

### The Goal of Biblical Teaching and the Correct Use of the Law

#### 1 Timothy 1:5-11

1 Timothy 1:5-11: *“Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, <sup>6</sup> from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, <sup>7</sup> desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm. <sup>8</sup> But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, <sup>9</sup> 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, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, <sup>10</sup> for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, <sup>11</sup> according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.”*

#### Background Notes

When the apostle Paul wrote this epistle to Timothy in about AD 63, Timothy was in Ephesus, one of the major cities of the ancient world. Some of us here today have had the opportunity to visit the ruins of ancient Ephesus, and to walk the very streets that Paul and Timothy would have walked – a great experience!

When Paul moved on to Macedonia (part of Greece today), he left Timothy in Ephesus to help build up the church there. Verse 3 says that false teaching was already a problem in the young church at Ephesus. The particular false teachers Paul had in mind apparently were believers, but they were believers who had strayed from the truth. They had “missed the mark” (v6). Paul did not instruct Timothy to excommunicate these “off the mark” false teachers, but he was to confront them and silence their false teaching. Verse 3: *“Charge some that they teach no other doctrine.”*

The particular brand of false teaching that Paul had in mind here was the false teaching of the Judaizers (v7). The Judaizers were Jews who put a great emphasis on the Mosaic Law and as a result, they were mixing up God’s grace with the Old Testament Law. They were confusing God’s gracious gift of salvation with the works of the Law.

The rest of the New Testament indicates that there was a whole range of Judaizers. There were non-Christian Judaizers, who had no time or place for the gospel of Jesus Christ in their teaching. On the other hand there were Christian Judaizers. They were true believers in Christ, but they put an incorrect emphasis on keeping the regulations of Old Testament Law. They taught that following the Law was necessary for salvation. They also emphasized the legends and endless genealogies of “extra-biblical literature” – writings that were not Scripture (v4). Thus they had strayed from the truth and “missed the mark.” These were the false teachers Paul had in view in 1 Timothy 1.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The goal of sound biblical teaching should be love.

Verses 5-6: “Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk.” In contrast to false teaching, which strays from the mark and results in idle talk, the purpose and goal and result of sound biblical teaching is **love** – not just an emotional feeling of affection, but true *agape* love. It is the kind of love that is characterized by denial of self in the interest of others. Selfless *agape* love for both God and man should be the goal, and it will be the result of sound biblical teaching.

Notice that this *agape* love is from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith (v5). At first this may sound like a three-fold goal, but it is really one goal: love that comes from a pure heart, love that comes from a good conscience, and love that comes from a sincere faith.

For the sake of time, I’m going to read a few paragraphs I wrote on this verse for Devotions for Growing Christians. It’s entitled “The Goal of Love.” The entire devotion is on our website – [www.growingchristians.org](http://www.growingchristians.org).

“The most startling aspect of this verse is the emphasis on **love**, rather than on **truth**! It’s especially startling in view of the context about distorted teaching. Truth was not to be pushed aside, because their love was to be the result of their sincere faith. However, according to this Scripture, the **ultimate goal** of Christian teaching and preaching is not truth – but **love**! That almost sounds heretical, but that is what the Holy Spirit had Paul write. Paul certainly could have written, ‘The goal of our instruction is truth along with love’ - but that is not what he wrote.

Often well-meaning Christian leaders become so concerned for the truth that orthodox belief becomes the bottom line of all their teaching and preaching. They become more concerned about what their congregations and their students *believe* than what they *do* with their knowledge. The proper ‘crossing of theological Ts’ becomes more important than living out the faith! According to our text, these well-meaning Christians have missed the goal. While this verse does not teach that “dotting the i’s and crossing the t’s” in our theology is trivial or unimportant, it does teach that correct doctrine is not the end product of good preaching and teaching. The ultimate goal is **love**!

“Again, the idea is not that orthodoxy is the wrong goal, but that orthodoxy *alone* falls short of the goal. The end product of all our Christian teaching and preaching should be love for God and mankind. Love for God is shown in a life that is characterized by worship and reverent obedience to His commands and desires. As we obey God, His love will increasingly fill our lives so that we will reach out to others with compassion and care. How are we doing? Are we teaching, preaching, and reaching the goal of our instruction?”

Continuing with the last few paragraphs of "The Goal of Love":

"The kind of love that is the goal of sound teaching and preaching is *love* from a pure heart, *love* from a good conscience and *love* from a sincere faith.

"Love from a pure heart is love that is free from hidden or impure motives. Love from a pure heart does not ask, "What's in it for me?" or "How can I avoid this responsibility?" Teaching that continually lifts up the Person of Jesus Christ as our Savior, and as the Model we should follow, will result in *love from a pure heart*.

"Love from a good conscience is love that practices righteous and Christ-like living. Christians with a good conscience pay back their loans on time. They don't cheat on their tests or their income taxes. Applying the moral standards of Scripture to our everyday lives is the kind of preaching that will bring conviction and correction - and ultimately *love from a good conscience*.

"Love from a sincere faith is love that is free of hypocrisy. It does not wear masks. It does not 'play church' or give mere lip service to God. It doesn't make only sporadic and ineffective attempts at living a biblical lifestyle. It is characterized by genuine and whole-hearted trust in God. Consistent ministry on the character of God and His purpose and program for man will result in *love from a sincere faith*."

The goal of sound biblical teaching should be love.

## **2. The purpose of the Law is to set forth God's moral standards.**

The false teachers misunderstood the purpose of the Old Testament Law. They did not really understand why God gave the Law. They didn't understand the believer's relationship with the Law, yet they were speaking as if they were authorities. Did you ever meet people who think they're authorities on a particular subject - but they don't really know what they're talking about? Unfortunately, they can lead some people astray.

Verse 8 says, "...we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully." What was God's purpose in giving the Law? Why did God give His moral law? Verses 9-10 make it clear that the purpose of the Law was to set forth God's moral standards. The Law reveals God's standards, and it shows us how far we fall short. It convicts us of sin. Romans 3:20 says that the knowledge of sin comes through the Law, and Galatians 3:24 says the Law was our "tutor," or schoolmaster, to lead us to Christ.

God's Old Testament Law shows that the acts mentioned in verses 9-10 are sin. Notice that the practice of homosexuality is sin, not an "alternative lifestyle." Practicing homosexuals can be forgiven, but the practice of homosexuality is not an acceptable lifestyle, according to God's standards. It is sin. See Romans 1 and Leviticus 18.

What about the statement that the Law is not made for a righteous person (v9)? The “righteous person” here is the Christian. When we trust in Jesus Christ for salvation and become Christians, we become righteous in God’s sight. If a person is righteous, no law is needed. Law is for the lawless and rebellious. It is needed as a basis for the punishment of criminals and the protection of society.

That brings us to an important question. How should the Christian relate to the Old Testament Law today? Some Christians say that when you become a believer, your goal in life is to try with all your might to keep the Ten Commandments. I think that’s a distortion – an incorrect aim.

The correct aim for the Christian is to fall more in love with Jesus Christ! For example, a man who is truly in love with his wife has no problem keeping the law of “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” And Christians who are truly in love with Jesus Christ will obey God’s Law automatically - much more readily than they could have if they tried to keep it with all their strength.

So the purpose of the Law is not for salvation, and it’s not for Christian living. The purpose of the Law is to set forth God’s moral standards. This view of the Law is right in line with the gospel (v11), and it does not take away from the glory of God that is manifested in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The purpose of the Law is to set forth God’s moral standards.

## Practical Application

### Does your philosophy of ministry have a biblical goal?

Most of you are actively involved in a church or Christian ministry. What is the philosophy of ministry of that church or ministry? What are they trying to achieve? What is the goal of the ministry?

If the goal is love from a pure heart, love from a good conscience, and love from a sincere faith - then it’s a biblical goal! However, if the goal is to build a mega-church, and the emphasis is on entertainment or catchy music or raising money for bigger and better buildings, then the goal is likely a distortion or a departure from the biblical goal.

Don’t get me wrong. Good music and helpful programs and adequate buildings are important, but if the *emphasis* in the church or ministry shifts to concentrate on these things, then the philosophy of ministry no longer has a biblical goal. Our ministry goal should be **love** - love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.

Every church and Christian ministry should have a “mission statement.” There is really no better “mission statement” than the goal that is found in 1 Timothy 1:5.

Does your philosophy of ministry have a biblical goal?