preach something that the Lord has taught me in my quiet time.

READ: 1 Timothy 1:1-7 (ESV)

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

³ As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. ⁵ The aim of our charge is **love** that issues from a **pure heart** and a **good conscience** and a **sincere faith**. ⁶ Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, ⁷ desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

Last Wednesday, I briefly touched on this passage in our study 'Wholly Living.' And while I won't rehash everything I said, it is nevertheless needful for me to explain what Paul meant when he said that the "aim" of ministry is love.

The point Paul was making for Timothy was that love—that agape-self-giving-kind-of-love—is the be-all and end-all of everything we do in Church. Quite literally, without love, the Christian life falls apart. It is the adhesive that joins the virtues together (cf. Col. 3:12-14). It is the singularity to which all the other aspects of Christianity can find their source (cf. Rom. 13:8-10). It is the melody line to which all the additional notes play off. Love is the answer to every “why” question in ministry. Meaning, whatever way the ministry is conducted, or whatever it accomplishes, or wherever it goes, the final result—that is, bottom line—is love. Every Church's end game ought to be people who

have **internalized** their faith for themselves and then **externalized** their love for others. Love is the sum total of Christianity and the purest expression of the Spirit.

You can have the best bible teaching, the most fantastic music program, the most enormous budgets, and multiple massive outreach events, but if people are not learning how to love, that Church has failed miserably. As Paul told Timothy, love is the aim of ministry. It is the final destination toward which the whole of church work ought to be moving toward.

But arriving at love is an impossibility without some help. Thus, to reach destination love successfully, every journey needs three things: a usable energy source, a reliable transportation device, and a firm adherence to the roadmap. And I thought the best way to help you—and me for that matter—remember these three principles is to give you your very own **Hot Wheel**.

i. A useable energy source.

Paul told Timothy that the kind of love the Church ought to be moving towards comes from a "pure heart."

During the first-century, whenever someone spoke of the heart, they didn't mean the organ in your chest. Instead, they meant the inner-most part of a person. It was their core. Or, as one commentator put it, "the heart was regarded as the locus of the human personality and origin of the emotions and intentions."¹ It's what gives a person life, expression, and movement.

But Paul doesn't just say heart; he says that love comes from a *pure* heart. Meaning, only a heart that's been washed, redeemed, and sanctified can a person express from the heart the kind of love Paul was talking about. This is what Jesus was referring to in Mat. 5:8 when he said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." To see God, one must be pure in heart, and to be pure in heart, one must be purified, and to be purified, one must go to the One who purifies: Jesus Christ.

Paul would later admonish husbands to love their wives the same way Christ loved the Church. In doing so, they set them apart as something special and unique.

READ: Ephesians 5:25-27 (ESV)

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of

¹ Towner, Philip H., *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Eerdmans; Grand Rapids, 2006), p. 115.

water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the Church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Like a husband who loves his wife, Jesus Christ chose the Church, gave his life for the Church to purify the Church so that the Church may be presented on that final day without flaw, the perfect example of God's love.

But the one who is not a part of the Church, the one who has not through faith asked Jesus Christ to come into their heart and save them, does not possess a pure heart, but an *impure* heart. They have no power with God. They have no relationship with Jesus Christ. They are dead in their trespasses and sins. And you CANNOT love well without a pure heart empowering your actions.

To use our car metaphor, before starting out on a long journey, every responsible driver asks themselves, "What's the fuel at?" Not unlike a vehicle that lacks fuel, the person who lacks a pure heart will not move in the direction God wants them to move. (**example**: Running out of gas coming home from work at the OMNI, ruining gas pump, stalling out at 3AM in Jacksonville.)

ii. A reliable transportation device.

Not only did Paul tell Timothy that love is a direct result of a pure heart, but love is also the clear consequence of a "good conscience."

Both then and today, the conscience is what facilitates choice. It is the mechanism governing man's will. Generally speaking, it guides a person toward the "right" decision and away from the "wrong" decision. But in today's understanding, the conscience can be seen as a purely good thing; scripturally speaking, the conscience can be both a good and bad tool.

The conscience can be both seared (1 Tim. 4:2) and corrupted (Titus 1:3), but thankfully, it can also be cleansed (cf. 1 Tim. 3:9). Conscience is merely a tool that bases its decisions on what a person believes. This is why, quite frankly, "listen to your conscience," can be terrible advice for some people as the qualifier for such advice ought to be, "listen to your conscience if your conscience has been transformed by the gospel."

You see, this is what preaching ought to do. Good bible teaching ought to clear and refine one's conscience so that a person knows good from bad, right from wrong, and

righteous from sinful. The false teachers Timothy was dealing with were muddling the waters. They focused on myths, genealogies, and the law taking away the focus from a practical response of the conscience in light of the Gospel and putting it on an impractical reaction from the mind in light of unknowable speculations.

But the saving work of Jesus Christ is more than mere speculations. On Calvary, the Messiah not only purged our sins, but he purified our conscience so that we might feel bad about things that are *truly* bad and feel good about *truly* good things. This is the very same point the writer of Hebrews was making in Hebrews 9.

READ: Hebrews 9:11-14 (ESV)

¹¹ But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹² he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

The one who looks away from the true purpose of the Gospel has seared and corrupted their conscience in such a way that they cannot function properly. They cannot make good decisions because they possess a ***bad*** conscience. The mechanism for their journey, which ought to govern their choices, is broken down and in disarray. You CANNOT love well without a good conscience helping you make good decisions.

Going back to our car metaphor again, not only should you see if you have enough fuel to make the journey, but you should also ask yourself, "How's my vehicle?" A good conscience is not unlike a good car. A functional vehicle can get you from point A to point B. But a dysfunctional car is nothing more than scrap metal. (**example:** Breaking down on the side of the road coming back from our honeymoon.)

iii. A firm adherence to the roadmap.

So, love is a product of a pure heart and a good conscience. But Paul didn't want Timothy to kick it into "autopilot" and coast. No. He wanted Timothy's love—he wanted the Church's love—to follow wherever God leads. Hence, Paul tells Timothy that the last component, the missing piece to this successful journey toward love, is a "sincere faith."

The word “sincere” is the Greek word, **ἀνυπόκριτος** (a-noo-pah-k'ree-tos) and the antonym for **ἀνυπόκριτος** is **ὑποκριτής** (hoo-pah-k'ree-tace') from which we get the English word, “hypocrite.”² Meaning, to be sincere is not being a hypocrite. A sincere person is a person that what you see what you get. They are honest and honorable. You can trust the sincere person, for they do not have any ulterior motives. Thus, when Paul says that love issues forth from a “sincere faith,” he's speaking about a faith that is unfaltering, unwavering, and unswerving. It, like the sincere person, is faithful.

READ: Luke 9:57-62 (ESV)

⁵⁷ As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” ⁵⁸ And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” ⁵⁹ To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” ⁶⁰ And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” ⁶¹ Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” ⁶² Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

When we get saved, we embark on a journey with Jesus as our guide. He directs where we should go. He tells us the pace we should set. He provides the bearing for our life. More than not, we never really know the specifics of our journey. As my pastor in Georgia would say, “Faith is going not knowing.” But we do know the destination: love. Point A is the here and now. Point Z is love. Everything in between is up to our Captain; we need only follow with a sincere faith.

If I may use our car metaphor just one last time: you’ve first checked the gas level and seen that it's filled to capacity; you’ve gone through your vehicle with a fine-toothed comb to make sure it’s well within operational parameters; and now the last thing you need to ask before hitting the road is, “Where’s the GPS leading?”

So, what’s the takeaway?

The Church is a group of people moving toward love.

And the mechanism carrying us to that destination is a vehicle with a “pure heart,” maintained through a “good conscience,” and directed by a “sincere faith.” Like the false teachers in Timothy, to compromise on anything of these would mean defiling one’s heart, poisoning one’s

² Towner (2006), p. 116.

conscience, and shipwrecking one's faith. The ultimate fallout would be a people not loving well but a people who've devolved into division, destruction, and doom.³

³ Köstenberger, Andreas J., *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary, (Bellingham, WA; Lexham Press, 2020), p. 72.