

A PASTORAL CHARGE: A SERMON FROM 1 TIMOTHY 1:3–7

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Service of Ordination for Brett Toney

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**Big Idea:** Timothy is to charge other local teachers to remain faithful to the teaching of the apostles and to be devoted to the singular gospel all with a goal to love that is birthed out of a pure heart a good conscience and a sincere faith.

<sup>1:3</sup> As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may *charge* certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, <sup>4</sup>nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. <sup>5</sup>The aim of our *charge* is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. <sup>6</sup>Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, <sup>7</sup>desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

**Introduction**

What a joy to be a part of this landmark occasion. I count it a great privilege to have been a part of Pastor Brett's theological training beginning at Northwestern College and then continuing at Bethlehem Seminary, and I delight in this opportunity to open the Word of the living God for you here at Five Points and to offer a special pastoral charge to Brett on this day of his ordination to the gospel ministry. What a hard and beautiful world we live in, and what a gracious gift from God to provide us shepherds to lead us to the green pastures and to protect us from dark dangers. As we ready our hearts to hear this impassioned, penetrating word from Paul, let's pray.

How needy we are to hear from you, O God. We praise you for your grace in speaking, your grace in enabling us to hear, your grace in helping those who recognize our neediness and your sufficiency. This is a day to celebrate your love for your church in once again raising up a shepherd for your sheep, a pastor for the pardoned, a guardian of the good deposit of the gospel supplied to the redeemed. Meet us now. Speak to us now. Change us now, for the glory of Christ and the good of these people I pray. Amen.

The passage that has been read, 1 Timothy 1:3–7, is divided into two parts, both of which relate to a *charge* that Timothy was to give some false teachers in Ephesus. Look with me at the passage and notice the word *charge* in both vv. 3 and 5. Verses 3–4 address the *nature of the charge*, and vv. 5–7 highlight the *aim of the charge*. Significantly, the letter is clear that the same dangers Timothy was to warn against, he was to guard himself from as well. As Paul asserts in 1 Tim 4:16: “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.” As such, as we look at the nature and aim of the charge that Timothy was to declare, I want to use the passage both to urge and charge Pastor Brett in the same way.

### *The Nature of the Charge (vv. 3–4)*

The charge itself is unpacked in two parts. What we read first is this: Timothy, I want you to “charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine” (v. 3). Timothy’s father in the faith was Paul (v. 2), who was “an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God” (v. 1). The church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (Eph 2:20). When the apostles speak, Jesus speaks, so to turn to a “different doctrine” is to turn away from Christ. Look with me at 1 Tim 6:3–4, where the same phrase “different doctrine” is used: “If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness,<sup>4</sup> he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.” False teaching has pride at its core, for it is about teaching man’s words rather than God’s. False teaching is not about surrendering one’s life and thought and ways to the Lord but about promoting a different master. But such a shift is deadly, for in Christ alone is hope and help found. In Christ alone can our sinfulness be overcome and can our lives be saved from the wrath of God. In Christ alone do love and mercy meet to satisfy our deepest longings. There is *one* body and *one* Spirit, *one* Lord, *one* faith, *one* baptism, *one* God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph 4:4–6). Mankind would be left hopeless apart from the truth of the doctrine testified to in this book. On it we must stand!

The second element of the charge is that Bible teachers must remain devoted to the singular gospel that promotes clarity rather than speculation and order rather than chaos. Note v. 4: charge certain persons not “to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith” (v. 4). Throughout the NT, the term “myths” always shows up in the plural and stands in direct contrast to the singular message of good news. Myths point to different beliefs about who or what governs reality, about who we are, about what is wrong with this world, and about what the solution is. Along with myths were

“endless genealogies.” When read with v. 7, which states that the same group desired to be “teachers of the law,” it seems likely that these false teachers were using the genealogies in Genesis to try to establish some biological connections in order to justify or invalidate status. But the result of all this was lack of clarity and heightened disorder.

The world pushes for plurality, for the relativism of truth, for the tolerance of multiple beliefs, not all of which can be equally valid. The Bible and experience testify together that all humans are utterly depraved, sinful in thought and action, and absolutely helpless before a just God. Scripture also testifies that mercy can be enjoyed in Christ Jesus, who alone is *the* way, *the* truth, and *the* life; no one comes to the Father except through him (John 14:6). We must keep ourselves faithful to the one true gospel.

The word in v. 4 translated “stewardship” is the same word for “order,” and thus points to the proper ordered structure that God has for his church. Order in this world is only established where God is supreme and everything else is secondary. Ministers of the gospel are those who steward God’s church by keeping God and his Christ preeminent over all and by speaking clear words that can be tested by the book rather than speculative words that have no Scriptural basis. And Paul says this stewardship or management that comes from God is enjoyed “by faith”—that is, by a radical self-surrender to and embrace of Christ and his truth.

We must never depart to a different doctrine, never depart from the singular gospel. I want to try to use every letter of the alphabet to stress the absolute necessity of the doctrine relayed to us in this book. In this book, the holy Scriptures, we meet a God who is . . .

- All sovereign and able
- Bigger than any enemy
- Cares for the broken who trust his Son
- Devoted to exalting his saving power in Christ
- Excellent in his love
- Forever unchanging
- Good all the time
- Here right now calling for your surrender
- Irresistible when he discloses his beauty
- Just in sending sinners to hell and in saving all who trust in Jesus
- Killed death decisively at the cross and who kills sin progressively in the lives of those who trust him

- Loves magnifying his mercy in forgiveness through Christ
- Moves people to treasure his worth
- Never will leave or forsake those who are his
- Opening doors of help for all who look to him
- Pleased in the redeeming work of his Son
- Quick to respond to all who call on his name
- Rightly passionate to preserve and display his glory
- Seeking all who are surrendered to him
- Totally committed 100% to all who are in Jesus
- Unswerving in his faithfulness
- Victorious over death and sickness, selfishness and suffering
- Working right now for his own
- Extreme in his curse-overcoming, righteousness-securing jealousy for his bride
- Yet open to save any who admit their sinfulness and need for Jesus
- Zealous for his name and his fame and his mission to save, set free, sanctify, and satisfy sinners by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

We must never turn to a different doctrine, for in doing so we turn from the only savior, only sovereign, and only ultimate satisfier in reality. **Pastor Brett, in the name of the living God, I charge you to remain faithful to the apostles teaching and to never depart to different doctrine. “Guard the deposit entrusted to you” (1 Tim 6:20).** You are one life in a sea of saints throughout the ages who have devoted themselves to seeing the truth of this Book preserved for the good of the world. You have been granted a sacred trust. **May the generations yet unborn not curse you and this church’s leadership for failing to hold fast to the apostles teaching and to the singular gospel of Jesus. May your preaching and teaching, administrating and governing, programming and vision casting all be guided by the light of this Word that alone can pierce the darkness and guide people to life.** Good news for a world under God’s just wrath is only found through a testimony that man’s sinfulness can alone be overcome by Christ’s sufficiency in his death, burial, and resurrection. To separate yourself from the one true gospel is like offering people bread made without flour, and this kind of bread will not satisfy or sustain. **So feed these people from the bread of life and lead these people to bounty that is Christ. Devote yourself to the singular gospel that grows out of the clear Word of God, trusting that God’s ordered way is best and that God’s way is enough.**

### *The Aim of the Charge (vv. 5–7)*

So God’s people are to remain faithful to the apostle’s teaching and devoted to the singular gospel. This was the nature of Timothy’s charge. We could stop here, but Paul immediately moves from the *nature of the charge* to highlight *the aim of the charge* in vv. 5–7. The ESV has included the word “our” before “charge” in v. 5, but only the word “the” shows up in the Greek text. “The aim of the charge is love.” Here I believe that Paul refers to the same charge he mentions in v. 3, but now he clarifies its goal. “The aim of the charge is love.”

Love is always the necessary proof that we have encountered God. The whole law is fulfilled in the command to love (Rom 13:8–10; Gal 5:14; cf. Matt 22:34–40), yet those who desired to be teachers of the law (1 Tim 1:7) never arrived at its ultimate purpose. Look with me at 1 Tim 6:4–5. Here we read that the false teacher “has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.” The false teaching never creates real love. How do people subdued by selfishness enter into the messy world of loving the broken, caring for the poor, adopting the orphaned? How do those overpowered by prejudice cross the tracks or the ocean to minister to those different than themselves? How do we for whom pride prevails take on the role of the servant, leading like Jesus did on the day he washed the disciples feet? It is only by the power of the singular gospel! In the journey of life, we only arrive at love on the path of the apostles teaching. As it says in 1:14, love is a fruit of being “in Christ.” No other path makes people loving.

“The aim of the charge is love” (1:5). Paul’s vision was that Timothy would be driven by love and that his teaching and preaching would bear the fruit of love in the lives of his hearers. . . . That army of men would rise up out of their passivity or aggression and begin listening to their wives, serving their kids, and showing that God, not themselves, is seated on the throne of their hearts. That women everywhere would begin to respect their husbands rather than harbor bitterness toward them or gossip about them. That young and old alike would not only see needs but be willing to give of themselves to meet them—to give their time, their talents, their treasures in the strength that God would supply. Love is the Christian faith in action. Love is the mark of a transformed life. **Pastor Brett, you must be relentless in pursuing love—love for Kelina and Maranatha, love for your fellow elders, love for your flock, and love for this community. And as you proclaim God’s Word, do so not simply to relay information about God but also to see the love for God and neighbor birthed in your hearers.**

Now all of us struggle to love at times. How can you, how can I, how can any of us in this room become more loving? Helpfully, Paul tells us in v. 5, and what he says is amazing if we can grasp it, so listen. Love “issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1:5). Let’s look at each of these.

From the heart “flow the springs of life” (Prov 4:23). “Out of the abundance of the heart [the] mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45). The heart is the factory of our soul that generates all desire, thought, emotion, and action. Our heart determines our identity, and that is why to become a believer we need a new heart and new spiritual influences upon it (Ezek 36:26–27). Here Paul says that love will flow out of a *pure* heart—that is, a heart that has been cleansed, one that has no defilement. Love is only possible where sin is forgiven and offense is pardoned. Otherwise, it is not God-honoring love. **Pastor Brett, teach from a pure heart, and call these people to pursue pardon from God. Show them their sin, and show them the cross.** This kind of life means that the gospel preacher and the gospel receiver are to be those who cherish Jesus, the one who bore God’s wrath on behalf of all who believe. May we say with Paul in v. 15, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.” The pure heart is not haughty because it recognizes the depth of its own depravity apart from Christ. The pure heart empowers one to love even those who are most difficult to love because it has experienced the sin-overcoming love of God itself. *A failure to love others is a sure sign that the heart is not relishing enough how much it has been saved from, if in fact you have been saved at all.* Look at v. 16: “But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.” Our love for the unlovable puts the love of Christ—the perfect patience of Christ—on display. Love flows from a cleansed, purified heart.

Love is also fueled by a “good conscience” (1:5). In Scripture, the conscience urges right and hinders wrong; it passes judgment on a decision or action; and it produces guilt or commendation in the heart (Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 24). For Paul, a conscience can be “good” (1:5, 19) or “clear” (3:9; 2 Tim 1:3), but it can also become “seared” (1 Tim 4:2) or “defiled” (Tit 1:15) when someone turns from the faith and rejects Christ (1 Tim 4:1; Tit 1:14). Love is birthed in a heart that is free from guilt. Paul recognized fully his own sinfulness, but he ministered with a good conscience because he had met the wrath-overcoming, mercy-displaying, joy-bringing Christ. As he says in v. 14, “The grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.” Jesus was his source for faith, his source of love, and it is with Jesus that you must teach and serve these people. He alone can clear the conscience of a sinner. **So Brett, when your soul is seared or when your conscience feels defiled, run to Jesus, who can equip you with everything**

**good. And as you counsel and minister, may your goal be to see love issuing from a good conscience in your people.**

The last means for seeing love produced through one's teaching is a "sincere faith" (1:5). By "sincere," Paul appears to address the *type* of faith—it was authentic, genuine, the real deal (see 2 Tim 1:5). The opposite or antonym of this kind of sincerity or genuineness is "insincerity" like that mentioned in 1 Tim 4:2. Beginning in 4:1, Paul says, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared." The Greek word for genuine or sincere is *anupokritos*, whereas the term for insincere is *hypokritos*. Paul is looking for an un-hypocritical faith, in contrast to a hypocritical faith. Faith for Paul is about dependence on Jesus. It's about radical affirmation of our neediness and Christ's sufficiency. It is the only means by which we receive help and hope, salvation and satisfaction from God. Faith in Christ is the decisive human response to God's saving, transforming work in our souls. And faith always works through love (Gal 5:6; cf. 1 Tim 1:14; 2:15; 4:12; 6:11; 2 Tim 1:13; 2:22; 3:10; Tit 2:2; cf. 2 Tim 1:7). **Brett, may your faith be sincere. Let your dependence on Christ be both real and evident, for you can only serve as a channel of grace when you have yourself been filled up with it.**

And for all of us here. . . . God's purpose is that the love of Christ may be put on display through our love of others. The aim of the apostles teaching, the aim of the singular gospel is to generate in us love, and it is this gospel displayed in the written Word that helps us gain a pure heart and good conscience and sincere faith. Live in the gospel, and you will find yourself becoming more loving, to the glory of God.

### *Conclusion*

**In conclusion, Pastor Brett Toney, in the name of Jesus Christ, the risen and reigning Son of God, I charge you on this day of your ordination to the gospel ministry to remain faithful to the apostles teaching and to devote yourself to the singular gospel. Pursue love in your own life and in the lives of your parishioners—the kind of love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. By not swerving from these you will keep yourself from wandering away into vain discussion (1:6). Amen.**