

Sermon Series: The Good, The Goad, The Guide: Ten Commandments

Sermon Text: 1 Timothy 1:8 The Law Is Good: The First Lawful Use of the Law

3 Uses of God's Law: The Good (the standard to reveal the character of God and God's code for human life); The Goad (the mirror that exposes our sin, showing our need of salvation, pointing us to Christ as the Savior); The Guide (the rule of love for believers)

Because God's law reveals God's character and code for human life, it is used lawfully to bind men in their duty to God.

We lawfully use the law to:

1) Instruct sinners in the character of God

- a) "The law is good" (Rom. 7:12) . . .
 - i) . . . because it reflects the character of the Law-Giver (Deut. 28:58; Psalm 119:55; 138:2; Romans 8:7)
 - ii) Greg Bahnsen, "a transcript of God's character"
 - iii) Thomas Manton, "the original draft is in God Himself."
 - iv) Joseph Morecraft: "Each of the Ten Commandments is rooted in and testifies to one or more of the glorious perfections of God's character and will:"
- b) **Application:**
 - i) Ignoring the law of God promotes ignorance of God.
 - ii) Proclaiming God's law as an expression of His holy character grounds morality in objective reality.
 - iii) Proclaiming God's law moves discussions out of the abstract to an existential encounter with God.

2) Call sinners to obey God

- a) All people are duty-bound to God's moral law:
 - i) **Objection 1:** The Mosaic Law was not universal but given to Israel for a specific era of redemptive history.
 - ii) **Answer 1:** That the Mosaic Law, as covenant administration, was not universal is true.
 - iii) **Answer 2:** That the case laws of the Mosaic Law were not universal is true.
 - iv) **Answer 3:** The moral basis of the Mosaic Law, the Ten Commandments, is not arbitrary, it is grounded in the very nature of the God who gave it. Therefore, it is an unchanging standard for all people for all time (1 Tim. 1:9-10; Rom. 2:6-16; 5:12-21; 7:1; Deut. 4:5-8)
- b) **Application:**
 - i) Matthew 5:17-20 "Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (v. 19)
 - ii) **Objection 2:** Since man is totally depraved, it is useless to call sinners to obey God's law.
 - iii) **Answer 1:** Man's moral inability does not diminish the authority of God's law.
 - iv) **Answer 2:** God's common grace generally upholds men from disintegrating into complete moral chaos. The Church is an instrument both of common grace and of special grace.
 - v) **Objection 3:** People already know God's law; they already know that they have broken God's law, therefore, they do not need us to tell them.
 - vi) **Answer 1:** People suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18).
 - vii) **Answer 2:** Christ commanded us to be salt and light in the world by words and deeds.

3) Warn sinners of condemnation for their disobedience to God

- a) Proverbs 14:34 "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people."

- b) Noah's generation; Babel; Sodom and Gomorrah; Canaanites (Lev. 18:24-27); Nineveh; Nebuchadnezzar; Belshazzar; Edom; Moab; Ammon; Herod
- c) Isaiah 24:5 "The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes, and broken the everlasting covenant."
- d) Bahnsen notes that God condemned the nations for violating the same moral standard as is found in the Mosaic Law:
 - i) slave trafficking (Amos 1:6, 9; cf. Ex. 21:16; Deut. 24:7)
 - ii) witchcraft (Nahum 3:4; cf. Ex. 22:18; Lev. 19:21)
 - iii) loan pledges (Habakkuk 2:6; cf. Ex. 22:25-27; Deut. 24:6, 10-13)
 - iv) Could add many more: unjust warfare and injustice in war (Amos 1:11, 13; 2:1)
- e) Rev. 20:12 "And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done."
- f) Rev. 20:8 "But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and Sulphur, which is the second death." (cf. Rev. 22:15)
- g) **Application:**
 - i) **Objection:** Warning of judgment makes us appear to be cranks.
 - ii) **Answer 1:** Love compels us to warn of danger.
 - iii) **Answer 2:** Humility ought to be just as evident as our confidence in God's truth.

4) Empower government to restrain wickedness

- a) Rulers of nations are to acknowledge God.
 - i) Case of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4)
 - ii) The Scriptures of the Church give counsel to Earth's rulers (Psalm 2:10-12).
 - iii) Christ is "Ruler of kings on earth" (Rev. 1:5)
 - iv) Nations will be judged for their treatment of Christ's Church (Matt. 25:31-46).
- b) Rulers of nations are to administer God's justice according to God's law (Rom. 13:1-7).
 - i) Because their authority derives from God: "there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God"
 - ii) Because they are God's servants: "he is God's servant for your good . . . he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. . . the authorities are ministers of God,
 - iii) Because the measure of good and bad conduct is God's law: "not a terror to good conduct, but to bad . . . Do what is good, and you will receive his approval . . . But if you do wrong, be afraid"
- c) **Application:**
 - i) Christian Political Reform
 - (1) Non-violence (John 18:36; Matt. 26:52; 2 Cor. 6:6-7; 10:4)
 - (2) Regeneration
 - (a) Regeneration is necessary for people to see the Kingdom of God (John 3)
 - (b) New Creation is individual and cosmic, embracing everything between the individual and the cosmos (society, culture, law, etc.).
 - (3) Education/Culture-Making
 - (a) Messianic Mission "Isa. 42:6; 49:6
 - (b) Apostolic Mission Matthew 28:20
 - (c) All things are for Him (Romans 11:36)
 - (4) Gradual Legal Reform

- (a) Such legal reform will occur as the Christian Gospel is believed by more regenerate hearts and as the wisdom of God's will is acknowledged by the unregenerate. It is not coerced on an unwilling society by a minority of Christians in power.
 - (b) Such legal reform does not require the conversion of every person in a society.
- ii) In the meantime, Christians must:
 - (1) seek to correct social evils through personal obedience and cooperative enterprises (poverty alleviation, pro-life ministry to mothers and families, ministry to sexually abused and to those who have abused sex, etc.);
 - (2) obey God rather than men when forced to choose (Acts 4:19-20; 5:29; Dan. 3:16-18);
 - (3) walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7).

Doxology: The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad! Clouds and thick darkness are all around Him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. Fire goes before Him and burns up His adversaries all around. His lightnings light up the world; the earth sees and trembles. The mountains melt like wax before the LORD, before the LORD of all the earth. The heavens proclaim His righteousness, and all the peoples see His glory. (Psalm 97:1-6)