

Subject: *The Law and the Gospel*

Scripture: *1 Timothy 1:7-11*

Paul began this letter with a strong word about false teachers. These false teachers wanted to be known as teachers of the law, but they did not understand the purpose of the law and therefore they were misusing it. Paul often had to deal with this kind of false teaching called legalism or the teaching that a person could be saved by keeping the law.

THE MISUSE OF THE LAW:

Paul makes it clear that the problem is not with the law itself but with the wrong teaching and application of the law. The law is good (useful) because God is good.

Psalms 19:7 *The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul.*

The problem is not with the law, but with those who teach that salvation comes by keeping the law. This is the problem of self-righteousness. The law is not a means to justification, but to condemnation. **Romans 3:20** *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

THE CORRECT USE OF THE LAW:

The law is not made for a righteous (self-righteous) man, but for the sinner. The law does three things:

The law reflects God's character and will

Romans 7:12 *Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.*

The law restrains sin – God's law sets limits and boundaries. It sets a standard for conduct. Our criminal and civil laws are based on the Ten Commandments.

The law reveals sin – This is the point Paul is making in First Timothy. In verse 9 he describes sins against God and against man. He begins with three groups that describe a type of sin and what it produces. The lawless (*anomia*) describes people with no commitment to God's law and they are disobedient and rebellious. The ungodly describes people with no regard for anything sacred and as a result they are sinners. The unholy describes people who are indifferent to what is right and they are profane (they trample on what is sacred). The law is made for rebellious, sinful, and irreverent people.

Paul then moves to the second part of the law dealing with sins against man. The law condemns murders of father and murderers of mothers. The fifth commandment says "Honor thy father and thy mother." The law condemns manslayers because the sixth commandment says, "Thou shalt not kill." The law condemns whoremongers and them that defile themselves with mankind because the seventh commandment says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery (sexual activity outside of marriage). The law condemns menstealers (kidnappers, something that was common in Bible times) because the eighth commandment says, "Thou shalt not steal." The law condemns liars and perjured persons because the ninth commandment says, "Thou shalt not bear false witness." And to make sure nothing is left out Paul says "if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound (healthy) doctrine." The purpose of the law is to expose and reveal sin and condemn it.

1 John 3:4 *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.*

Romans 7:7 *What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*

Romans 3:19 *Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*

The law makes all people guilty before God and every mouth is stopped. There is no defense or argument. This is our guilty silence.

What does the law then have to do with the Gospel? Notice that Paul connects the right use of the law to the gospel in verse 11. The law reveals the bad news that we are guilty sinners and that prepares us for the good news of Jesus Christ who died for our sins and rose again to save us from our sins. This is “the glorious gospel of the blessed God.” The gospel is glorious because it reveals God’s glory or His attributes. One of His attributes is holiness or His hatred of sin. Another attribute is His justice that demands punishment for sin. The glorious gospel must include the truth about sin and judgment or it is no gospel at all.

Have you ever thought, “There must be a key to reaching lost people for Christ?” There is a key, but it is a rusty key because it hasn’t been used. Keys have a way of getting lost, and this key was lost around the turn of the 20th century. It is a biblical key. Jesus used it. So did Paul and James and Stephen. The Pharisees had this key, but they bent it out of shape so badly it wouldn’t work. Satan hates this key, so he has misused it, twisted it, and hidden it from the church because he knows what it can do. What is this overlooked key in evangelism? It is God’s moral law, the Ten Commandments.

We share the gospel of Christ and salvation and people don’t seem to care. That’s because they don’t understand the bad news of sin. The gospel is for sinners. We try to give people the cure without showing them why they need the cure. We tell people about God’s love, but we don’t tell them about God’s law. If we preach “Jesus died on the cross for your sins,” to the lost person it will be foolish and offensive because “the preaching of the cross to them that perish is foolishness” (1 Cor. 1:18), and it is offensive because in his mind there are a lot of people worse than him. But if we first show him God’s law and allow the Lord to prick his conscience and show him his sin, when we share the gospel it won’t be foolish and offensive, but it will be “the power of God to salvation” (Rom. 1:16).

Galatians 3:24 *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

Suppose someone said, “I paid your fine in court so that you can go free.” That wouldn’t mean a thing if you didn’t know you were guilty and had to pay a fine. But suppose he said, “A police officer caught you speeding in a school zone, but I paid your fine so that you can go free.” That would make sense and you would appreciate what that person did for you.

This is the gospel that was committed to Paul’s trust (vs. 11). The gospel was and still is a sacred trust. In the church I served years ago there was man who was a farmer and grocery store owner, and he would say from time to time that he had 3 people in his life that he really trusted: his doctor, his lawyer, and his pastor. It is very humbling to know that people put their trust in me as a pastor, but far greater is the thought that God trusts me with His gospel.