

Letters From My Father
Week 2
1 Timothy 1:5
"Love: Step by Step"

Introduction

"By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another."

John 13:35

Based on the information that Paul offers in his letter to Timothy, we can discern there were two different "types", if you will, of false doctrines being taught in the church of Ephesus. The first of them being Gnosticism, and the second being legalism. It can easily be understood that these two very different dogmas would have caused a schism within the body, for one (*Gnosticism*) was a license to sin, while the other (*Legalism*) taught that one must perfectly observe all the commandments of The Law in order to be saved. Is it any wonder that Paul sent his young protege to get the church back to its gospel roots of salvation, by grace, through faith?

False doctrine kills churches. It is as simple as that, and Paul wasn't about to watch the church that he loved, namely Ephesus, go down without a fight. So he sent the man that he trusted the most, the one to whom he was most like minded (***Philippians 2:20***), to shepherd this flock and protect it from the wolves that had threatened its very survival. Love doesn't give up on people, but rather it protects, bearing all things in order to keep them safe (***1 Corinthians 13:7***).

While there were those in Ephesus who certainly needed to be weeded out from among the congregation, Paul hoped that the majority of the Believers there would heed the sound teaching of Timothy and repent. This should be the goal of any pastor, to see to it that the sheep under his watchful care were properly feed, as well as rescued from danger. Timothy had been charged to meet the spiritual needs of the flock at Ephesus, and Paul wanted them to know that his young son in the faith was being dispatched there with his full endorsement. Many of them would more than likely resent this young man coming in to take charge, so Paul had sent a letter of recommendation so that this transfer of authority would be fully embraced.

The best way to spot false doctrine is to know the Scriptures, while the best way to recognize its fruit is by seeing see its results. True Christianity produces love, while false teachings lead to sin and division. The devil deceives Believers in many ways. Arguably the two primary means by which he is able to accomplish his evil schemes are to 1.) convince Christians that their sins are acceptable, and 2.) to convince self-righteous Christians that they are somehow more "spiritual" or "special" than the rest of the flock. Both methods will tear a fellowship apart, and both were being employed in Ephesus. Timothy had his work cut out for him, as well as every pastor who ever stood behind the pulpit in an effort to effectively shepherd Christ's flock. Paul reminded Timothy that the true gospel has the power to bring agape back to any divided fellowship.

Now the goal of our instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.

1 Timothy 1:5

In this one verse, Paul sums up what causes a congregation of Believers to not only love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, but to love their neighbors as themselves. This charge of agape love is known as "The Royal Law", and it is the very essence of true Christianity. Every church must in fact strive to have this agape relationship between God and man. In short, we love God, and we love each other. And Paul listed the three ingredients, the stepping stones if you will, in order for this charge of agape to be fully realized. God's Word never leaves us "hanging", as it were. When The Savior requires something of us, He will also instruct us as to how to accomplish His will. Here we see the sequence that brings agape to the churches: a *Sincere Faith*, a *Good Conscience*, and a *Pure Heart*.

A Sincere Faith

Paul had charged Timothy with restoring sound doctrine to the Church at Ephesus (**vs 3**). The Greek word rendered “*instruct*” in the CSB and “*command*” NIV is “*parangelio*”, and it is best translated as a “*charge*”. Paul had charged Timothy with the task of correcting the false teachers at Ephesus. And just a few sentences later, he explains exactly how this “charge” was to be implemented.

Now the goal of our instruction (paragalia) is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. Some have departed from these and turned aside to fruitless discussion. **1 Timothy 1:5-6** (with the Greek addition)

What Paul was saying here was that the end result or “goal” (*telos* in the Greek) of the *charge* (*parangelio/parangelia*) that he gave to Timothy would restore agape back to the divided congregation. I can only imagine just how divided they were, with one portion telling everyone that sin was acceptable, and therefore, should be embraced by the “truly spiritual”, while the other side was insisting that every letter of the Law of Moses was to be obeyed to the fullest extent or their salvation would be forfeit. I don’t know about you, but I wouldn’t want to attend this church on a regular basis! Oh, how we need truth to be taught in our churches.

An entire sermon series could well be preached on the “ingredients” that Paul lists for Timothy in order to restore agape love back to Ephesus. And I believe that they are listed here for us in reverse order. Paul states that agape will be the end result (“*telos*” Gk) of three separate elements working together in harmony within the body of Christ. And I believe they are like “stepping stones”, if you will, that are ascending in the direction of the agape love that is so desperately needed for a church to be in the center of The Saviors will. I would like for you to envision with me these three steps in the order in which I believe will allow us to climb toward the ultimate goal of agape.

The first of these “steps” is a *sincere faith*. Now there are a plethora of “false faiths” out there, but I believe a true faith begins with the comprehension of Who Jesus truly is. He is the Son of God, God incarnate, and He came to earth to take away the sins of the world (**John 1**). A person cannot truly be saved from their sins unless The Holy Spirit enables them to see Jesus as He is. He is not some “good moral teacher”. He is not simply a “good man”, who was misunderstood. He is God, and unless you see that, and believe, you have not come to “sincere faith”. Every belief system out there that portrays Christ as somewhat lesser than He is, is false faith. And false faith will lead to destruction.

The second thing a person must believe in order to find salvation is to realize that they *need saving!* The Law of Moses was given so that we could see just how inadequate we are in comparison to God’s Holy Standards. It was given to show us that:

The righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe, since there is no distinction. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Romans 3:22-24

So, in short, we all need saving, and the only means by which we can obtain this salvation is to place our complete faith in Christ in order to be saved. He is the only means by which we can find forgiveness for our sin. This is what Paul means when he speaks of “Sincere Faith”. It is the understanding that in Christ alone can we find the forgiveness that we need.

And thirdly, in order to have a faith that is sincere, *we must believe* that Jesus will do everything that He has promised that He will do! I cannot tell you how many “Christians” have expressed doubt of their salvation to me over the years. When you have asked Jesus to forgive you, and then turn around and doubt that you have been forgiven, then you are not doubting your salvation my friends, you are doubting the integrity of Christ! He keeps His promises.

“Everyone The Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him Who sent Me. This is the will of Him Who sent Me: that I should lose none of those He has given Me but should raise them up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father: that everyone who sees The Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I will raise Him up on the last day.” **John 6:37-40**

To trust fully and to rely solely upon this testimony of truth given by The Savior as the sole assurance of your forgiveness and salvation is to have a *Sincere Faith!* And it is the first “stepping stone” leading to the ultimate goal of agape love.

A Good Conscience

The word “conscience” in English simply means, “to know with”. And not surprisingly, the word for conscience in the Greek (*syneidesis*) means exactly the same thing. The conscience is something that every person is born with. It is an internal guidance system that instinctively lets us know when we are doing something wrong. Although everyone is born with a conscience, it can be “seared” or “deadened” by habitual sin (**1 Timothy 4:2**). This occurs when we keep excusing our wrongful actions until our conscience no longer properly governs us, as it was intended to do.

When David sinned with Bathsheba, and subsequently, brought about the death of one of his most trusted servants Uriah (**2 Samuel 11**), God sent His prophet Nathan to confront David about his great sin (**2 Samuel 12**). David repented to The LORD for what he had done, and then he did a remarkable thing. He wrote a song for the congregation of Israel to sing about how his guilt had wrecked his life and damaged his relationship with God. Now, how many people do you know that would publicly confess their sins in such a way, so that others may be instructed not to commit the same sin?! Just imagine a king or a president who would publicly humble themselves in such a way and publicly confess their sins! Now, that is a candidate that I could vote for.

When David wrote his song of confession (Psalm 51), he said something very interesting:

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place. **Psalms 51:5-6 (NIV)**

David is speaking here of his conscience. The thing that he was born with, which accused him on the inside, whenever he did something wrong. We all have one. And if we live any length of time, our conscience will reveal to us the sinfulness of our very nature. And when we are exposed to the truth of God’s Word, we are convicted not only by our conscience, but also by The Holy Spirit of the Living God Who made us.

Nevertheless, I am telling you the truth. It is for your benefit that I go away, because if I don’t go away The Counselor (The Holy Spirit) will not come to you. If I go, I will send Him to you. When He comes, He will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment. **John 16:7-8** (emphasis added)

So when we are taught the commandments of God’s Word, our conscience as well as The Spirit of God convicts us of our sin. We are without excuse and stand accused and guilty as charged in the presence of a Holy God.

But here is the good news: If we have a genuine faith, and truly believe in the gospel message of Christ, then we have the full assurance that our sins are forgiven! Our conscience has therefore been cleansed to the uttermost knowing that although we were guilty, our debt has been fully paid on the cross!

But God proves His Own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. How much more then, since we have now been justified by His blood, will we be saved through Him from wrath. **Romans 5:8-9**

So the blood of Jesus is far superior to any other sacrifice, for through His blood, our consciences which once condemned us are now washed clean!

For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow, sprinkling those who are defiled, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works so that we can serve The Living God. **Hebrews 9:13-14**

Step one to the agape life, genuine faith in the saving grace of our LORD Jesus, step two, a conscience that has been washed clean as a result of this saving faith! And now we climb to step three.

A Pure Heart

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come! **2 Corinthians 5:17**

When David sinned, he wrote **Psalm 51**, even he knew that he couldn't purify his own heart. Although his conscience had told him right from wrong, he still foolishly sinned against it. His prayer to God in the Psalm is very telling:

God, create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit within me. **Psalm 51:10**

David knew that despite his best efforts, he could never have created a clean heart within himself. Only God could do it. And that is exactly what His Spirit does when we are born-again in Christ. He changes our hearts from the inside. That doesn't mean that we are sinless, but what it does mean is that our hearts are changed so that we have a longing to live according to God's will, rather than in sinful self-indulgence. We go from living in accordance with our own fleshly desires, to living according to The Spirit. Sin will no longer satisfy our longings, only a right standing before God will give us lasting peace. Our hearts that were once dead are made alive in Christ.

The Prophet Ezekiel spoke of a time of great rebirth, when God promised that His people would have their hearts awakened:

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will place My Spirit within you and cause you to follow My statutes and carefully observe My ordinances. **Ezekiel 36:26-27**

This promise was fulfilled in Christ Jesus. And any man who is in Him is a new creation. The old has passed away, and the new has come!

Now, this is the final step to agape. We come to Genuine Faith in Christ, we are forgiven, and our Consciences are cleansed, and The Spirit of God creates within us a new heart, purified in its longing to follow Christ. And what happens as a result? We love Him because He first loved us! And this new love is contagious. For we cannot help but love those whom Christ loves. So the final goal (telos) is agape love. And that, my friends, is how you can tell if a person's faith is genuine. False teaching causes discord and division, but the result of genuine faith is a clean conscience, and a purified heart, which brings agape.

Oh God, our Holy Father, may we truly be made whole in Christ Jesus, so that love is the goal of our faith.

And let the true believers say... Truth!!!