



Faith Baptist Church of Cabot, Arkansas
Pastor's Mid-Week Bible Study
September 30, 2009

Lesson Three – The Law is Good When Used Lawfully
1 Timothy 1:8-11

But we know that the law *is* good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for *the* lawless and insubordinate, for *the* ungodly and for sinners, for *the* unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

Introduction

The Apostle Paul has instructed his son in the faith, Timothy, to remain in Ephesus and to deal with those who were teaching different doctrine from what Paul had preached. According to verse seven, there were those who wanted to be teachers of the law but who had no understanding of what they proposed to teach. And that which they did not understand, they affirmed; which means that they were ignorantly confident, in your face and not likely to back down without a fight.

Paul's letter to Timothy is not only encouraging but also informative. These four verses give the purpose of the law in a "nutshell" and would help Timothy combat the erroneous teachings in Ephesus. And since such errors still abound, the instruction continues to be relevant for us.

Exegesis

- ❖ The Law Used Lawfully
 - A concession of benefit

The would-be law teachers had issues with Paul and the Gospel he preached. They saw the Law of Moses, or at least their interpretation of it, as being an essential element of justification; for example, the addition of circumcision to faith. So when Paul preached justification by faith alone (Galatians 2:16), he was accused of being anti-law.

But the Apostle is clear that the Law of Moses is good, both in its content and in its application. The law revealed the perfect standard of righteousness and perfectly served its purpose. As we will see, the Gospel is not anti-law, but rather the Law of Moses should lead one to the Gospel of Christ.

- A call to Biblical integrity

The law is beneficially when one makes proper use of it. This is true of Scripture in general. The workman of the Word of God must "rightly divide," that is cut straight the Word of Truth. Any deviation is error. The workman must be constantly checking his doctrine against the Bible. The Bible is its own best commentary. When kept in context, the Bible explains itself – a word in a verse in a chapter in a book in the Bible.

❖ The Law Revealing Sin

People doing the right thing would not need a law. The law is useful only for those doing the wrong thing to make them aware that they are indeed doing the wrong thing. Therefore the law does not make one right, it reveals what is wrong – namely sin.

Paul gives a list of sins that are so revealed by the law. The list is not all inclusive – “and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.” But the list demonstrates Paul’s point. The law makes clear what sin is and who sinners are. Sin is an offence against the righteousness of God as revealed in the law and sinners are we all. (Romans 3)

❖ The Law Fitting with the Gospel

Even if we start now keeping the law, that doesn’t address the penalty for the law we have already broken. If I receive a ticket for exceeding the speed limit, starting then to drive the speed limit doesn’t absolve me of having already broken the law. The law was not given to help us fix being law breakers, but to humble us before the righteous God through the awareness of our sinfulness.

Paul says that the law is “according to the glorious gospel.” The law is not separate from the Gospel, but a part of the Gospel plan. Consider Galatians 3:24-26:

Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

The solution for our sinfulness is not found in the law we broke. Rather it is found in the Savior who paid the penalty for our lawlessness. So that salvation is not founded on merit, but found in mercy.

The law is wrongly used as a means of righteousness through human works. (In reality it constantly fails as such.) The law is rightly used as the revealer of our sinfulness driving us to the cross.

Application

1. We must continue to be on guard against those who would compel us to come under law. If anything is added to faith, is it still faith? If anything is added to Jesus, is it still Jesus? Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, to His glory alone.
2. We must continue to be on guard against adopting a mentality of superior righteousness through a convenient legalism. While many, if not all of us, would agree doctrinally with the Apostle Paul, we in practice may look more like the Pharisees. That is we act like we are going to heaven because we are special when in fact we are mere sinners who have been saved by grace.
3. We must continue to boast only in the cross. (Galatians 6:14)

This lesson was prepared by Brent D. Summerhill, Pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Cabot, Arkansas. Permission is granted to reproduce this lesson, but please do not alter the content.

www.faithcabot.org www.forevertruth.org