

Sermon 3: Using the Law Responsibly

Text: 1 Timothy 1:7-10 “Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; ⁹ Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine...”

Purpose: Paul wanted to correct irresponsible uses of the law, without giving the impression that the law served no current function or was evil, therefore he reminded Timothy of two good functions of the law, restraining evil and revealing righteousness.

Part 1: The Law and Its Proper Use

Four important observations about the concept of law and righteousness

- **Observation 1: A righteous person does not need the law to become righteous, he already is righteous. Matthew 5:17-18** Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.
- **Observation 2: A person does by nature what is in his heart, whether there is a law or not. Romans 2:14** For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves...
- **Observation 3: An unrighteous person does not know that he is unrighteous unless a righteous standard reveals his unrighteousness. 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...
- **Observation 4: Once an unrighteous person becomes aware of their unrighteous nature, a change of nature, not the presence of the law is the only way to make them righteous. Romans 7:8-14** “Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin...”

Three wrong uses of the law: The law cannot make you something that you are not already.

- **Seeking to be justified by the Law:** A means to become righteous before God **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. **Romans 3:28** “We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” **Galatians 2:16** “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law:

for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” **Galatians 5:4** “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.”

- **A source of pride:** because of my relationship to the law **Romans 2:17-21** Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?
- **Seeking to be sanctified by the law:** A means by which we become more holy **Galatians 3:1-3** “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”

Part 2: The Specifics of this Passage

Four good uses of the Law

- **Reveals God’s righteous character in real life circumstances:**
 - **Old Covenant/Testament Law:** A national ancient near eastern context
 - The Mosaic Law was given in the context of God’s covenant with Israel.
 - This law articulated the conditions associated blessing and cursing from God and toward the nation.
 - Much of the Mosaic Law is written as case law, using situation that were common in their culture, but not necessarily in our own.
 - The timeless principles that were applied in each of these cases is often restated and then applied appropriately in the context of the NT.
 - **New Covenant/Testament Law:** An individual and local church context
 - Relationship within the church
 - Relationship to God in worship
 - Relationship within the home
 - Relationship to human government
- **Restrains evil by giving a standard by which to judge individuals: 1:9-10** “Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, ¹⁰ For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine...”
 - **People without regard to proper order in society:** “Lawless and disobedient” **1 Peter 2:13-14** “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme. Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.”
 - **People without regard for God’s right to rule their lives:** “Ungodly and for sinners” **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...”

- **People without regard for the sacred:** “Unholy and profane” **1 Peter 1:13-16** Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy...”
- **People without regard for the dignity of human life:** “Murderers” **Romans 13:9-10** “For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law...”
- **People without regard for the sacredness of the marriage covenant:** “Whoremongers” **1 Thessalonians 4:1-7** “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness...”
- **People without regard for God’s design for human sexuality:** “They that defile themselves with mankind” **Romans 1:24-28** “Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient...”
- **People without regard for people’s right to be freedom:** “Menstealers”
- **People without regard for truth:** “Liars”
- **People without regard to the fidelity of the justice system:** “for perjured persons”
- **People without regard for Christian doctrine:** “Anything that is contrary to sound doctrine” **1 Timothy 1:3** As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine... 20 times in the Pastoral Epistles

- **Reveals man's moral bankruptcy to drive Him to the finished work of Christ:**
Philippians 3:4-9 "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith..."
- **Provides a gauge that reveals real Spirit produced growth into Christlikeness:**
Romans 8:3-5 "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit..." **Galatians 2:19-21** "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain..."

Conclusion: Let's be careful how we handle issues related to the law. Let's realize God's purposes for the use of the law and use it accordingly.