

Keeping the Main Thing the Main Thing

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Date: 04 November 2007

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[0:00] 1 Timothy 1, and we'll read the first 11 verses. 2 Timothy 1, and we'll read the first 11 verses.

3 Timothy 1, and we'll read the first 11 verses.

They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm. 3 Timothy 1, and we'll read the first 11 verses.

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Let's listen then as God's Word is preached. 1 Timothy 1, and we'll read the first 11 verses. And we'll read the first 11 verses.

[2:06] thing to hear the people of God raise their voices and praise of their God. And you all ministered to my heart tonight, and I thank you for tonight and for every Lord's Day when you do that. Have you ever met someone that thinks they know everything about everything and want to tell you everything they know about everything? Have you found that some things that come out of people's mouths are profitable and helpful and edifying, and other things that come out of people's mouths are not profitable and not helpful and not edifying at all? Have you ever found that some things you hear are true and other things that you hear are clearly false? Have you ever found that some of those things you hear that are true are useless, even though they are true? And some true things that you hear are helpful and good. When Timothy got his first letter from Paul, he was finding all of this and more in Ephesus. Timothy is urged to stay there. I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus. And Timothy has run into some problems in Ephesus. You see, Paul had been there and he had taught them and he had taught them sound doctrine. He had taught them the truth, but now people were taking that truth and they were starting to stray from it. They were turning aside down this path here and this path here. And maybe there was an element of truth in some of what they said, but they were starting to distort it. And some of it was just flat out lies and there were myths and all sorts of things and just vain talking. Even if it was true, it was useless. And Timothy is encountering all these things. And Paul says, I've got some instruction for you, Timothy, some help for you as you deal with all of these problems. To give you an idea of what was going on in Ephesus, I want to give you an example tonight that might help us to understand a little bit better of what had happened after Paul had left. Imagine with me a classroom. We'll say it's maybe a third or a fourth grade classroom. And the teacher has introduced a subject in her class. We'll say that it's the solar system. I don't know if you do that in third and fourth grade. It's been a long time, but just bear with me for the sake of illustration. The teacher says, we're going to learn about the solar system today. And so she begins introducing some facts about the solar system. There are nine planets, at least there were when I was in school. I've heard they voted and now there's only eight. But anyway, Pluto evidently got demoted. But anyway, when I was in school, there were nine planets. And so she tells you the names of all the planets in a way that you can remember all the planets. If you just remember that my very educated mother just served us nine pizzas, you've got the order. Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto, if you count Pluto. And she shows a picture of each of these planets as she tells their names. And she talks about how these nine planets are all in orbit around the sun, which is at the center of our solar system. And the sun is a star. It's just like the stars that you see in the night sky, only it's a whole lot closer. And so it's brighter. And as the earth is orbiting the sun, it's also revolving on its axis. It's turning. And so whichever side of the earth is facing the sun, it's daytime there.

And whichever side is away from the sun, it's nighttime there. She's talking about the solar system. At that point, the teacher begins to think about how she ate too much pizza last night and then went on the tilt the whirl. And she starts to not feel so well. And her head begins to spin and stomach turns.

And so she makes a beeline for the door. And while she's gone, the class continues the discussion on the solar system, but without the guidance of the teacher. And so you begin to hear things in the classroom. If you were to just listen in, there's soon a cacophony of noise coming out of there. There's the class know-it-all who's reciting the names of all nine planets, but he's getting the wrong order and he's mispronouncing some of them. Several students are engaged in a heated debate over whether Jupiter is bigger or smaller than Saturn. One little boy is saying that there's nine stars revolving around one planet. The moon is a star, others say. And some are arguing now that the moon has been brought up, that it was destroyed by the fully operational death star in Star Wars. But some are saying, no, that was a planet. And that was Alderaan. And that's not in our solar system. And others then are debating the merits of whether Star Wars or Star Trek is better and more entertaining to watch. And there's one kid bragging about his dad's new Saturn car that he's driving. And other children are talking about how they wish their educated mothers served nine pizzas every night because that would be the way to live. And one child is bragging that he has eaten nine pizzas all in one sitting. And another is bragging that he can drink a liter of Mountain Dew in nine seconds and then can belch the whole alphabet. And one child is trying to do that without the help of the soda. And other students are claiming with absolute certainty that the teacher must be pregnant because she had to run out of the class like that with her hand over her mouth.

[7 : 36] And you've got all sorts of things floating around. It started with a sober, sane, truthful lesson on the solar system. And now there's all sorts of things. There's some truth.

There is distortion of the truth. There are things that are slightly related to the truth. There are things that are true but are totally useless and unhelpful. There are exaggerations. There are outright lies. And there are rumors and speculation all going on because the teacher had left the room. Now the teacher's aide sticks her head in the door and hears all the noise and goes and reports to the teacher who's now sick. She's in the nurse's office. And the teacher says, please go back to my class and tell them to stop and tell them to sit down with their textbooks and to read about the solar system from their textbooks so that they get their facts straight. Now that's a sort of long drawn out, maybe a bit overdone, but it's sort of what you find in Ephesus. Because Paul had come and he had taught them the truth. But then he had left and they were starting to distort it. And they were starting to talk about things that were sort of related to it, but not really. And they were spewing things that were meaningless talk. And they were talking about myths. And they had turned aside from the faithful teaching that Paul had given them. And now that Paul is gone, he says to Timothy, who is there, tell them to stop. Tell them to knock it off. Not to teach these things anymore. Not to listen to these things anymore. It won't be helpful. In fact, it will be destructive to their very souls. And so there's a problem. We want to see the problem tonight. All this false teaching going on. And then there's a solution. There's truth. They've deviated from the truth. And Timothy is to call them back to it. Well, the problem at root is that these people were teaching false doctrines. I command you or I urge you to stay in Ephesus verse three so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines. And it seems the problem is down in verse six, at least the root of it. Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk.

[9 : 43] There's a couple of words he used to describe Paul had given them sound doctrine. He talks about it now. We read it in verse 11 or verse 10. Things that are contrary to sound doctrine. Paul had given them sound doctrine. He'd given them the truth. And now he uses two words to describe what they've done in verse six. They've missed the mark and they've gone astray. If the gospel is the target, it's an easy target to hit, but they're missing it. It's not as though it's a moving target running through the woods, trying not to get hit. It's been the same since since it was declared from the beginning. The gospel is salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. And these people were starting to miss the mark. And if God's word is a light to their feet and a lamp to their path, they had turned away from the light and were now off the beaten path. They had strayed. They had turned away, it says in verse seven. And the thing they had turned to was was meaningless talk, worthless, a waste of time and breath. And we know what it is to get off the beaten path, to get lost, to miss the mark. You're headed for a goal and you get lost on the way and you don't ever make it to your goal. Hopefully some of you do eventually make it if you're not too proud to stop to ask for directions. But these folks were proud and they didn't want to ask for directions. Verse seven, they want to be teachers of the law, but they don't know what they're talking about or what they so confidently affirm. And so they go on and on teaching and confidently.

You never noticed that the less somebody knows about something, the more sure they declare it to make you think that they know what they're talking about. They declare it with certainty. That's what these people were doing. They didn't know what they were talking about. They wanted to be teachers of the law, but they were had turned aside from the truth and were blowing smoke now, confidently affirming things that they knew nothing about.

And this is dangerous to turn aside from the truth. It's dangerous to be babbling on when you don't know what you're talking about. And it's dangerous to listen to people like that. And so Paul will say later to Timothy in chapter six, Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away. That's our word. Get lost from godless chatter. Turn away from the kind of teaching that's going on in Ephesus. Stay away from that. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith.

That's our word. They've missed the mark. If you listen to false teaching, you're going to wander from the way. So you should turn away from the false teaching. Don't turn away from the truth. Stay on the path of truth. Life and death at stake. Wandering from the faith.

It's a sad state of affairs in Ephesus. His teacher is teaching what they thought was best, but they didn't know what they were talking about. That's not the sort of pastor you want. Somebody that doesn't know what he's talking about, but acts like he does.

[12:36] So busy revealing their own minds that they're too proud to stop and ask for help. The Ephesians are all too ready, apparently, and willing to follow them. They're listening to these people. And so, Paul later will get there in chapter 3. He'll give them some guidelines. Here's the sort of teachers you should be looking for. Here's what your pastor should look like. Not people that spout their own wisdom, but rather hear some guidelines for you. Don't listen to the false. Listen to the truth.

And so, these who have turned astray to meaningless talk, they're teaching false doctrine, verse 3. Teaching different doctrine. Teaching other doctrine. That implies that by that time there was an accepted standard of doctrine. We here have our confession of faith that we believe accurately summarizes the truths of the scriptures. They probably didn't have a nice pamphlet that they could have out to hand out to different people that they visited their church, but they had a standard of doctrine that had been proclaimed to them. And these teachers were teaching something other than that. Something different than that. Not the truth. Not the pattern of sound doctrine that had been proclaimed to them.

And if that's the case, then Timothy, command them to not devote themselves to these things. Verse 4. Command some of them not to teach. Command others of them not to devote themselves to that teaching. Nor to devote themselves to myths. And endosthenologies. These promote controversies.

Don't devote yourself. Don't pay attention to these things. Some things are worth paying attention to. And Paul will later tell them, devote yourself. Give attention to the public reading of God's Word. That's worth paying attention to. God's Word. Here is something you should latch hold of. But don't devote yourself to myths and endless genealogies that are only going to provoke controversy and speculation.

[14:27] That's not worth paying attention to. And yet here, apparently, people were. And these myths and genealogies. Hard to nail down exactly what he's talking about. You can turn up other passages in the pastoral epistles in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus and find that they were probably Jewish in their origin and related to Jewish history.

And we find out that they're contrary to truth. Turn away from this to the truth. It's likely that they went together. Myths and genealogies. You know, there's all these genealogies in Scripture. And Paul isn't saying not to read them, to stay away from them. But it appears that myths would rise up around them. A lot of the people in these genealogies, we don't know who they are. But the Jews would write stories about them.

And speculate. And say, I wonder what was true of this name. And they would write a little story about them. And embellish that story with their own imaginations. Perhaps what they knew of the culture and the time in which that person lived.

And they would write a little myth about them. You could compare it. And this has become very popular today. And I'm not a big fan of it. But people will take a biblical character and they'll write a novel about them.

[15:41] Or a book with a compendium of them with six famous women in the Bible. And they add to what Scripture gives you. Some of it might be cultural information that's helpful.

But a lot of it is the author's imagination. It's myth. It's speculation. It's a guess. And it leads to confusion. And once you've read one of those novels, it's hard to go back and think.

Now, did it come from the Bible? Or was that the author's imagination? And you forget which God gave you and which the man-made author gave you. And that's the sort of thing that appears to have been going on.

They're embellishing stories from the Scriptures. Writing stories around these names. And it's leading to all sorts of controversy as our translations have it. It could be translated speculation. And that's what it was. Speculation. Guesses as to what had gone on. And Paul says to Titus, who's dealing with a similar problem, But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless.

[16:46] If God had wanted you to have all those details about that person's life, He would have given them to you. And so don't pay attention to such things, Timothy. And command those who are devoting themselves to Him to stop.

Don't listen to these things anymore. And so, some of these speculations about these genealogies. It appears that some of the false teaching had to do with the law. So these people, it says in verse 6 again, wanted to be teachers of the law.

Or excuse me, verse 7. And they wanted to be like some of the Pharisees, experts in the law. And since Paul goes on to correct their view of the law in verse 8, we won't get there tonight. We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.

Apparently, they were using it improperly. These so-called teachers. And there were deviations then with the law. And we read of one of them in chapter 4 and verse 3. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving. By those who believe and those who know the truth. There were people in Ephesus that were requiring things that God didn't require. Binding people's consciences. Telling them, you should believe this.

[17:55] You should do this when God didn't require it. Maybe some people were going the other way with the law. Saying, Paul said somewhere else that we've been set free and that the law can't save us.

And so we don't need the law. And so we don't need to keep the law. And so maybe there was some speculation on the law in that way. Those who made you do things that you shouldn't, you don't need to do. And people who said the law is not important at all.

So we're not going to keep it at all. Speculation about the law. False teaching floating all around. We even find in 2 Timothy that there were some people that were teaching that the resurrection had already taken place.

That Jesus had already come back. 2 Timothy 2.18 The resurrection has already taken place and they destroy the faith of some. All sorts of false teaching floating around, coming around because people have left the truth.

They were teaching things that were irrelevant, false distortions, misunderstandings about the law. Novel new teachings that didn't line up with what had been handed down to them. It seems the Ephesians had caught something of the Athenians problem in Acts 17.

[18:57] All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas. Wanted something new to tickle their ears.

Something exciting. Something they hadn't heard before. And in so doing, many were being led astray. And what a sad thing that it seems the church hasn't yet learned its lesson.

Still people trying to come up with new ideas. Something different. Something exciting. Something to bring you back again. I'm not going to apologize that you hear the gospel every Lord's Day here. And we'll see that's the antidote to this problem. But people get tired of hearing the same thing again and again. And so they want something fresh and new and something different. And so the church is constantly coming up with new things.

Did you know there's a new perspective on Paul? I didn't know there was anything wrong with the old perspective on Paul. I think it's pretty good. I think it's exactly right.

[19:52] The old perspective on Paul. The Paul that taught that justification is by faith alone. Apart from works. And the upshot of this new perspective. And they bring in all sorts of fascinating things.

But in the end, what it does is it adds works to our faith. For justification. New perspective. It's new. I mean, they even call it new. Because that sounds new. That's what people want.

We've talked here about open theism before. How there's supposedly much more comfort in a God who doesn't know what's going to happen in the future. Because He's able to suffer with you. And able to be surprised with you and mourn with you.

You know what? I have a high priest that's able to suffer with me. Perfectly. And a God who knows the future both. And there are still those who are too strict with the law.

And going beyond God's law. Requiring things that God does not. Enforcing them in their churches. Binding people's consciences beyond what the scriptures require. There are still people who are antinomian against the law.

[20 : 51] Who think that we don't need the law as a standard of living. We could spend hours looking at new teaching in the church. That's really just rehashing of old errors and heresy.

And so if you ever hear your pastors or your Sunday school teachers deviating from the pattern of sound doctrine. If you ever hear us teaching things that are not found in the scriptures. Teachers teaching vain speculation.

Babbling on about myths. Call us to account. These things must not go unchecked in the church.

And that's why Paul's writing Timothy. Tell them to stop. Knock it off.

Don't let it go on any longer. I love the old translation of verse 6. Some have wandered away from these and turned aside to meaningless talk. Meaningless talk they translate.

Or at least some of the commentators. Vain jangling. And it's one of those words that almost sounds like what it is. It's vain. It's empty. It's useless. And it's jangling. Almost like the rattling of keys.

[21 : 48] People are saying something and there's noise. But they're not really saying anything at all. It's useless. And so what you get is that third grade classroom. And that's not good.

But it's not really that big of a deal, right? If people just deviate a little bit from the truth. Get away from the central doctrines. Just a little embellishment here or there. I'll turn down to verses 18 through 20 at the end of the chapter.

See how big of a deal it is. Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you. So that by following them, you may fight the good fight.

Holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these. And so have shipwrecked their faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander.

Whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme. It's going to take a fight to hold on to the truth. And if you don't, you could shipwreck your faith.

[22 : 50] And I'd say those are pretty high stakes. And so we must not listen to false teaching and vain jangling and babbling on. Dear people, beware of wandering off the path and missing the mark.

Beware of new theological formulations. Exciting just because they're new. Be careful what you say and teach. And be careful to what and to whom you listen. Be humble.

Be alert. Be careful not to let our church come this way. You see, there's a reason that we have something called doctrine. That we have a systematic theology. That we have a confession of faith.

A summary of what we believe the Bible teaches. That's been passed down to us from generation to generation. Taken from the Scriptures. Tried in the fires of real life.

People that say they believe these things. And then we've seen them go and let them and even die for them. These things that have been carefully studied and passed down. These theological details that are so important.

[23 : 51] These things we must hold dear. We're going to see what's at the center here in a minute. The answer. The gospel and love. Which is from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

But Paul isn't saying only the most basic simple things matter. He's saying if you mess with your theology in one place, it's going to go south everywhere else. Here they've started tinkering with the law and other things have followed.

And so we'd better be certain that we have our theology, our doctrine straight. Again and again in the pastoral epistles, Paul talks about sound doctrine. The pattern of sound doctrine.

The good teaching. That which has been entrusted to you. We must be careful stewards of it. Not deviating from it. I'm not advocating blindly accepting what others have taught.

But verifying it with the scriptures. And when others have taught it and proven it from the scriptures. We must be very careful and absolutely certain if we would go against it.

[24 : 49] May God keep us and our theology safe and straight on the narrow path. And so I've said this, but be careful who you listen to. There are thousands of voices.

Theological voices. Bible teachers. You can hear them on the radio and you can hear them on the internet. And bloggers that write and they're new and they're exciting. And that's not necessarily bad, but look at what they're saying.

And see if it conforms with the scriptures. And don't be led astray by something that's different and new and exciting. Make sure their teaching is in line with the truth.

How can we avoid what plagued Ephesus with this false teaching? What's the solution? There's the problem. It's false teaching. They had it then. We have it now. The solution is given to us here by Paul.

Simply, first of all, command them to stop. But assuming you're not teaching false doctrine and you're not listening to it, how can we guard ourselves from ever letting it in? Paul gives us at least hints at it here.

[25 : 53] Again, again in verse 4. Command them not to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work, which is by faith.

God's work. God's administration. God's administration. God's economy. The work, the plan likely of salvation. It's the word that's used of stewardship. His salvation that has been entrusted to us. It's been given to us. That work that he planned in eternity, carried out by Jesus in history and applied by the Holy Spirit in each of our lives. That work of salvation by the grace of God through the work of Christ.

We've been entrusted, in other words, with the gospel. The good news that men can be saved from their sins and made right with God. If you're going to pursue these myths and this vain talking, that's going to promote controversy rather than the message of God's work.

God's gospel, which is by faith. The Ephesians, instead of listening to, believing, propagating, telling other people about the gospel, were babbling on about things that were useless. Even if they were true, some of them.

[27 : 04] What a waste. What folly. They've got the best message man could have. They are part of God's work and they're wasting their opportunity. They're wasting the truth that God has given them.

Turning away from it. In other words, they needed to and we need to keep the main thing. The main thing. Is God's work central to our work? Are we working with God to accomplish His purpose? Or is what we're doing fighting against God? The Ephesians were starting to work against God instead of working with Him. Is His work central to ours is what's important to Him, important to us? Do we focus on Him and His Word instead of ourselves and our own ideas? Are we God-centered instead of man-centered? Is the fundamental truth of the gospel central to all that we say and do? Or are we playing around and talking about things that are irrelevant? If we're ever promoting controversy and speculation rather than God's work, His Word, His gospel, then we must repent and return to the truth of the gospel.

[28 : 11] It's one of the reasons we do things the way we do here in our church. We aim to keep God and His Word central. If we want to know about God's work, His Word, His message, then why would we proclaim anything but the Scriptures?

And so we seek to read this Word and we seek to preach from it and we seek to sing it and seek to pray it even. That's why we center everything around God's Word. We want to think His thoughts after Him and not our own thoughts.

There's no desire for originality here, but rather to take what's been entrusted to us and be faithful stewards of it. Ephesians were failing. Paul says, Timothy, tell them to stop.

May we never go down that path. That's why we support missionaries who believe the same pattern of sound doctrine that we do, who love the Word like we do, and will proclaim that Word to the ends of the earth as we aim to do here.

It means that things are going to be very basic and simple around here. You're going to hear a lot of the Word. And that's as God wants it, as it should be. It should be that way for the church.

[29 : 13] It should also be that way in your individual lives. When you're apart, away from the people of God, is your life centered on His Word? Is it frequently on your tongue? Frequently before

your eyes?

Frequently in your heart being meditated on? Are you frequently speaking of the Gospel and the work of God? And how He's done that work in your own heart? And how He can do it in the heart of someone else?

Do you speak much of the Gospel and God's glorious truth? Or are you pursuing myths and meaningless talk? It seems that even the people of God are very good at meaningless talk. Babbling on about things that aren't really of any eternal importance. Now there is a place for entertainment and enjoyment.

And even right here in Timothy, we're told to enjoy all things that God has given to us for our enjoyment. But are you ever very far from the central truth of the Gospel?

[30:11] What is it that's most often on your lips? Vain babbling or the truth of God's Word? And as soon as we start giving in to the vain, talking, meaningless, babbling in our lives, then we're more likely to put up with it when we hear it from other sources.

And then we're more likely to put up with it when we hear it in the church. And more likely to contribute to it when we come to the church. And then we're down the road that the Ephesians started down. God, keep us. Help us to keep the main thing, the main thing.

The Gospel. But there's another antidote to this problem. And that is love. There's God's work. The Gospel.

And then verse 5, the goal of this command. Remember, he said, command certain men not to teach these doctrines, not to devote themselves to these things. The goal of this command that Timothy is to give to them, and really the goal of all of God's commands to us, is love.

Verse 5, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. If we focus on this, we won't be so apt to go astray and listen to false teaching.

[31:25] Love. It's appropriate that Paul would talk here about love. It seems that the law, remember, is at the center of some of this misguided teaching. And do you remember how Jesus summed up the law? The two great commandments.

You shall love. You shall what? You shall love. The Lord your God with all of your heart and soul and mind and strength. And the second is like it you shall.

Love. Your neighbor as yourself. These sum up the law and the prophets. And Paul says he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law. Love does no harm to its neighbor.

Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law. They had started to misunderstand the law, and so Paul brings them back. Love is the goal. And we know that if we love God, we'll keep His commandments.

We know that men will know us by this if we love one another. That we're Christ's disciples. But when people are thinking about themselves, oh, I want to be a teacher of the law.

[32:22] And I'm going to spout all my teaching. When they're thinking about themselves and their own ideas, then they're not thinking about loving one another. They're loving the sound of their own voice. And when people are putting their own word before God's word, they're not thinking about loving God.

Only their own ideas. The reason Paul wants these people to stop teaching foolishness and paying attention to foolishness is that they might return to love.

Love for God. And love for one another. It seems that in Ephesus, a love for self has taken its place. It isn't love what's at the heart of the gospel.

Why is it that God gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life? Why was that again?

For God so loved the world that He did these things. How could we forget the love of God for us? And if we forget that, then we start to go astray.

[33:23] We begin to forget the glory of the gospel. It's obscured when we start to forget about God's love for us. Does love control you?

When you think about what you're going to say, who you're going to listen to, do you think first of love? Will it promote love to God and love to man? Will it remind others of God's love for us?

Something that those who preach and teach must be careful to remember.

Love, Paul says, is the goal. And it comes from three sources. Three things will feed this love. Here the rubber starts to meet the road a little bit. You start to feel the rub a little bit.

Clean heart. Good conscience. Sincere faith. These will feed love. Love comes from these three things. Do you know anything about these people of God?

Ephesians, we're starting to forget. Pure heart. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

[34 : 27] God. The Holy Spirit comes and regenerates us. He gives us a new heart. A pure heart. A clean heart. But yet we still go back, don't we?

And we go back to our sinful ways sometimes. And we have to go afresh for cleansing to the cross. To make sure that our heart and our hands are pure. And so we go again and again to find that cleansing.

And it's when our heart is pure and we're right. And we haven't sinned against God and man. That our love is most pure for God and man. And so love will flow out of a pure heart.

Is your heart pure tonight? If you come right with God and man tonight to worship. Have you sought forgiveness for the sins that you've committed even this day?

Knowing that you've dirtied your heart again. If you're not living according to the word. And here it comes back to the law again. And maybe some had deviated from the law. They weren't keeping it any longer.

[35 : 23] They had defiled their hearts. And so they didn't mind if they weren't hearing right teaching on it. They didn't want to hear it. They didn't want to have their consciences pressed on it. If you let the heart get dirty, then other things start to follow.

You forget what love to God is and love to man. And you go astray. And so Paul goes on. And hand in hand with a pure heart is a good conscience. If we are by God's grace keeping our hearts pure. Then our consciences will be good. Good conscience. Clear conscience. What a sweet thing a clear conscience is. When you've sought forgiveness.

And you're right with God. And your fellow man. What a thing it is to be able to lay your head on your pillow at night. And to be able to rest. And know that you don't bear the guilt of your sin.

That it's been forgiven. That you have a good conscience. That it's not tormenting you. Some of you never have experienced a good conscience tonight. But you can. More on that in a moment.

[36 : 26] But interesting that Paul talks about conscience back in Corinthians. A weak conscience enslaved to obeying commands that God doesn't require. And that's some of what's going on here.

People were being told. You can't get married. You can't eat this food. You can't eat that food. And their conscience was enslaved. A good conscience won't be enslaved to those things. We won't be binding one another's consciences with things that God doesn't require.

Later Timothy is going to talk about people who have seared their consciences. If you can rest easy tonight. And you're not a Christian. You haven't trusted in Christ. Then be fearful that your conscience has been seared.

And you don't care any longer about love to God. And love to man. It doesn't matter. You can get to the point where you can rest easy. Because you don't care anymore. Oh and that's dangerous. That's scary. We'll talk about that. I believe it's in chapter 4. When he talks about conscience is seared as with a hot iron. That's not a good conscience. A good conscience is one that's been made right with God.

[37 : 29] One that knows it's Lord. And if you have that good conscience. Then love will flow from it. Easy to love God and man when you're right with God and man.

Easy to keep the main thing the main thing. When your conscience is clear. When it's good. And then sincere faith. Faith without hypocrisy. If we've trusted in Christ.

If we have put our faith in him. And in him alone. Then we will be seeking to keep our hearts clean. Our conscience is good. It's by faith that we draw near to God. It's by faith that we are justified. That we're declared righteous in his sight.

And when we're declared righteous in his sight. Then we want to be righteous. And so we seek to live a life of righteousness. Keeping a clean heart. A good conscience. And so we make it our aim to live by faith.

Trusting in Jesus for our salvation. For every day. For our help and strength. This isn't that fake, spurious faith. It says I'm going to act like I'm a Christian on Sundays.

[38 : 29] And I'm going to deceive everybody into thinking I'm a person of faith. And then go and live however I want the rest of my life. That doesn't produce love for God and love for men. And this is the genuine article. Faith without hypocrisy.

Faith that produces self-abasing, him-exalting love. And here in some ways, in summary form, is what Paul is going to talk about in chapter 3.

If you're looking for a faithful teacher of God's Word, look for somebody with a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. In some ways, chapter 3 is just fleshing those things out. But it's not just a requirement for preachers, teachers. It's for all of God's people. We must keep these central. And this might help you understand other aspects of what we do in our church here. That's why when we preach, seeking to preach God's Word, we make it our aim not to leave you with just doctrine and theology and theory, but seek to bring it home to your lives.

[39:30] To apply it. To make you feel the rub of it. To make you see where you need to obey. Where perhaps we've been slipping and falling and going back to our sin. To make you feel the weight of those things and how we ought to live.

God's Word should affect us in that way so that we can have a clear conscience and a pure heart. So that we will be loving one another in our God. If we don't have these most basic things, we'll always be in trouble.

Never unified. Always pursuing vain teaching. We want this to be a place where the main thing is the main thing. God and His Gospel. His plan for His church is to save a people.

To cause them to grow in grace. And for them to propagate and take that Gospel to the ends of the earth. And we want this to be a place where that happens.

That's why we stick with the basics here. And it must be what you personally are pursuing as well. If you've professed faith in Christ, can you say you have a pure heart and a good conscience tonight?

[40:28] If you've started finding worship a little bit difficult these days. Not so eager to be in the Word. And finding it difficult to love some of your brethren.

Especially the ones that rub you the wrong way a little bit. Maybe you've begun to turn away from the truth. Maybe self-centered pride has crept in and made others seem less important. Maybe you need to come back to the cross.

To be cleansed and forgiven afresh. To renew that clean heart and clear conscience. What blessed things to have. Clean heart.

Good conscience. Sincere faith. Sin robs these things from us. Leaves us vulnerable to the attacks of the evil one. May God keep us from these things. But maybe some here tonight have never put their faith in Christ at all.

You've never had a clean heart. Never a sincere faith. And never a good conscience. It all begins with faith. You can run to Jesus tonight.

[41:35] Trust in Him by faith. You can cast yourself upon the Savior. And the Holy Spirit can give you a new heart. It starts there. But you can then trust in Him.

And receive that glorious gift of salvation. Forgiveness of sins. And then you can have a clear conscience. And what a thing it would be for you. To be able to lay your head on your pillow tonight. For the first time in your whole life. And know that your sins are forgiven. And to not bear the guilt of them anymore. And to not bear the weight of coming punishment.

And the dread of an eternal hell anymore. That can be yours tonight. If you would come and trust in Jesus. It's very simple. It's the gospel. God sent His Son.

He took the punishment in your place. His righteous life can be yours. And so you can be right with God. And have that forgiveness of sins.

[42:33] It's a glorious thing. And then having put your faith in Him. He'll enable you to walk in His ways. So that you can have that clean heart. That clear conscience.

You'll learn what it is to love. And to be loved. This is glorious truth. It's the main thing. It's God's work. It's what by God's grace.

We aim to never abandon. Here. It's what we always want you to hear. Here. The truth of the gospel. That you can be saved from your sins. And be burdened by them. No longer. So what will it be?

People of God. Will we each spout our own folly. Wasting our time. Will we listen to useless talk. That doesn't edify us. Will we teach out of pride.

Or will we remain humble. And seek to honor God. And teach and listen to those things. That are true. And edifying. And beneficial. For God's people. Getting back to the basics.

[43:32] May God keep us close to His truth. May He make us a people. Who love His work. May He make us a people. Who love Him. May He make us a people. Who love one another.

May He make us a people. Of clean hearts. Good consciences. And faith without hypocrisy. May God keep us from straying. From His perfect truth. Let's pray together.

Our Father. We thank You for Your Word. We pray that You would. Keep us from ever straying from it. We thank You that it is a lamp. To our feet. And a light to our path. Keep us from ever deviating. From that path. From ever going astray. From ever missing the mark. Of Your glorious gospel. We pray that You would keep us. Faithful to Your Word. Faithful to Your truth. And as we.

Seek to be a people of love. With. Good. Consciences. Clean hearts. And a sincere faith. We pray that You would occupy us. With these things. So that when. Other lesser. False.

[44 : 29] Or vain. Teachings. Come our way. We pray that they would hold no attraction to us. In the light of. Your glorious gospel. As we are. Aiming to live our lives. According to Your Word. By faith.

Give us help. And strength. For these things. We are inadequate for them. And so we feel our great need. Of Your help. Your strength. To guide us. To sustain us. And to keep us faithful.

And to the end. That none here might make shipwreck of their faith. Guard us. Protect us. And draw some. This night. To yourself. For the first time. That they might come with faith.

And trust in Christ. And so be able to. Pillow their head tonight. With a clear conscience. Come and do a great work in our midst. We pray in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.