

“The Right Use of the Law”
1 Timothy 1:6-11
(Preached at Trinity, November 15, 2020)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. After hearing of false teachers having an impact upon the Church of Ephesus, Paul had left Timothy behind before continuing on to Philippi. This letter is in the context of Timothy's work of correcting the false teachers and setting forth a consistent pattern of sound doctrine within the church.
1 Timothy 1:3 NAU - "As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines,"
2. The false teachers were most likely elders who had become enamored with new ideas and endless doctrinal speculations. Although Paul doesn't describe the precise nature of their teaching Timothy knew and the other elders in the church would have known the details.
 - A. One element Paul tells us is that these false teachers desired to be teachers of the Law but had no understanding of what they were teaching. This tells us that they were perverting the Gospel message by misusing the Law.
 - B. Another thing Paul tells us is they were presenting their false doctrine forcefully and confidently. False teachers of this sort are the most dangerous and the most difficult to oppose. They present their teaching powerfully, making it seem true.
3. Paul knew their false teaching had to be exposed and brought to an end.
 - A. Paul also understood the possibility of another danger. In charging Timothy to stand in opposition to their false teaching about the Law there was a danger that the Law itself might be called into question.
 - B. Paul inserts an important statement of clarification.
"But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully."
Paul wasn't asserting that it was wrong to teach the Law. He was condemning the misuse and wrong application of the Law.
4. We must always remember there is a right use of the Law and the Law is in perfect harmony with the Gospel.
Our Confession states: LBC 19:7 – "Neither are the aforementioned uses of the law contrary to the grace of the Gospel, but do sweetly comply with it, the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do that freely and cheerfully which the will of God, revealed in the law, requireth to be done."
5. **Verse 8** leads us to ask the important question, "What does it mean to use the Law lawfully?"
6. First, we must define the Law. We divide the Old Covenant law into three separate and distinct types. We should bear in mind, in the Old Covenant dispensation Israel would have viewed them all as essential and obedience was required by all. In the New Covenant, however, some of these laws have been abrogated and are no longer binding.

- A. In the Old Covenant there were judicial laws that had the design of governing Israel as a Theocracy. These laws ended and were abrogated with the end of theocratic Israel. Although they are no longer binding, the wisdom of them are useful as we seek to live among others with justice and equity.
For example:
Deuteronomy 22:8 NAU - "When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, so that you will not bring bloodguilt on your house if anyone falls from it."
The principle is we are careful about the safety of our neighbor.
We put a fence around our pool.
We make sure the brakes on our car are safe.
- B. The second type of law was ceremonial law. These laws governed the worship and religious ordinances of Israel. They set Israel apart from the pagan nations. Their design was to prefigure Christ and draw attention to the perfection of His work as our Redeemer. When Jesus Christ accomplished that which the ceremonial law prefigured, these laws were abrogated and taken away. These laws included the Temple ceremonial worship, feasts and festivals, circumcision, and the dietary laws. Most important, it included the sacrificial system.
- C. The third type of law is most often referred to as the Moral Law.
- (1) The Moral Law was written upon the heart of man at creation and continued as God's rule of righteousness after the fall. It is the standard by which all men shall be judged.
 - (2) The Moral Law was later summarized in the Decalogue or Ten Commandments. At Mount Sinai the Moral Law was codified on two stone tablets. It is perpetual and unending.
LBC 19:5 – "The moral law doeth for every bind all, as well justified personas as others, to the obedience thereof, and that not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it; neither doth Christ in the Gospel any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation."
Jesus stressed the perpetuity of the Law:
Matthew 5:17-19 NAU - "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. ¹⁸ "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."
7. The problem with the false teaching at Ephesus was not with the Law. The Law is good. It is God's holy standard. It reveals God's holy character.
The problem was in their misapplication of the Law.
"The Law is good, if one uses it lawfully."
How is the Law to be taught and used lawfully?

- I. What are the lawful uses of the Law? The Reformers described three lawful uses of the Law. The Pedagogical use, The Political use, and the Pious use—these are also referred to as the condemning use, the restraining use, and the sanctifying use.
- A. The Pedagogical Use – the Law condemns
 A pedagogue is a teacher. The Law teaches us that we are sinners.
1. The Law is God’s standard of righteousness. Sin is defined as transgression of the Law of God.
 On the Day of Judgment Christ will judge all men according to the Law
Matthew 7:23 NAS - "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'
 “lawlessness” - *ἀνομία* – transgression of the law – law breakers
 2. No one has perfectly kept the Law.
 The Law stands to show a sinner his sin. As the sinner looks upon God’s perfect Law of righteousness, he can only hear the word, Guilty!
Romans 3:10-12 NAU - "as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one; ¹¹ There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; ¹² All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one."
 3. The Law demands perfection but provides no means of fulfilling its demands. Instead, sin only increases.
Romans 5:20 NAU - "The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,"
 4. Jesus Christ has fulfilled the demands of the Law through His perfect life and carried our guilt to the cross.
 5. The Law declares our guilt as lawbreakers and drives us to Christ and the cross.
 The preaching of the Law is an essential aspect of the Gospel. No one can be saved unless they come to an understanding of their guilt before God.
 They are guilty because they have violated God’s Law.
- B. The Political Use – the Law Restrains
1. The Law serves to restrain sin.
 2. It is written upon the heart and it informs the conscience. The Law is one of the means of God’s restraining grace upon sinful men.
 3. The Law helps to prevent sinful society from falling into absolute lawlessness.
 4. Puritan Samuel Willard wrote in *A Complete Body of Divinity* in 1726 –
 “Man’s life, chastity, estate, good name, and property must be preserved, and how is this done, but by imprinting on men’s hearts an apprehension of these rules of justice and equity, making them approve them and holding a curb on their consciences? And in this way God upholds His government of the world.”¹

¹ Willard, Samuel, *A Complete Body of Divinity in Two Hundred and Fifty Expository Lectures on the Assembly’s Shorter Catechism*. Boston: Green and Kneeland, 1726.

5. Paul's use here emphasizes both the pedagogical and political use.
1 Timothy 1:9-10 NAU - "law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers¹⁰ and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,"
 In other words, the Law points the lawless man to his wickedness and need for a Savior. And the Law serves to restrain the lawless man in his natural pursuit of sin.

C. The Pious Use – the Law sanctifies

1. The Law teaches us God's will for our lives
2. The Law is in sweet harmony with the Gospel. We are saved by grace apart from the Law but the Law remains God's standard of righteous obedience.
3. Christians are freed from the penalty and condemnation of the Law, but we are still responsible to our Creator
 We must bring our life, mind, affections, conscience, and will under the Law as our duty before God.
4. The glory of the Gospel is God's sanctifying grace. We are saved by grace by faith alone apart from any works of our own. But those whom God has saved have a heart to obey Him. Instead of servile, legal obedience, we obey from a motivation of thanksgiving and love.
 We call it evangelical obedience. It is Gospel obedience.
5. **Samuel Bolton** describes the difference in
The True Bounds of Christian Freedom
 "In servile obedience the man does things in a legal spirit, either hoping to get rewards by it, or fearing punishments if he omits the duty. The godly man, on the other hand, goes about duty for the sake of obtaining communion with God, and knows it to be his reward and happiness to have that communion, while the lack of it is the greatest punishment he can endure."
 "The one kind of man looks for his satisfaction in the duty by the performance of the duty, the other looks for satisfaction in the duty as he finds Christ thereby."²

² Bolton, Samuel, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2001 – page 57.

II. What is the false use of the Law?

- A. The antinomian view. They deny its authority or its place in their lives.
1. This is a huge problem today
 - a. There is Dispensationalism that insists the Law was only for Israel. It insists the Church is under the dispensation of grace thus removing all uses of the law.
 - b. There is New Covenant Theology that insists that the New Covenant is under a new law – the law of Christ. There error is presuming the law of Christ is different from the Old Covenant Decalogue.
 - c. Both of these risk a dangerous perversion of the Gospel. John Murry insisted that care must be given to protecting both the Law and the Gospel. “It is not only the doctrine of grace that must be jealously guarded against distortion by works of law, but it is also the doctrine of law that must be preserved against the distortions of a spurious concept of grace.”³
 2. For many, it is just an anti-authority heart
 - a. They disregard the commandments that infringe on their life-choices. They claim liberty and freedom from the rule of Christ. Many find it far too easy to disregard the Law of God.
 - b. In our culture of individualism, narcissism, and Biblical illiteracy lawlessness is often the prevailing view.
 3. As Christians, we are no longer under the curse of the Law, but we are not freed from the commands of the Law. Our obedience to the Law is merely an expression of our thankfulness to God for His grace of redemption. Bolton writes, “He has freed us from the *manner* of our obedience, but not from the *matter* of our obedience. Previously, the principles of obedience were legal and servile, now they are filial and evangelical. Previously the strength was our own; now we have fellowship with the strength of Christ.”⁴
- B. The legalist view
1. Some of these false teachers were teaching asceticism and self-denial as a means of gaining God’s approval.
1 Timothy 4:1-3 NAU - "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, ² by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, ³ *men* who forbid marriage *and* advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth."
 2. There is always the danger of perverting the Gospel with human works

³ Murray, John, *Principles of Conduct*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), page 182.

⁴ *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom* – pages 72-73.

3. Paul always had the harshest words for anyone tampering with the Gospel **Galatians 1:8 NAU** - "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!"
4. Martin Luther: "Any opinion which attributes merit of grace and remission of sins to *the works we do* is utterly to be condemned. Some say that a good work before grace is able to obtain grace because it is right that God should reward such a work. What need have I of the grace of God, forgiveness of sins, and of the death and victory of Christ? According to this argument Christ is now to me unprofitable, and His benefit of no effect: for I have free will and power to do good works, whereby I deserve grace, and afterwards, by the worthiness of my work, eternal life."⁵
5. We have to guard ourselves carefully against being brought again under the yoke of the Law. We must guard against the preaching of mere moralism as if our good behavior will make us acceptable to God.

Conclusion:

1. The Law and Gospel must always be presented in the perfect harmony that the Bible teaches. This is the Sound Doctrine that Paul is presenting in this chapter.
2. When we lose that harmony and balance the Gospel is perverted and souls are put in danger.
3. The Christian is saved by grace alone, but the Christian finds delight in holiness to the honor of Christ. This obedience is not founded upon a meritorious expression of our good works but of the pure grace of the Gospel.

⁵ Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell a division of Baker Book House, 1988), 90-91.