

1 Timothy 1:8-11

By
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“But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous man, 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 murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.”

Introduction

[The audio recording begins after Pastor Nam had already begun his sermon]

The wrong emphasis still equals error; to speak of things that aren't actually there or to imagine or mythologize the genealogies then becomes an area of sin that leads us away from the purity of the gospel.

Review with me 1 Timothy 1:6, 7. *“For some men, straying from these things (i.e. the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart, good conscience and a sincere faith) have turned aside to fruitless discussion, wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.”*

As Paul mentions how they wanted to be teachers of the Law, he addresses, as a side note, what is the good and proper use of the Law—the value of the Law.

So, what we are going to look at this morning is in a sense, a side excursion; something that Paul feels is necessary to state as part of his main argument. He's speaking against these false teachers because they think that they are “teachers of the Law” and in the midst of that, he wants to remind us that orthodoxy (i.e. keeping it straight) is important.

One commentator put it this way:

“The battle for orthodoxy, or proper and right teaching is lost not only in the head, but in the heart. Apostasy begins at the very deepest level when we trample our conscience. There's no doubt that some of us have inner places where we have hidden, where we have ridden roughshod (to treat with brutal force) over our own hearts, indulging ourselves at the expense of God's work within us. In time, our love for God will fade, our heart and conscience will give in and we will be shells of hypocrisy. Maintaining a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith is the primary battle for those who want to live for God.”

We should keep that in mind—that it's about keeping it straight for the glory of God; and when we look at how the Law ought to be applied and used, then hopefully that reminds us that the God of the gospel of the grace rescues us from the judgment that we deserve. Let's go to the Lord and ask for his help in prayer this morning.

Heavenly Father,

We come before You and we thank You; that even as we sing about the love of God—how marvelous, how unimaginably deep.

It reminds us Lord that it is Your grace and Your infinite mercy by which we can come to You and know that we have a right standing with You.

Our righteousness Lord, we are reminded in the Scriptures even this morning, does not come from ourselves. We are not capable of such righteousness. Certainly we can do one or two good things Lord, but only God, the living God, can do what is impossible and take what is dead in us, that which is sin in us and pay the full price through the death of Christ that we might be a new life in You.

So, as we look to the Word this morning, I pray that You would use my mouth, that You use the words of the meditation of our hearts, and that You would make the Scriptures alive; and embolden to us to realize that the Law has its purpose and that for us as individuals that may have come to understand the grace of God in conversion, in salvation through Jesus Christ.

We pray that we would appreciate all the more the gloriously, Lord, the salvation we have through grace alone.

We give You praise this morning and ask that Your Holy Spirit would come and do His perfect work of taking the Word of God and making it applicable, making it understood, making it genuine, and bear fruit in our lives.

We pray for Your conviction. We pray for Your ability to illuminate the Scriptures, to make it understandable and absolutely clear to us; that we may bear fruit. We give You this time in absolute worship.

*In Jesus' name we pray,
Amen.*

I Timothy 1:8-11

Let's take a look at this passage together where we look at the proper use and true value of the Law.

"But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous man, 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 murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted."

Remember that the discussion here is a side note. Paul has begun this whole concept of "what is the goal of our instruction." He says, "There are some among you that are teaching you myths from genealogies; they are making up stuff because it seems interesting."

Men and women have done that all throughout the history of the church and even earlier. There have always been false teachers. If you read through the Bible (especially in the times of the latter kings of Israel), there were always false prophets that would come; there would be a room full of prophets prophesying, saying how things were good and how God wasn't going to judge [Israel] and that God was for [Israel]. And then there would be the true man of God, the true prophet who would come and say, "Man, they are lying."

There are great stories in there that talk about the boldness of some of these prophets, these men of God—they often stood in contrast to those that were just making stuff up; who had seen it as a fanciful ability to just see things and make up stories that were contrary to everything that the Apostles and the Holy Spirit would have us to appreciate.

The Word of God is given to us with clarity so that we might understand it and we might actually apply it. I've mentioned this to you before and I'll mention it to you guys again that it's not that odd that the best technical, grammatical, historical works concerning the Scriptures are written by men and women who *don't even believe* what they seem to understand so clearly. It's because the Scriptures are given to us in clarity. You don't need some kind of mystical lens to figure it out. You just have to get back to the original languages and see what they say and just understand it. Proper grammar, proper historical background, and context—those are the things that are able to reveal to us what the Scriptures say.

So, Paul is against such fanciful interpretations of the Old Testament by these so-called teachers of the Law. And he says that our goal is instruction that results in love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith and we talked about that last week. He says that we ought to get back to what is right and proper, but this slight digression is necessary to explain that the Law is good. Don't think that the law is useless because of the false teachers who call themselves "teachers of the Law," because of their error. The Law is useful, but only if we use it and understand it properly. Verse 8 gives us the first principle of the proper use of the Law and it comes by way of understanding.

Understanding the Law (I Timothy 1:8)

"But we know that the Law is good"

When he says that **"we know that the Law is good,"** he uses the Greek perfect tense. It's an interesting tense that is not used in our daily discourse today. It conveys this idea that it's an established thing that holds true, a perfected idea, in the sense of whatever action you are talking about, it is finished, complete, and still holds true. So, when he says that **"we know,"** he means that we have come to this conclusion a long time ago. This is a settled reality to us. It's a common understanding among us—that that Law is good.

The word “good” that Paul uses here is *kalos* (καλός), which can be translated as “beautiful.” It is good in the aesthetic sense, not just good as in the opposite of evil, but good in the sense that it is excellent, proper, and useful; that it is beautiful unto us. So, he says that the Law that we have come to commonly appreciate is good, “**if one uses it lawfully.**” There’s a singular condition to taking advantage of the goodness of the Law and what is that condition? Whether a person uses it appropriately or lawfully.

The idea of “**uses it**” is important because what Paul is addressing here is not how someone should *teach* the Law, but rather how someone, anyone should *use* the Law.

In other words, this short phrase that starts out verse 8 has a lot to tell us about who gets to and how he should get there; that is, anyone who wants to use the Law unto some benefit can do so, but only if they do it in a manner that is lawful or appropriate, according to what the Scriptures say.

It’s not just for the teachers that these things are spoken. It is for all of us. If we want to benefit [from the Law], then we need to understand that the Law has a particular use and that use is given to us in the first part of verse 9 in the negative (in the sense that this is not what the Law is for).

The Righteous & the Law (I Timothy 1:9a)

“**realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous man**”

Again, Paul uses the perfect tense (which emphasizes the present or ongoing result of a completed action). He’s saying we have already come to know this that “**the fact that the law [was] not made for a righteous man.**”

The idea of the Law being “made” is this word *keimai* (κεῖμαι) which means “to literally be laid upon.” I think that it would be good to keep that word picture here. I think that Paul is trying to lay out that the Law was not meant to burden those that were righteous.

Let me illustrate it this way. Imagine I am coming to church with my family, going down the freeway in the carpool lane and the California Highway Patrol came up behind me and pulled me off to the side. And the police officer comes up to me and says,

[Officer] “Hello. How are you doing?”
[Nam] “Hello, officer. How are you? I don’t understand was I going too fast?”
[Officer] “No, you were going the speed limit.”
[Nam] “Oh, then is everything okay? Why did you pull me over?”
[Officer] “Because sir, you were in the carpool lane.”
[Nam] “Yeah, my whole family is in the car.”
[Officer] “Yes, you cannot drive in the carpool lane unless you have more than 2 people in the car. Yeah. I just wanted you to know that because that’s how the law interprets how people ought to drive in the carpool lane.”
[Nam] “Yes. So we’re good, right?”
[Officer] “Right.”

We would think that this officer was a little crazy.

In other words, the Law has certain parameters and those that breach those parameters are the ones that are “laid upon” or “burdened upon” by the Law. Paul likes to use this term (especially in Romans and Galatians) for those that are under the Law. The Old Testament Scriptures and the Law of Moses lays upon them. This is what he’s talking about that (this is a fact now, this is a reality) for the righteous, the Law does not lay upon them.

In other words, the carpool lane law doesn’t apply to me in the sense of its judgment upon me. Does it have other applications? Yes. It reminds us of what is right and legal. For example, I’m often using the carpool lane with my kids and wife and sometimes when I drive to the Los Angeles flock, instinctively I’m in the carpool lane. I’m not paying attention. I’m listening to a sermon or thinking of something and as I’m driving along I suddenly realize that I’m in the carpool lane. At that point, I’m in breach of the carpool lane law and that’s the purpose of that law, generally speaking, to remind us of the prohibition and to keep us straight.

The word “righteous” is taken from the Greek word *dikaios* (δικαιος) from the root word *dike* (δικη), which means “to be righteous, good, to be just.” For the righteous person, the Law does not burden upon them anymore. Now we have to ask then who are the righteous. The righteous person, as Paul likes to use this term righteous, is that person who is living in conformity to the requirement of the Law because of the blood of Jesus Christ. Let me explain this to you more thoroughly to make sure you totally understand this.

There are a couple of things that we can say absolutely about what the New Testament teaches regarding the Law of Moses. The first thing to understand is that the Law could not justify any person. We use that term “justify” in our colloquial language in a way that implies something appropriate or fitted. If someone does something and you say “Did you forget to

wash the dishes?" And they answer, "I meant to, but I was in a hurry." For someone who makes excuses, we would say that person is trying to "justify" something they did wrong. The point is that the Law cannot declare or make an excuse or make you right.

Let me read you a few verses:

- Romans 3:20 *"because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin."*

Paul says they're trying to do the works of the Law. He says, "You don't even believe in the true God. Why do you think you deserve to go to heaven?" They would answer, "Because for the most part, I'm a good person." In other words what they are saying, in some intrinsic form, I'm doing the works of some general spiritual goodness or law that is out there. But it says very clearly, even in Romans 3:20, *"by the works of the Law no flesh shall be justified in His sight."*

- Romans 3:28 *"For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law."*

In other words, how does a man become righteous or justified (it's the same word in the Greek, *dikaioō* (δικαίω)? He becomes justified by faith in Christ alone; by trusting in Jesus Christ's full payment for his sins apart from or not included with the works of the Law. It's not by the works of the Law that you can become saved.

- Galatians 2:16 *"nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified."*

Paul seems to repeat this idea in a few other verses that I won't mention. He constantly says the works of the Law cannot justify or make a man righteous. How is it that the righteous man or the individual, who puts his faith in Christ, is not burdened by the Law? Because the Law is fulfilled or accomplished in those who have faith in Christ.

- Romans 8:3-4 *"For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."*

The Law couldn't justify or save a person. It's not the Law's fault, but our own sinfulness, our inability to do what is right and to do it rightly all the time. Did you catch that part where he says *"that the requirement (penalty) of the Law might be fulfilled (paid) in us"*? That's important. In other words, He sent Jesus Christ to die for our sins that if we have faith upon His death for us that we might have new life and salvation.

Let me give you one more. It's not directly associated with the Law, but it's important in terms of why the righteous do not bear the burden of the Law.

- II Corinthians 5:21 *"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*

Notice the absolutes that are stated there. The beauty of that is that God the Father made Christ who knew absolutely no sin. He knew no sin and He made Him not to *not* sin but to *become* sin. It's like when Christ died on the cross, He literally became the embodiment of sin so that we might become not just in joy, but that *"we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* This is that great doctrine of faith called "imputed righteousness." It means that righteousness is given to us; an alien, external righteousness is given to us. It is God's very righteousness, not because we deserved or earned it, but because Jesus Christ had fulfilled the requirement of the Law, the penalty of death. He's fulfilled that in us.

So on this basis, Paul says we have already come to know this; we are already realizing the fact that the Law is not made for the justified one—individuals that are already righteous that have the blood of Christ already redeem them. The Law doesn't burden, doesn't sit upon them anymore.

So what is the right use of the Law? It comes in this next long list of sins that explains to us how the Law is to be enacted or used lawfully or appropriately.

The Appropriate Use of the Law (I Timothy 1:9b)

"realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious,"

It's made for individuals who do not keep the Law and who, in their hearts, are men and women that are rebellious. This is in a sense an introduction to the rest of this long list of "heavy" sins that Paul is about to discuss. It is curious because what you realize is that in the Greek these are all substantives. These are not just verbs, but verbal nouns. It's the difference between saying someone cooks versus someone who is a cook. Do you understand the difference? One is

talking about an action that an individual might do on an occasion, while the other talks about what he does as a profession.

Grammatically, the Hebrew has a similar construction. Take for example the story of Jonah, it says there that there were these guys who were “sailors” or in the Hebrew, *mallāch* (מללך). Remember God says to Jonah “Go to Nineveh” and Jonah goes the opposite direction? He goes out to sea and it says that the “sailors” (it uses this particular construction that meant that these were not men who occasionally sailed, but that these were sailors by trade). In other words, these guys had their “sea-legs.” And so when everything started to pitch and turn and they were panicking and thought that they were going to die, it was extraordinary because they were not men who ought to panic because they had experienced storms and were professional sailors by trade.

Many commentators have tried to correlate this list (and I think to some degree appropriately) to the Decalogue or the Ten Commandments.

The Decalogue or Ten Commandments

1. The First commandment is against mental or theoretic idolatry, (Exodus 20:3).
2. The Second is against making and worshipping images, or practical idolatry (Exodus 20:4-6)
3. The Third is against false swearing, blasphemy, and irreverent use of the name of God (Exodus 20:7-10)
4. The Fourth is against profanation of the Sabbath, and idleness on the other days of the week (Exodus 20:8-11)
5. The Fifth is against disrespect and disobedience to parents (Exodus 20:12)
6. The Sixth is against murder and cruelty (Exodus 20:13)
7. The Seventh is against adultery and uncleanness (Exodus 20:14)
8. The Eighth is against stealing and dishonesty (Exodus 20:15)
9. The Ninth is against false testimony, perjury, etc. (Exodus 20:16)
10. The Tenth is against covetousness (Exodus 20:17)

The Ten Commandments (out of 613 particular laws to be kept in Deuteronomy and the Levitical code) are the best known commandments because they cover such a wide variety of almost all the issues. And remember that in the Ten Commandments, the first 3 commandments (Exodus 20:3-7), and maybe the fourth commandment about Sabbath keeping (Exodus 20:8-11), relate to our relationship with God. The first three or four commandments discuss how we are not to sin against God.

The first three commandments are: 1) we are to have no other gods; 2) we are to not make any graven image of god; and 3) nor to take His name in vain. Those 3 things encompass the things of God and the rest of them discuss our relationship with other human beings.

So, Paul makes a list here that corresponds to the Ten Commandments and there's an indirect relationship between them. He's speaking of significant things concerning the Law, so he uses as an analogy that which is probably most familiar with them—the Ten Commandments.

He first talks about how the Law lays upon those who sin against God. Look at the list.

The Law & Those who Sin Against God (I Timothy 1:9c-9d)

“but for those who are lawless and rebellious,”

The Law then is meant to burden **“those who are lawless and rebellious.”** It's the issue of the heart. Understand that those two descriptions give us an introduction to the rest of the particulars in this list and I think that this is significant because there are some things on the list that we have many issues about, at least our culture does. And one thing on that list is homosexuality.

And if you read enough Christian literature on the topic of homosexuality, there are some who try to suggest that this is the concept of *arsenokoitēs* (ἀρσενικοίτης); that these are individuals who cohabit or have sexual relations with homosexual prostitutes. In other words, it's the sin of immorality more than homosexuality. But the Law is not talking about the particular acts themselves, but emphasizes the individuals that commit them.

If you have a friend or co-worker that is gay, they find it reprehensible that the Scriptures would speak against their “lifestyle.” Understand that if they ask you if gay people go to hell, tell them that *all* sinners go to hell, not because he or she is a liar or a homosexual or because he or she is this or that, but because in their heart of hearts, they are lawless. They do not submit to the authority of the Word of God or to God's Law; they are lawless and that makes them rebellious. For that reason alone individuals go to hell.

The particulars are not nearly as significant as the reality of their heart. Lawless and rebellious men and women (and such were you and I) don't have to be homosexual to go to hell. We understand that. You can be a normal, decent individual. Just someone who has never submitted to the guidelines of what the Scriptures call to be righteous and that is enough to be condemned to hell.

So the Law is not to be laid upon the righteous, but upon the lawless and rebellious.

“for the ungodly and sinners”

The term **“ungodly”** means that they have no reverence for God; they’re impious. And **“sinners”** basically means that they have no regard for any acts offending God; they live contrary to the will of God. It is often used of those who were the Gentiles or idolaters. So you can see that there might be this cognitive idea of them being outside the will of God, even in not reverencing God as the one true God. That might have something to do with it. The idea of these two types of people is that they were irreverent. The second thing we see is that they are irresponsible in heart.

“for the unholy and profane”

It says that the law is **“for the unholy and profane.”** The term **“unholy”** here (if you took off the prefix “un-”) uses the same root word “holy” which occurs in 1 Timothy 2:8. *“Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.”* What it’s talking about there is that they ought to lift up hands that were pious and properly prepared for worship and pure. It’s saying that the irresponsible heart is someone who is unholy and the net result is that they become profane, unhallowed, unconsecrated and they blaspheme. It describes individuals who don’t hold carefully to the things of the Lord; who basically bring shame to the reputation of our God.

The word **“profane”** is also mentioned, which means those who besmirk the name of God; those who take the Lord’s name in vain, possibly. The commandment to have “no other gods” corresponds to this idea of sinners and reverence mentioned previously. The commandment to have “no graven image” would correspond to this idea that these were unholy ones instead those properly prepared with the right attitude of the things of God. So maybe that’s included there, generally speaking, while the rest of the list almost definitely coincides with the fifth to ninth commandments, which outlined how we were to relate to one another. Take a look at the rest of that list.

The Law & Those Who Sin Against Others (1 Timothy 1:9c-10)

“for those who kill their fathers or mothers”

I want you to know something; that when it comes to this particular point of the passage (dealing with sins against our fellow man, against our fellow humanity) Paul uses the most intense forms of the Law that are to be broken and why he does so is unclear.

But I think that at least some part of it is because he had just written before this verse “this is the goal of our instruction—love; a love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith” and I think that that’s bugging him so that when he lays out for whom the law lays upon, he writes that it bears upon those who are not just guys who don’t honor father and mother, but those who would *kill* their fathers and mothers. And he highlights those things that actually occurred then and that actually occur today.

Something like murder is not new to the history of the world. Killing your mother and father is not new to us, either. Just read some of those Greek tragedies. Its crazy, but some of these things have actually happened. In contrast to the fifth commandment (to honor your father and mother), Paul says this is part of the list for whom the Law comes—**“for those who kill their fathers and mothers.”** Instead of honoring, they kill. So he gives an intense version of that.

“for murderers”

The sixth commandment says, “Thou shall not kill” and Paul says **“for murderers.”** He uses a particular term that means “man-slayer.” It is that concept of killing with genuine intention; premeditated murder.

“and immoral men and homosexuals”

The immoral is next on the list and that, with homosexuality, goes along with the seventh commandment (adultery). If you think about it, the seventh commandment is not just about having improper sexual relations with someone that is already married. That’s not all that it prohibits. It prohibits sexual sin altogether.

The word **“immoral”** in Greek is **pornos** (πόρνος) which means “fornicator.” It signified the sexually immoral individual or in some translations, it’s translated “the perverse.” It represented the wickedness of sexual sin. **“Homosexual”** comes from the Greek word **arsenokoitēs** (ἀρσενικοιτης), which literally means “males in the marriage bed.” Both of those terms talk about sexual sins that have become rampant and address lifestyle issues.

It’s an issue to me and it bothers me (not to the point of hatred) when we hear this political, semantic use of this idea that it is just a lifestyle that we choose, that it is about our freedom. It’s not just our lifestyle. If you are prepared to say that (if it’s all an issue of preference), then how about when it comes to pedophiles? Is that not just a sexual preference? If you look at the ancient Greek society that’s the path they took. They went from homosexuality to pedophilia. They felt that a relationship between an older man with a younger man was the purest and truest form of sexual encounter. Wives were just for having babies and it was your protégé with whom you would enjoy your promiscuity. All of these things are trying to address the breaking of God’s Law by men unto a graven or unto an intense form.

“and kidnappers”

What does this have to do with the eighth commandment concerning stealing? The term **“kidnappers”** actually means a “slave stealer” or “man stealer”. Often this term was used of a person who stole other people’s slaves and eventually was used more frequently for anyone who was a slave dealer. It started to make more sense to call them **“kidnappers”** because they stole human beings and they sold them like they were property.

“and liars and perjurers”

The ninth commandment is to not bear false witness, so you know what lying and perjury is about.

If you take all these characteristics into account, one thing is curious. Paul takes the latter commandments (from the fifth to the ninth commandment) and he particularly emphasizes the atrocious nature by which people sin against one another. That’s what this is about. He doesn’t say that these are guys who “dishonor their fathers and mothers.” No. He says that the Law falls upon those who, instead of loving and honoring their father and mother as God had intended, they would rather kill their father and mother.

It reminds me of that famous trial of the Menendez brothers who literally shot their parents to death and tried to play it off due to extraneous circumstances. I thought about that and did some research and read the autopsy report. It said that the parents were shot from different angles, meaning that someone had shot them from behind and then came around, reloaded probably when they shot their mother. It wasn’t a one shot deal for each of their parents, without looking at their mother and father. It was where they had shot them then went around the side (and the parents were sitting there bleeding, shocked, and surprised) and they still were shooting them. They reloaded and then finished off their mother. One of the most disturbing descriptions I read was how they had found the mother in a defensive position with her hands trying to hide her eyes. It was conjectured that she was trying to hide her eyes from seeing her own sons committing this atrocious act against her husband and herself.

There’s a burden in that; there’s a reality in that someone would kill their own father and mother instead of honoring them. And that’s what Paul is trying to say. “This is the proper use of the Law. Let’s examine the atrocities that men and women commit against one another and then we will understand why the Law of God is the Law of God and why it bears what it bears. They would kill their fathers and mothers. They would kill other human beings. They would kill other individuals.”

Did they have issues? Of course they did, but so do you and I. And that’s Paul’s point. Instead of love from a pure heart, they would rather kill one another. Is that the kind of world that we would try to pretend to be filled with righteous individuals, good people? Is this the kind of morality that we would encourage one another and say “Oh, no. That’s just the way that people work?” It’s evolutionary isn’t it? The strong should live. The weak should die. Doesn’t that purify the race? There is just a horror in that.

For the immoral individual, the sexually impure, the homosexual—they don’t sin unto themselves alone. They sin with others and they demean what God had created—another human being, another image bearer, someone God had created, not as an animal or thing, but as one of His. His delight and desire would be that each one of those individuals that lust and participate in sin would be saved and righteous as well.

Kidnappers—if you guys are familiar with the author of the song “Amazing Grace” he (John Newton) was exactly one of those—a slave trader. His testimony is amazing so that his words in the hymn that we all know are quite remarkable. He sold human beings. He mistreated, killed, and raped many and that was the lifestyle. He lived that way until God had saved him. He became a pastor later in life, but he never got over the grace of God to save someone such as him. Why would individuals steal people, sell them, kill them, injure them and do that for profit? That’s the atrocity of humankind.

They are liars. They are perjurers. They lie through their teeth to get away with their sin. And you may think that that is not that bad; it’s not killing or kidnapping. But can you think of all the individuals, who because of no better reason than that they were in the wrong place at the wrong time, and because of the lies of so many, it cost them their lives? Injustice was done to them; all kinds of horrible things occurred just because of perjury; just because of lies.

And there you have the fifth through the ninth commandment on steroids. It’s the worst form of the breaking of the Law concerning human beings. So, then you may ask where’s the tenth commandment? Where is the coveting? Curiously, it’s the one commandment not mentioned here. Do you realize that all the commandments tell you specifically what happens to you if you break them? If you’re an idolater, you get taken outside of the people of God and are stoned to death. If you do not honor mother and father, they take you outside of the camp and you are stoned to death. And you can go all through the commandments and they all require a death penalty, but not coveting. Why? Because I think that it is a different kind of sin in the sense that it comes from the heart. It’s difficult for one human being to say to another that you are coveting.

You cannot tell the sins of the heart and I think that maybe that’s why Paul is talking about how the Law bears upon those that are lawbreakers. He says basically (and he’s trying to imply that they break the Ten Commandments and all the commandments that have to do with the death penalty) that if they want to live under the burden of the Law, let them live under the burden of the Law. They should all be taken outside and killed.

Death is the proper validation of what the Law speaks against; all these atrocities committed against our fellow man. In case you're thinking "That's not me. I'm not a homosexual. I didn't kill anyone. I didn't kill my mother or father. That's not my style."

"and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching."

In case you try to disassociate yourself from these things and pretend that you have nothing to do with all of these things, Paul says in verse 10 **"and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching."** You see, he brings it back to his point from the beginning that if you are speaking false truths, the natural result is that you will incur upon yourself the full weight of the Law.

If you think to yourself (and this is apparently what some of these false teachers/elders, leaders in the church had picked up these notions) to look at the Old Testament Law and say, "Hey remember in this genealogy, Seth was mentioned? That kind of reminds me of this. And remember Revenge of the Seth?" And all this kind of stuff and making up story upon story—he is saying "We are keeping the Law and remember that all this mystical stuff, I will reveal to you over the course of time."

Paul is saying if you want to keep the Law, let's keep the Law. Because the Law doesn't bear upon those that are righteous because their penalty is paid for, but the ones that want to say that they themselves are going to bear the Law, let them bear the full weight. These things come with the death penalty and if you think that you will get away with something not mentioned, he says anything **"contrary to sound [teaching]."**

The term for **"sound teaching"** is the Greek word *hugiainō* (ὕγιαίνω) where we get our English word for "hygiene." So it kind of gives you the idea of what it means to have sound doctrine. It's not the word for "audio" or "audible." It's not doctrine that is audible. We use it in a similar expressionary phrase—he is of sound mind and body. We don't mean that he is decrepit and messed up. We mean that he is strong. His body is good and his mind is functioning properly.

When he uses the phrase sound in instruction or teaching, he does not mean "the method of teaching," but rather, sound doctrine; the embodiment of what is being taught. It is the idea that it is hygienic. It is good. It is strong. It is capable. It rightly functions. That's the doctrine that we hold onto. That's the goal of our doctrine, our instruction, or our teaching—love from a pure heart; love from a good conscience; love from a sincere faith. These are the things that are sound and stand up and make sense. Not what the false teachers are trying to put upon us.

And when we think about all of the unlawful things that are committed against the ethics of God's law (these absolute sins that we've looked at) we might be tempted to say that we are not *that* bad. But think about the way that Paul had put it. And I think it is right, that is in humility we ought to approach the issue of sin.

In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 he has a similar list. *"Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God."*

Another improper use of the Law is to point fingers. That's not what the Law is for. The Law is to be used as a mirror like what James says in (James 1:23-25). The law of liberty—you are supposed to look upon it and say "look at the junk that I am capable of." And if we think like Paul thinks, in humility (1 Corinthians 6:11), we would think to ourselves *"and such were some of you; such as I until the grace of god took over me."*

You might think that I may have wandered from the point with all of this, but not at all because Paul comes back to that exact same point. He says **"whatever else"** (in case you try to squeeze in some sins that you commit that is not on the list) **is contrary to sound** (hygienic, proper, excellent, and healthy) **doctrine."**

The Law & the Gospel (I Timothy 1:11)

"according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted."

This sound doctrine is **"according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God."** It's significant that this idea of the gospel is associated directly with sound teaching. The term "gospel" in Greek is *euaggelion* (εὐαγγέλιον) and it literally means "good message or proclamation" or "good news." In fact, whenever you read the word "gospel" in English bibles in the New Testament, sometimes it doesn't mean THE Gospel (doctrine or the basis of faith and truth).

Sometimes, it's just talking about good news. I think that is the case in Ephesians 6:15. *"and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE."* I don't think that it's talking particularly about being ready, in the sense of being ready for the gospel, like wearing shoes. I think that it's saying that there is stability in the good news of having peace with God; that kind of peace is stabilizing to you.

It says that sound doctrine is appropriate or corresponds with good news, *the* Good News, not just general good news, THE Good News—the Gospel; the message of Salvation; *that* Good News.

What this tells us is that this is the final test of good and sound doctrine. Understand it this way, if we claim that our teaching or our instruction or our doctrine is good or excellent, etc. There's a simple test, according to Paul, if its sound teaching—it's got to be according to the Gospel.

In other words, if it's hygienic, healthy, it ought to display the character of the gospel of salvation by the grace of God through Jesus Christ alone. Let me give you some ideas of how this may play out.

If there is a new teaching that comes to us, the questions we ought to ask ourselves are:

- Does this new doctrine humble us in the face of god for our lack of holiness in comparison to his infinite holiness?
- Does it bring us to our knees in worship?
- Does it remind us of the impossibility of saving ourselves? If it's genuine in sound doctrine it ought to bring us to the fact that we are that sinful; that we cannot save ourselves, but what is impossible for men is possible through the death of Christ.
- Does it clarify something of the depth of the character of God? Does this new teaching make us think more deeply of His attributes—things like His holiness, His love, His grace, His transcendence, His imminence? His transcendence is that He is so distantly differently from us because He is uncreated. He is so transcendent from us and yet it says in the Scriptures about how He is near us; how we might experience His goodness; that He is imminent.
- Does this new teaching make our love for our Maker increase and cause us to desire deeper worship and just want to sit in His presence?
- Does it energize us to live more vigorously for Him? Does it push us; prod us to be sanctified, to walk in a manner more worthy of His name? And whatever years that the Lord would give us, that we would honor Him with anything and everything that He would give us into our hands?

Do these teachings do that? If they do then they are sound doctrine. If they don't, then they are mythologies, endless genealogies. They are not worthy of the living God.

He says you can test sound doctrine because it always comes **“according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God.”** **“Blessed God”** is a great phrase. It's that term that Jesus used in the Sermon on the Mount (“Blessed are...”). It means that there is a sense of beautiful goodness about Him. And to declare that God is **“the blessed God of this gospel”** that we receive is to say that God is of such a character that He is good (beautifully and excellently poured upon good) to us in giving to us the gospel of Jesus Christ.

He uses another term here **“the glorious gospel”** of the blessed God. Even if we give everything in the list in verse 9 legs and stories and illustrations, all of that would pale in comparison to this short phrase: sound doctrine which is **“according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God.”**

Who cares how you got here. Who cares by what sinful route or what pit God dug you out of. What is glorious is the gospel of the saving knowledge of Christ; that we might be actually declared righteous. We who are made of filth and incapable of being nothing else than the worse sorts of individuals; He cleanses us; He makes us new. How glorious is our salvation. How blessed is our God.

And when we forget these things, when we talk coldly about the teachings of Scripture or things that are read and learned, when it becomes “theology” to us (and by that I mean that it becomes cold; a study; it is of the mind and not the heart) there is a foolishness in that that I hope that Satan does not get a hold of, because that's the kind of junk that the elders in these churches were led astray by. They were not satisfied in talking about true doctrine. They were desirous of experimenting with their minds; of talking about things that were above everyone else. They wanted to be erudite. They wanted to be counted preeminent among their brethren.

Foolishness—when we share this one glorious truth. Not a single one of us were saved because we deserved it. In fact, we didn't make ourselves more “savable” because we were good. You don't deserve to be more saved versus the worst mother and father killer; more than the worst sexual offenders. You don't deserve salvation more than any of those. The Law bears upon them and the Law bore upon you, except now you are declared righteous.

How can that not mean something to you? Where have we gone as a people that doctrine and Scripture become that empty to us? That is foolishness.

I like what J. Gresham Machen (influential American Presbyterian theologian in the early 20th century; founder of Westminster Theological Seminary) says:

“What good does it do to me to tell me that the type of religion presented in the bible is a very fine type of religion and that the thing for me to do is just to start practicing that type of religion now. So I'll tell you my friend, it does not one type of little bit of good. What I need first of all is not exhortation but a gospel not directions for saving myself, but knowledge of how god has saved me. Have you any good news for me. That's the question that I ask of you. I know that your exhortations will not help me but if anything has been done to save me, will you not tell me the facts?”

And that's why the gospel such a gracious gospel. In the end, this is the value of the Law. It reveals sin so that people might wonder “Can anything, anyone save me?” And we have the answer in the Scriptures in the person of Jesus Christ.

Salvation by faith alone, in Christ alone. It can't get more glorious. If we need more than that something is really wrong with us. That's what we need first and foremost.

We ought not to take the byways of intellectualism. We should not take the byways of legalism and we should not seek for ways in which we might show ourselves particularly excellent in the eyes of God because we are not. I am not. We ought to come back to the clear teaching that we depend on Christ alone and that we depend on the glorious gospel from our blessed God.

“with which I have been entrusted.”

When Paul says **“with which I have been entrusted,”** he means this is that “which I guard.” What these elders have taught is not just wrong, it is abhorrent. It is horrifying because they take us away from the purity of the glory of the gospel of God through the blood of Jesus Christ.

R. Kent Hughes says it this way:

“Paul's point is relentlessly clear. If you are going to proclaim the Law in this dark and diseased world, do it as an entrance to preaching the gospel.”

These men were sitting around with a small group of self-righteous believers weaving endless teachings into an imagined ladder to a high spirituality. For these Ephesian elders, the church had become their mission field. This is fatal. When you are making Christians your unreached people group—something is wrong. When we start running around trying to correct one another on some vague issue of some doctrinal this or that or making up stuff so that we might have some “deeper teaching,” instead of taking the gospel to the world—something is wrong. If we are sitting around not appreciating how salvation is so rich for us, so that we actually would take it so somebody else—something is wrong.

And that's not my purpose—to stir you to guilt because guilt does not rescue or sanctify you. It's like the Law falls upon you, it bears upon you if you have done something wrong and let your conscience remind you that something is wrong. From there, you need to enter into the grace of God to do that which is right. We need to take the gospel into the world because all the rest of the mythologies and genealogies cannot rescue souls.

The beauty of what Paul says brings us back to that singular point that sound teaching is according to the gracious gospel of the blessed God of which I protect, **“which I have been entrusted.”** That guardianship goes from the apostle to Timothy; from Timothy to the elders of Ephesus; from the elders to the congregation to all peoples who proclaim themselves righteous by the blood of Christ; to you and me, to this very day we have been entrusted with the glorious gospel of the blessed God. That is more significant than any breaking of the Law because it covers all the breaking of the Law. Let us pray.

Heavenly Father,

As our meditation upon the idea of salvation through faith alone, through Christ alone, permeates through our hearts, I pray that You would forgive us because there are times when we put the things of salvation on the shelf.

Lord, it's amazing and we confess it to You right now that we are distracted by things that have to do with what we drive or how we might get to a place or what kind of quality of life we might enjoy thirty, forty years from now.

Lord, the foolishness of our hearts captivated by so many small things—cleanse us from such mediocrity and help us to consecrate our lives for the greater purpose of making Your gospel known.

Lord, we know that the Law has its rightful use, to convict us of sin, and if we have fallen under that conviction of sin, Lord, then help us to also understand what sound doctrine teaches us, what true Scripture tells us—that there is only salvation in One; that we need to give ourselves wholeheartedly to Him, Jesus Christ to find life and forgiveness of sins.

Help us to understand and to appreciate that reality so that we might take the Word of God to all the nations; that we might bless Your name.

We thank You for Your glory and for the glorious gospel by which we are saved.

*In Jesus' name we pray,
Amen.*