

## **The End of the Commandment**

**"The end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart,  
and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned"—I Tim. 1:5**

The first epistle to Timothy contains much material for thought and edification. The circumstances of its writing are explained in 1:3. Paul left Timothy at Ephesus to guide the ecclesia there, and is writing to him on various matters concerning its welfare. The first injunction strikes us forcibly—

"That thou might charge some that they teach no other doctrine."

Why is Paul always so zealous about the doctrine? Why are details of belief so important in his eyes? This is not just Paul's idea. He was writing by the guidance of the Spirit. Doctrine is important because truth is important. True doctrine is simply the truth regarding spiritual things—the actual facts. False doctrine is fable, darkness, confusion—contrary to fact and reality.

All our actions are based upon our conception of the facts. If our conception is wrong, our actions will be wrong. Now God has revealed certain facts and outlined for us a certain course of action consistent with these facts. There is no hope or safety for us in any other course. This is the one narrow course that leads to life. All the countless others lead to death. If we choose the one, we choose life. If we choose any of the others, we choose death. It is very simple. Paul is just saying,

"First and above all, see that they hold fast to that one course of belief and action that leads to life. It is plainly marked, and it is vitally important."

There are many ways, as Solomon reminds us, that appear right and just and profitable to the unguided human mind, but God has spoken. He has revealed the framework of truth and reality. He has given us a divine yardstick. We do not question it, or judge it by human conceptions of wisdom. We either accept it or reject it as a whole, and if we accept it, we accept it without question, and measure everything by it.

But is doctrine just an arbitrary formula that we learn by rote, and repeat from memory?—"Man is mortal"—"The dead are unconscious"—"We do not go to heaven at death"—"Hell is the grave"—"Immortal soulism is a fable"?

Far from it. Knowledge is the basis of conduct. There lies its importance. These things are integral parts of the complete picture of truth by which our lives are guided. God has given us sufficient light to direct us. Paul makes this clear in verse 5—

"Now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned."

That is the "end" or purpose of ALL commandments, and teachings, and revelations.

Love—a pure heart—a good conscience—and an unfeigned faith. These things, to be steadfast and sure, must have a foundation of knowledge and truth. This foundation is afforded only by the Scriptures. If we wander from that narrow beam of light, we shall find in times of adversity that our love is merely self-pleasing sentiment, and our faith but the flush of self-satisfied prosperity.

In the same discussion, verse 4, Paul warns against those questions which gratify curiosity but do not edify or upbuild. Against these we must always beware. We do not seek knowledge for its own sake—such knowledge puffeth up. We must always remember that the end to which we are working is a pure heart, a good conscience, and a living, unfeigned faith; and the value of everything must be measured according as it contributes to this end.

A pure heart. What can compare with it? Guileless, open and sincere, full of light and truth. Free from remorse, regret and misgivings. Serene in the quiet confidence of godliness and purity. Innocently and happily heedless of the innuendos of the evil, the scorn of the wise, or the sarcasm of little minds.

"Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (John 14:27).

"Who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His holy place? He that has clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity."

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

A good conscience. At first thought this seems to cover the same ground as a pure heart, but Paul does not waste words. He has another angle in mind. To attain to the perfect man we must have both. It is possible through ignorance to have a good conscience without a pure heart. It is possible through ignorance, but rare, to have a pure heart without a good conscience. Conscience is regulated by knowledge, purity of heart by love, and both knowledge and love are essential. Love without wisdom is maudlin and harmful—knowledge without love is cold and destructive.

Paul, with a good conscience, helped to stone Stephen—Peter, with a pure heart, would have shielded Christ from his appointed death. "Add to your virtue, knowledge," Peter himself later exhorts (2 Pet. 1:5).

And faith unfeigned. Why does he stress the unfeigned part? "Unfeigned" means real, sincere, genuine, actual. He emphasizes this because faith is something that is so easily and fatally counterfeited. It can so easily be dead when it seems alive, particularly in times of prosperity.

Faith, Hope and Love, as Paul shows, are the three fundamental virtues, and to mean anything they must mean everything. This is particularly true of faith. If faith is to be anything more than just pious feeling, we must launch out and throw our full weight upon it in perfect confidence, with no safety strings to some human provision lest faith lets us down.

Paul makes this clear in his letter to the Hebrews. He cites a score of memorable instances in which holy men of old, faced by a choice between faith in God and human reason, chose the former, and fearlessly pressed forward.

We are faced daily, and even hourly, with the same choice. The importance of each particular instance is irrelevant, the principle is the same. For faith to be unfeigned, we must give daily and practical evidence of our belief that the things that are seen by the natural sense are not the real, important things.

For faith to be unfeigned we must trust our security and wellbeing entirely to it. It is not sufficient just to abstain from wrong. That is just prudence and commonsense. The rich young ruler had all that, but still he lacked the courage to give his faith life. It's easy to

be faithful with security behind us, but when Jesus said, "Go and sell all that thou hast and give to the poor," his faith was exposed for what it was. All his life he had been deceiving himself, making a hobby of goodness but lacking the power thereof. It is written,

"The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17).

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves . . . For we are glad when ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection" (2 Cor. 13:5,9).

In the last seven verses of chapter 2, Paul touches upon the special position of women according to the divine purpose. He speaks of apparel and ornaments, of modesty and sobriety. (What would Paul think of painted faces and enameled nails?)

Then he speaks of deeper things—of woman in relation to the man. Woman's position in this respect is a difficult one, especially in times and conditions such as these, but if with the help of God, she fills it with graciousness and perception, it will earn her an unfading crown of glory.

Pride is the greatest handicap; and pride (which is only a vain form of ignorance) is equally rampant and offensive to God in man as in woman. Man's subjection and humility is required no less than woman's, but God has decreed that in order for harmony to prevail, a proper and scriptural relation between the two must be maintained, as Paul outlines.

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In chapter 3, Paul speaks of the qualifications necessary in those put into positions of responsibility. These things are written for our admonition, and vitally affect the welfare of the body. These are rules—commands—not just suggestions, and we do well to ponder them carefully when called upon to select the servants of the ecclesia.

Vigilance for the faith, ever watchful. That comes first, just as Paul opens the epistle with the earnest exhortation to pure doctrine. Then sobriety, hospitality, patience, gentleness, gravity, freedom from the lure of temporal wealth, and the ability to govern their household firmly and well. Paul says "must." If we ignore these restrictions and commands, we cannot hope for good results, and we are responsible for what ensues.

In chapter 4, Paul returns to the theme of doctrine. This is the foundation of all, the bond that holds all together, that which gives everything a meaning. Neglect the doctrine, and all will crumble. God has declared it; history proves it; our own experience confirms it.

Furthermore, there is only one bulwark against all the speculations and superstitions of the human mind, and that is the one revealed Truth. As Paul points out, as soon as men wander from that which is revealed, there is no limit to the absurdities they will invent and impose on others. We see the principal example of this in modern Babylon, to some of whose practices Paul prophetically refers. Therefore, he says,

"Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine . . . Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."

Then he says (verse 7), "Exercise thyself unto godliness." And he compares this with bodily exercise, showing its superiority. We are all aware of the benefits of consistent bodily exercise—how the powers and possibilities of the body can be developed to almost unbelievable degrees of ability and perfection—we think of the fingers of the pianist, the

feet of the dancer, and the muscles of the athlete—marvelous examples of the value of practice and application, but all to a perishing end.

Rather practice godliness, Paul says. This will last when all other talents and abilities are consumed by the resistless march of time. This alone has profit both in this life and in that which is to come. Develop your talents with an eye to eternity. Lay up your treasure in heaven.

Practice makes perfect, we are told. This is natural law which holds good in spiritual things. Practice godliness, Paul urges. Make it your consuming ambition. Give thyself wholly to it. There is no higher aim possible than to be like God. That is ambition enough for one life time. We cannot afford to be bothered with passing things. Give thyself wholly to it. We remember the first and greatest commandment—

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind."

A part-time service is a mockery—worse than none at all. "I would," Jesus says, "that ye were either cold or hot" (Rev. 3:15).

Chapter 5 deals more directly with the practical application of these principles. Some verses are very striking and timeless in their timeliness.

"If any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home" (verse 4).

We are reminded of James' words—

"Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows."

And also in verse 8 in this same chapter—

"If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

True religion is essentially practical. It is a way of life, not merely a form of belief. It consists of doing, to the best of our ability, and in harmony with divine revelation, those simple daily things that come to our hand, not for reward or profit but AS UNTO GOD, knowing that nothing so done will be forgotten by Him.

"If any provide not for his own, he hath denied the faith." Does Paul contradict the words of Jesus when he said—

"Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on, for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

We know that there can be no contradiction, and there is none. The words of Jesus do not condone slothfulness, neither do the words of Paul condone hoarding. Both are harmonized by Jesus' summary, giving scope for both industry and faith.

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

"Give us this day our daily bread." Here is the field for faith and dependence upon God. To use what comes to our hands today as God would have it used, and trust Him for

tomorrow. "He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord." Will the Lord withhold when the need comes? Should we hold some back in case the Lord forgets? How the paltry benefits of earthly investments pale before the great insurance company of ever-watchful divine Providence.

Verse 19: "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses."

The R.V. says, "At the mouth of two or three witnesses" and all versions and lexicons support this meaning. A single accusation is not to be received against one whom the ecclesia has placed in a position of responsibility. The wisdom of the injunction is apparent.

"Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear."

Is Paul overlooking the course of reconciliation as outlined by Jesus? Of course not, and neither should we. It is obvious that this command applies when all private efforts have failed.

Then verses 24 and 25: "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid."

There is a wealth of meaning, comfort, and warning in these two verses. Some men's sins are apparent to all. Some only God can see. Some suffer deep humiliation and hardship for their indiscretions, some sin far more, but outwardly appear fair to men—all have sinned—only mercy can save us.

So with good works. Only God can judge the hearts. The humble and obscure daily service of the poor is much more in God's sight than the flashy, intermittent generosity of the rich.

"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart: and then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Cor. 4:5).

The faithful will be content to wait that day in patience.

In 6:5 Paul speaks of some who "suppose that gain is godliness"—that prosperity is a sign of blessing. Let us guard ourselves against this common error. The men of whom the world was not worthy, as Paul says, were those who "wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented." To them doubtless, as to Job, it would be said in derision—"Gain proves godliness; affliction shows some hidden sin."

Gain, if it is a sign of anything, is a sign of greater responsibility, greater requirement, greater temptation, greater anxiety, the need for greater care and faithfulness.

"If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?"

We are but stewards—all things are God's.

"But godliness with contentment is great gain . Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content" (1 Tm. 6:6).

"Having food and raiment, let us be therewith CONTENT." Do we obey this command? "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?"

Having, by the mercy of God, the bare necessities for material existence, let us turn our attention to higher things.

"But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts" (verse 9).

What does he mean by "rich"? How much is it necessary to have? It is not a matter of amount, but of principle. "Haring food and raiment, therewith be content" is the principle. The man of God does not need any limit set. He is eager to be about his Father's business. But we must not say that he begrudges the time necessary to earn his living. That, too, can be a pleasurable service to God if approached in the proper spirit. The motive, the desire of the heart, is the determining factor.

It is the love of wealth, the desire for gain—always something a little better, a little flashier, a later model, a newer fashion—that is the root of all evil, as Paul says in v. 10—pride and greed and the lust of the eye, no matter how disguised.

"But thou, O man of God, flee these things"—realize their foolish emptiness—"and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life . . . "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust" . . . "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine . . . Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them" . . . "Grace be with thee. Amen."

—G.V.Growcott

—The Berean Christadelphian, January, 1957