

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

“The Protection of the Church”

1 Timothy 1:3-7

If you turn to 1 Timothy 1:3-7 we will take a look at this passage and I will read it for you.

“As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus, in order that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith. But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.”

So Paul instructs Timothy to instruct others to not teach strange doctrine. He considers this to be so significant that he starts out his book with this exhortation. More than exhortation, it's like words from an overseer or a superior to a subordinate. It's instructions like an urging, a charge to an underling. It's also an incomplete sentence in Greek showing a sense of urgency or perhaps emotion. A sense of need to get this accomplished because it's a threat to the protection of the church.

So, right off the bat we have strange doctrine to deal with and it is a threat. It was a threat then and it's a threat now. In fact, it's more of a threat perhaps than it has ever been because now we are in the information age where information travels about and it becomes very difficult to brush it back like a broom sweeping the pacific ocean, its surrounding us. Many, many ideas from many, many people about what supposedly is right about God.

As we look at this protection from strange doctrine there's the phrase here “teach strange doctrine,” my version says that, translates it this way. It's a translation from a compound word, this compound word which is two simple words put together. Paul sort of coined this word. It gets used again later on in the book, it gets used again for different doctrine in 1 Timothy 6: 3, **“If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing.”**

This different doctrine, joining two words together, of another or other and teaching, this is other teaching that are different than doctrine that is being taught by the apostles. It's not just teachings that are the same, you can almost go about any teaching and find some degree of similarity of the truth. Not everything that some people teach is completely wrong. In fact, some of the more difficult of doctrines to deal with are the doctrines that are more similar but are not accurate.

So the emphasis here is on other doctrines and when people teach other doctrines, other teachings, which need to be guarded against, people need to be instructed not to do this. If they are not going to listen and they are going to continue to do this, then we need to be on guard, which is why Paul directed Timothy to remain on in Ephesus to guard the church of Ephesus against this.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Now to try to communicate this sense that Paul has of urgency and forcefulness with an element of “let’s rebuke these people” I thought I would give you some words from somebody more of a contemporary to us. He’s a football coach. His name is Jim Mora. He coached the New Orleans Saints many years ago. About 15 years ago he was in a press conference after a football game and he was rather irritated with the press that was asking him some questions and he felt like they didn’t know what they were talking about. So, sort of like when Paul was instructing Timothy to instruct these men, here’s what Jim Mora had to say to instruct these men that he was dealing with.

“You think you know but you don’t know, and I’m promising right now that you don’t know, you really don’t know. You think you know but you don’t know and you never will, okay?” (audio)

Get the point? These writers thought they knew football and he’s telling them “you think you know but you don’t know,” and these strange doctrine teachers thought they knew. Who goes about teaching thinking they are wrong? Everybody who is teaching thinks they are teaching what they think is right and that people need to embrace, but they didn’t really know.

In verse 7 they were making confident assertions about things they knew nothing about. They thought they knew but they didn’t know. Their doctrine was founded upon myth. Founded upon myths, this word myths in verse 4 comes from the Greek word MUTHOS. It is a word that we get right from the Greek word and it comes up again in other places in the Pastoral Epistles later on in this book, Chapter 4:7, “**Have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women,**” or people that are susceptible to being led astray. Don’t be giving attention to these things.

Then there’s the people in 2 Timothy 4:3-4 the people that had accumulated for themselves, “**For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires;**” Also Titus 1:14, “**not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth.**”

Myths, things that are false, are the underpinnings of strange doctrine. Strange doctrines are built upon myths that lead to speculation. Speculation that builds upon itself, ideas that because we have embraced some things that are wrong, then we add other things and we add other things on top of those things. It becomes like a house of cards and if we are not careful then it is built on things that will collapse.

The myths are, if you will, the foundational beliefs that are wrong. Worldly fables, and upon those myths are built speculation we give rise to mere speculation. Things that we don’t know but we are guessing about. And when the foundation is myths, things that are not true, the speculations are going to crumble. This is how strange doctrine arises.

Myths with speculations built up on them which gives rise to strange doctrine. “Mere speculation,” this is a word that Paul coins. He takes a more common word and makes a prefix in front of it meaning “mere speculation.” “Useless seeking out” is a direct translation of it, “useless seeking out, mere speculation.”

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

One of our position papers is on spiritual warfare and this verse is used about that because one of the things that is filled with speculation, one of the doctrines that is filled with guesses is about demons and what the demons are doing. So we reference this verse in that paper.

Somebody wrote me, e-mailed me, and said aren't you making speculations about speculations? And I wrote back and said no we are not making speculations about these speculations because we are saying these speculations are not in Scripture. We don't have to guess whether they are in the Scripture or not, we can look at the Scripture and say these speculations these people are making are not in the Scripture, so they are guesses. Are they right? Are they wrong? Well, the best we can say is they are guesses. The worst we can say is they may be down right wrong.

So we don't have to speculate. We can look to the Scripture and understand what it says and not guess. So these mere speculations are a way of seeking out information. Even if we can somehow acquire this information on many things, and it is really doubtful, it's still useless. It doesn't serve any purpose because what is God's Word designed for? It's designed to instruct us about Him, to build holiness and righteousness into our lives.

And so if it were so important for us to know, don't you think He would give us that information so we could live by it? So, since it is not instructing us in the Scripture I think we can conclude God didn't make a mistake by leaving it out. He intended that it wasn't really that important for us to know. It's mere speculation, a useless seeking out.

Now this can result in disputes or controversies. This is why some of your versions will describe mere speculation and translate it as disputes or controversies. Because when you have speculations it ends up in disputes and this is the context of disputes about speculation. Those who teach other doctrines are causing the disputes.

Don't be mistaken. Who is causing the speculations and disputes, the controversies? It is the people who have departed from the true doctrine. One of the defense mechanisms by people that are teaching wrongly will be they'll say by pointing this out this is divisive and disunifying. But Paul does this, he not only points it out he actually even names names in this book and in 2 Timothy and talks about the very people who are doing this very teaching. The people who are the ones causing the division are the people that are teaching the strange doctrine, not the people that are alerting the congregations to the strange doctrine that's being taught.

Now what are these myths specifically in this context? Specifically in this context the myths that Paul saw as a major threat to the church was the Jewish Law. There was lots of stuff going around, there's Greek mythology surrounding the church and other religions but the one that he saw as the threat that needed to be opposed surrounded the Jewish Law.

We can find that in the context, the immediate context, we read in verse 8, **“But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully,”** and then he goes about describing why the Law is given which we get to look into more next week. So this Law was a threat, we also see this in Titus 1:14 which we read a little earlier, **“not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth.”** These myths surrounded the Jews and the law. That was what was threatening the church and this is what he was concerned about.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Today, is the Jewish Law and people teaching the Jewish Law threatening the church? To a degree, yes. We will get the chance to look at that next week. There are other things threatening the church, lots of things threatening the church. Myths. What myths would be the major threat to the church? There are different teachings of the gospel that threaten the church. In education, there's evolution that threatens the church, that says there is no God and basically we came about by chance rather than according to the Scriptural account in Genesis. These things are threats.

Here's my opinion about the major threat of the churches. The major threat of the church involves psychology and the reason it is a major threat of the church is because it has so invaded the church of America, certainly, and even other places. Worldly ideas of how man can overcome their spiritual problems. Now when I say psychology I mean modern psychology, not the early stages of it where factory workers were given more light and they got a little better at their job, or given a break and they found they were more productive. But more the spiritual side of man.

There's a physical side of man and a spiritual side of man. The spiritual side of man needs to be ministered to by the Lord and His Word not by man and their ideas. We have physical bodies and there's physical science that deals with our physical bodies. If we have a broken arm we can look at the X-ray and say the arm is broken. If we have a disfunctioning brain it can be shown by an EEG exam, that's something that we can look to. But some things are seen more with just behavior and then we have to wonder why are these behaviors taking place.

Some people have lots of ideas about why these behaviors are taking place but what's the truth in all these? Good question. There's a dictionary that I have in my office that gives the definition for counseling. Its from 1968, Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, it says "to give advice, to recommend." That was how it describes counseling in 1968. I have another dictionary in my office, the Webster's Collegiate Dictionary of 1979 and the definition changed. Here's what it said in 1979. What counseling is, "professional guidance of the individual by utilizing psychological methods." Somehow between 1968 and 1979 we went from amateurs to professionals and we went from mere advice to utilizing psychological methods.

In sports, professionals get paid, amateurs don't get paid. And psychological methods deal with this element of man's ideas, not just advice but man's ideas, the field of psychology. Incidentally I also have a dictionary from 1949, my dad's dictionary that I still have in my house and use. Do you know what the definition of counseling is in 1949? There is no definition of counseling in 1949, the word doesn't even exist in 1949. I don't know what people did back then, they were really in trouble, their problems were just not solved I gather.

Now in this whole field of psychology there are so many ideas that it is hard to shake a stick at them all, but I'm going to focus on just one. I am going to focus on one very simple one. Probably one that you have to some degree bought into, I have to some degree bought into because I joke around with my wife about this and that's the birth order. There is the first-born and the middle child and there's the last-born and how all this works and what this results in as far as people's behavior.

Of course, this has not much to do with Scripture now although there are some Christian teachers that are trying to show that Jesus was a first-born child therefore He acted the way He did. I'm not kidding. And there are people in the Old Testament, these people were first born and these people were not the first-born and they acted in this way.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

These teachers consider this to be so important to understand if we are really going to minister to these people.

Well, whether it's that important to understand I'm not sure, but there's a question of whether it's even true or not. There's even analysis of that by psychologists themselves. Here's one from the university of Zurich it came out in Science Magazine in 1983. These two people said on the scale of importance the effects of birth order fall somewhere between negligible and non-existence. That was their view after many years of study and fifteen hundred case studies.

Well I'm not here trying to consider whether it has any value or marginal value. (Though I am an only child and I've got my own problems because of that). The question really is of what use is all this? Even if it were true what use is all this? I would have to say it's of no use because if it were necessary to solve the behavior problems of mankind then we would find some instructions given about it by God. Since He doesn't, I consider it might be interesting, but not really profitable.

And that's just one concept. I think that's a really basic concept that you can really grab a hold of that one. We can really say who the first-born is. We can really say Shelby is the middle child and she is getting overlooked because we are giving so much attention to the last child and the first child. We don't have to guess who is the oldest and who is the youngest and who is the middle one, do we?

But in so many of these other things behind us we kind of have to make some analysis and say well what really happened there and it gets really difficult. Much less than the cause and effect relationship, which is, even more challenging. God in His Word really does have us looking forward not so much looking in back. Paul says it this way in Philippians 3. **“forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”** We need to look forward and look at God's Word for our guidance on how to solve the spiritual problems of mankind.

If we don't, then we will be distracted by all these other things and this is really what verse 4 is teaching, **“nor pay attention to myths or endless genealogies which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.”**

So instead of focusing on the administration, the stewardship of the work of God which is by faith, giving attention to that, we can get distracted by these interesting things. Maybe they are right, maybe they are not, they're speculation, they're educated guesses. Who knows?

And when get distracted by that we are taking ourselves away from the administration of God which is by faith. And it is very easy to do because there are many ideas that are very well packaged and being sold very prominently and filling the airwaves and things like that. And filling the churches.

This is the reason it is a problem. It's not the people who have shaved their heads, wearing weird clothes, those people are not infiltrating the church. It's the people who have smooth words and have some air of sophistication about them but they are not teaching from God's Word, they are teaching from the ideas of man and that's the danger.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

And churches, many churches, have bought into this and it becomes an infiltrator, it's insidious, really.

So if you are hanging out in the self-help section of the local bookstore, I would say you are in the wrong place. You need to focus your attention on the administration of God which is by faith. It's interesting why they call it the self-help section, that should clue you in. Are you going to be ministered to by self-help or by the Lord? And don't think by fleeing to the Christian bookstore you are going to eradicate this, because it has infiltrated the Christian bookstore as well.

We need to be discerning and focus on the administration of God which is by faith as He's revealed Himself and realize the ideas of man are just the ideas of man. And even if they might happen to be right to some degree they are not furthering the administration of God, which is by faith. God's ministry is built upon faith not on speculation. God's ministry is built upon faith and trust in Him, not in the guesses from people who supposedly know but they don't know.

The purpose of instruction, verse 5, **“The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart in a good conscience and a sincere faith.”** The goal of instruction, the goal of teaching is love. Love is built upon a pure heart, that speaks of salvation, those who seek God are those with a pure heart.

The Old Testament speaks numerous times of people who have a pure heart are being believers. A pure heart speaks of salvation a good conscience speaks of being Spirit-filled. The people who are Spirit-filled are those who have yielded themselves to the Lord and said “yes” to God. Those who don't have a good conscience are not Spirit-filled, those who are holding some degrees of rebelliousness they know what they should do but they are resisting, they are not Spirit-filled. We can be Spirit-filled by yielding ourselves, our will, to the Lord's will and wanting His way to be done in our lives.

Christian's need to be Spirit-filled, having a good conscience, and that's the goal of instruction. Salvation, being Spirit-filled, yielding ourselves to the Lord, and then the goal of having a sincere faith, which speaks to godly service. Another translation is, “not with hypocrisy.” The people who are not trusting God but are hypocritical in their faith, there're not serving anyone they're serving themselves. We are hopefully serving the Lord sincerely in faith, trusting Him, following Him, not serving ourselves.

All three of these elements are internal, they are within us. They're God's work that He does within us. The goal is to instruct people not only about truth, but so the truth can be applied internally within us that we can be responding to it. This is the work of God. There is no eloquence that can accomplish this.

So we must not only know the right things we must also practice them, apply them with right motives. That's the goal of instruction. If instruction is only information it is deficient in biblical instruction. It needs to be within the mind, application with right motives. And that's what Paul's instruction was. It dealt not only with truth about God and truth about life, truth about man, it dealt with right motives. How to have a right heart. That was the purpose of his instruction.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The goal of all of this is love and love serves God and man. If we are loving, we are serving God, the first great commandment, and man, the second great commandment. That's the goal of instruction, not just information. But without right information and we get strange doctrines it can be very difficult to apply things well.

Let's conclude with the last section the pride of certain men verses 6 and 7. The pride of certain men. **“For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.”**

They deviated from God's principles. Some men straying from these things, they strayed, they deviated. This word strayed, deviated, means failing to aim, they failed to aim thus they deviated, they turned.

When we fail to aim at the Scriptures, when we have lost our focus on God's Word and what He says then things become fuzzy. And when they become fuzzy it leads us to be susceptible to the myths and the speculations of man and their ideas and we can stray, it happens. To guard against that is to not lose focus not fail to aim but to keep our mind filled with God's truth. As that happens, we will be more protected and not straying, like the false teachers.

They were also dislocated; they were dislocated from their place. “Dislocated” was used in a medical sense like an elbow gets dislocated. What happens when your elbow gets dislocated, your joint is out of place? Couple of things, one, it hurts. And this hurts the body of Christ when people have dislocated. They've turned aside, that word “turned aside” is what we are talking about.

They've turned aside and dislocated, what else happens when you have a joint that is dislocated? It no longer functions, you can't use it, it becomes useless. So when people have become dislocated, strayed away they are no longer useful in the body of Christ. They are not fulfilling God's role for them.

Then their discussions lack profit. Some straying from these things have turned aside to fruitless discussions. They were not ministering, these discussions, they were not applicable. We can have ideas that are even speaking about truth that are not fruitful if it is not for the means of bringing application to God's Word developing in our lives for obedience. Because the goal of instruction is love, not just instruction in and of itself. So when we engage in discussions that have no goal for instruction in love, no application of God's Word, they are fruitless. These men were even more fruitless because their discussions were founded upon myths and fruitless discussions only bring controversy and division. They should be refrained from. Their discussions lacked profit.

Next they desired position. Wanting to be teachers of the Law. They wanted that position of being teachers of the Law. Now, it is evident here that a desire to instruct is not specifically what's being spoken against because we see this in chapter 3:1, **“It is a trustworthy statement if any man aspires to the office of overseer it is a fine work he desires to do.”** And part of that role Paul gives in that chapter and in Titus 1 is teaching. So wanting to teach is not the problem, it's why you are wanting to teach. If the wanting to teach is to ascend to a position, that's bad.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

If it's wanting to serve people, to help people, that's good. These men were wanting to serve themselves, that's bad, and Paul instructed about them.

And lastly, they were dogmatically presumptive. "Wanting to be teachers of the Law even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they are making confident assertions. The people who believe things and want to communicate them can do that confidently. They think they are right but they may not be they may think they know but they don't know.

We need to be careful. Just because people are confident doesn't mean they know what they are talking about. How do we know they know what they are talking about? We have to look to God's Word and compare what they are saying with the Scripture because that is what God has revealed to us. And that's the means by which God wants us to change. God wants us to change through His revelation not only because it is true, not only because it's what He has designed to mature us, but by doing that then we give glory to God and He is exalted because He is the source rather than some other source. This is how He has designed it and people that make confident assertions are dogmatically presumptive. They think they know, but they don't know.

When can we make dogmatic assertions? We can only make confident assertions about that which we know to be true. Something we think is true, we're guessing we should say it, "I'm guessing, I don't know, it's my opinion." But when something is in the Scripture we can make confident assertions because God's Word is truth. God's Word is truth and when we focus on God's Word then we will be protected as a person and as a church from being led astray by the myths that surround us, building upon them speculations. Let's take care to not be led astray by focusing on what God says rather than what man says.

Let pray together, shall we? Lord, we thank you for Your work in our life we thank You that you have revealed Yourself to us. Lord, we thank You that You have been so gracious to impart Your Son to be the sacrifice for our sins and impart Your Word to be the means of sanctification. We thank you that we don't have to be confused viewing who we are or who You are as the way man says, but we can see You for who You really are as revealed to us and we pray Lord that You would accomplish a more mature mindset and protect the church from all the error that surrounds us. In Jesus' name, amen.