

## What About the Law?

1 Timothy 1:8-11

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Dave Geldart

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### 1. Review 1 tim series and ch 1 context

- a. Letter written by the apostle PAUL to his younger disciple TIMOTHY
- b. Last week we read this 6-chapter letter in its entirety – just like originally would have been read!
  - i. GOOD BASIC PRACTICE for studying books of the bible, especially epistles/letters
- c. The church Paul planted in Ephesus (Turkey) had come into theological problems since he left.
- d. READ 1 Tim 1:5 The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.
  - i. v5 tells us orienting goal of this letter and this series: aiming for LOVE in the household of God.
    1. That's why this image of family sharing meal
    2. In all things in our church family life, we are to aim for love ... even in the difficult issues Paul is about to charge Timothy to address
- e. Read v 6-7
  - i. <sup>6</sup>Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, <sup>7</sup>desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.
  - ii. So the Ephesian church culture was in jeopardy because "certain persons" were teaching serious misunderstandings about the law
    1. Let's look into this tonight –
    2. Because as I'm confident you'll see, these serious misunderstanding about the law still are around today! – and they can and do wreak HAVOCK in the church.

### 2. PRAY!

#### 3. What is the law?

- a. Generally, laws make assertions about what's good and bad...right and wrong
- b. So, let's start by asking foundational question: How can we know what is right and wrong?
  - i. Apologetics side talk
  - ii. Determined by:
    1. Individuals
      - a. Fatally problematic
      - b. Because equalizes all claims and actions as equally valid = equally moral
    2. **Exact same in practice as saying there's NO SUCH THING as right and wrong!**
      - a. Nothing objective. Thus entire moral category is illusory.
      - b. So, no one has any right to dictate to another what is right and wrong FOR THEM. Nothing binding above. No ability to judge or enforce rules. All personal preferences.
      - c. AKA: Anarchy.
        - i. Under anarchy, MIGHT makes right.
        - ii. Whomever is STRONGER is able to enforce their personal preferences on others (usually to their great injury)
    3. Groups / societies
      - a. Similar to case with individuals
      - b. All society's claims to right and wrong MUST BE EQUALLY VALID. So no way to push back on any society's definitions or actions.
      - c. So again, Might makes right.
        - i. Nazis torture and extermination of 6 million Jews, elderly, infirm, other undesirables...
        - ii. Is there really NO WAY to say that that is wrong?
        - iii. Not if there is nothing ABOVE individuals and societies by which we can objectively judge right and wrong.

4. There's another possibility – actually the one that is most reasonable and best fits the facts – A personal, moral being exists above and beyond individuals AND societies who defines what is Good and bad, right and wrong -- **GOD**

- c. That's the foundation for today's passage – the LAW
  - i. This law is what's in view here: God's revelation of what is good and bad, right and wrong, what leads to true human flourishing, and what leads ultimately to human destruction.
  - ii. Objectively true moral standards. The Law.
  - iii. What God has revealed about right and wrong - including but not limited to the 10 Commandments

#### 4. What about the Law?

- a. Read v 8-11 <sup>8</sup> Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully  
...understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers,<sup>10</sup> the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine,<sup>11</sup> in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.
- b. Lots of data points here.
- c. I think we must start by addressing the Elephant in the Room – Homosexuality
  - i. The fact that Paul here pairs homosexuality with all sexual immorality...
    1. And puts it in this same list with other heinous acts like killing your parents, slave kidnapers, perjury, etc.
  - ii. THIS is super offensive to our culture.
  - iii. So offensive that some of you likely heard nothing else this passage said, and you're even still stuck staring at this giant elephant in the room and in the Biblical text.
  - iv. This issue is as important as it is difficult, so we don't want to gloss over it.
    1. So rather than just addressing it briefly in this talk, in 3 weeks we're going to devote an entire Sunday evening to studying and addressing this topic.
    2. So I hope you'll plan to join us then as we engage on this very timely topic.
  - v. However I do want to say in brief, today, that while so many of us hear this through the grid of gay hatred protests, the Bible is clear that God hates sin but loves sinners. He has literally moved heaven and earth to seek and save all of us. Each of us who is broken and sinful. Each of us who are sexually broken. That's all of us.
  - vi. So though we're going to engage more in 3 weeks, I want you to hear right now that God does not hate gay people. And neither should his church. And the grace and mercy of Christ are able to fully forgive and substantially transform ALL of us.
  - vii. More about this in a few weeks.
  - viii. But for now we'll have to leave it there
- d. But before we depart fully, why this specific list of sins?
  - i. Some have suggested correlation of these to the 10 commandments
  - ii. The first half deal with our engagement with God
  - iii. The 2<sup>nd</sup> half deal with our engagement with each other
  - iv. Some potential correlation between these. Clearest on 2<sup>nd</sup> half of list.
    1. Though covetousness strangely missing.
  - v. Almost certainly this list made sense to Timothy, and fit within the occasional context of this letter.
    1. We're not fully sure what that was, only some pointers.
    2. Either way you slice it, Paul is going out of his way to say that the law is for sinners!
    3. And not just SOME really bad sinners, but ALL –
      - a. AND WHATEVER ELSE IS CONTRARY TO SOUND Doctrine
      - b. Sound = hygienic = THAT WHICH PROMOTES TRUE HEALTH & Human Flourishing!

#### 5. OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE LAW:

- a. The law is Good
- b. The law can be used wrongly
- c. Law not for the JUST
- d. Law is for sinners

- e. The law is to be used IN ACCORD with the Gospel
- 6. Lets UNPACK these:
  - a. The Law is Good
    - i. It's from God!
    - ii. It says TRUE things about what is objectively right and wrong. Good and bad, what will lead to true human flourishing!
    - iii. The law is good! But we have to use it the right way.
      - 1. Issue is NEVER that the law is bad. It came from God. It's good.
      - 2. But at issue here is how it is used!
  - b. The law can be used wrongly
    - i. Tool mismatch!
      - 1. SEE PICTURES!
      - 2. I told yall recently about me trying to trim my front tall grass and bushes with loppers. Not a good match! But all I had
        - a. So thankful for a neighbor who walked by and lent me his electric trimmers!
      - 3. How about these fun ones:
        - a. Hammer nail
        - b. Grammy - whiteout
        - c. Tree/saw
        - d. Tire
        - e. Some aren't just inefficient, they're Dangerous!
          - i. Tractor
          - ii. Gun butt
          - iii. Saw, back
      - 4. THE LAW IS JUST LIKE THAT! – lets read more
  - c. Who are the just?
    - i. Big question: Who is righteous?
    - ii. Most people think if they were to meet God tonight, they'd be judged basically good.
      - 1. Yah I've done some bad stuff
      - 2. But Generally pretty good.
      - 3. Especially compared to others
        - a. I've never killed anyone!
    - iii. Bible says this kind of COMPARATIVE righteousness is crap
      - 1. Think you've done pretty well?
        - a. You'd better be 100%
        - b. James 2:10 –For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God's laws.
      - 2. Say you haven't murdered anyone?
        - a. Jesus said anyone who's even thought angry, unrighteous thoughts against someone is guilty of killing them in their hearts
      - 3. That's why Rom 3:9 – “There is no one righteous, not even one”
    - iv. So according to God, NO ONE IS JUST/RIGHTEOUS
      - 1. No one has kept the law perfectly enough.
    - v. Soooooo..... doesn't that mean the law is for everyone? So why the qualifier?
      - 1. Scripture also says, those who trust in Christ are DECLARED RIGHTEOUS, apart frm deeds
      - 2. That's the GOOD NEWS!
      - 3. Rom 3:21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— <sup>22</sup>the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.
    - vi. Soooo, those who trust in Christ are DECLARED righteous before God, based on their faith in HIS righteousness, not our own.
      - 1. SO, scripturally speaking, Christians are actually considered just and righteous!

- vii. Jesus Christ lived the law PERFECTLY
    - 1. Then Died a sinner's death
  - viii. So he can offer us the Great Switcheroo!
    - 1. I get his righteousness, his perfection under the law
    - 2. And he gets my sin, and the death I deserved to die.
  - ix. That's the Gospel.
    - 1. 2 Cor 5:21 - For our sake he [God] made him [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
7. So the law is NOT for Christians [the Just]
8. Instead, the Law is primarily for those who have not yet trusted in Jesus [Sinners]
- a. WOAH!
  - b. So how does the law function correctly for nonbelievers?
    - i. **Rom 3:** <sup>19</sup> Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. <sup>20</sup> For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.
    - ii. The LAW is primarily to show us our sin – NOT TO MAKE US RIGHTEOUS!
    - iii. So the law can't save us. Can't make us righteous.
      - 1. Can only show us our NEED for forgiveness
    - iv. THE X-RAY EXAMPLE
      - 1. Diagnostic – revealing
      - 2. DRIVES US TO THE DOCTOR WHO CAN HEAL US
    - v. Likewise the law is to show us what's wrong inside, our fatal condition
      - 1. To show us our GREAT NEED to be healed, made right
        - a. To help us see how deeply depraved we are.
        - b. No chance to claim ignorance
    - vi. The Right Use of the law is to show us our sin, our desperate state, and drive us to Christ, who alone can heal us and set us free
    - vii. This is in ACCORDANCE with the Gospel!
      - 1. Christ is the ONLY source of righteousness available to us. Not available through the law! Paul, in Romans 10:3-4 says
      - 2. <sup>3</sup> [The Jews] being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own [via the Law], they did not submit to God's righteousness. <sup>4</sup> For Christ is the end [not abolishment, the GOAL, the ENDGAME] of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.
      - 3. As Luther said, "The . . . principal purpose of the law (is to be) a mighty hammer to crush the self-righteousness of human beings. For it shows them their sin, so that by the recognition of sin they may be humbled . . . and so may long for grace and for (Christ)."
      - 4. Spurgeon – "I do not believe that any man can preach the gospel who does not preach the Law. The Law is the needle, and you cannot draw the silken thread of the gospel through a man's heart unless you first send the needle of the Law to make way for it."
    - viii. It's something to be THANKFUL for!
      - 1. Also has a sense of the law safeguarding us until we can get to Christ
      - 2. **Gal 3:** <sup>23</sup> Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. <sup>24</sup> So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, <sup>26</sup> for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.
        - a. The Law is like a slave, helping you get to school.
          - i. Not the master.
          - ii. The child is.
          - iii. And the goal is to get the child to where REAL TRUTH is found
        - b. So we are not to DISPISE the law, instead be grateful for it!
        - c. For only by it were we able to come to Christ!
9. So, so far, we've covered 2 incorrect uses of the law:

10. Incorrect use of the Law #1 For sinners to EARN their right standing with God
- We've seen how that's a fatal misuse of the law which for them is intended to show them their great need for salvation
  - But it cannot make us righteous!
  - "We earn God's acceptance by obeying His moral standards and/or religious rituals."
  - This has been the dominant view in Christendom for 20 centuries.
  - It turns Christianity into a religion (vs. a love-relationship with God).
  - It promotes a self-righteous and hypocritical church culture
  - It deprives the watching world of "good news" and leaves it only with "bad news."
  - It leaves nonbelievers in their sins and keeps them away from redemption in Christ!
11. The 2<sup>nd</sup> incorrect use of the law naturally follows as well:
12. Incorrect use #2: For Christians to MAINTAIN their right standing with God
- The law is NOT for the justification of Christians
  - Justification is from Christ alone.
  - So lets talk about that a little more:
  - What about Christians? Not under the law any more?
    - NOW, no longer under this law – the law that shows the perfect moral **requirements for relationship** with a Holy God.
    - No, Thank GOD!, we are no longer under this law!
      - IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GOSPEL!
      - Romans 7:6 - <sup>6</sup> But now we [Christians] are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.
    - So.....Can do anything we want?
      - Technically, yes,
      - if you're really asking a more specific question: "Can I do whatever bad things I want and remain in secure right standing before God."
        - Yes you can. Technically.
        - Since your right standing IS NO LONGER gauged by your moral conduct.
    - But if you're really asking the specific question "Is the freely indulgent sinful life the new life God has for the Christian?"
      - Romans 6** <sup>1</sup>What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup>By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ... <sup>13</sup> Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. <sup>14</sup> For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.
      - Since we are now freed from the law of sin, we are not freed to anarchy, but freed and enabled to finally live the full and flourishing life God designed for humans.
      - And What specifically IS this full, flourishing life like?
  - God has already shown us --- In the law!
    - Objective standards that Promote human flourishing as only the Designer could do
  - Those paying attention, might be confused here
    - Wait a second, aren't you contradicting yourself? How can the believe be free from the law, yet still under it?
    - GOOD QUESTION!**
    - The law does NOT disappear from the life of the Believer
    - Instead it's how we USE that tool that changes.
    - And that change makes all the difference.
      - The tool mismatch!
        - The law is terrible at making us righteous
        - But it's great at showing us what is good and bad!
      - We're back to the central question: What's the RIGHT use of the law
13. So now we've come to our final incorrect use of the law:
14. Incorrect use #3: For Christians to grow spiritually
- To become more like Christ

- i. To Who I am and will fully be when all my sin nature is finally gone and I'm fully my sinless, redeemed self.
- ii. Mind renewed to right thinking
- iii. Body ready and able to live and act out of complete goodness.
- iv. AKA: To live my life as Jesus would live it, were he I
- b. So, again... Do we need to keep the law to GROW spiritually?
- c. This one is a little tricky, a little nuanced, as you may be seeing
- d. It really depends on your Motivation!
  - i. boils down to that same tool/use issue!
  - ii. For simplicity: Are you trying to grow out of a Law Motivation or a Grace Motivation?
  - iii. The law motivation says: "You must focus on God's Law & follow it by your own will-power in order to grow spiritually"
  - iv. The Grace motivation says "Since I'm ALREADY fully love and accepted by God by grace, I'm freed and MOTIVATED to try... to try, to live life as he designed it, for maximum human flourishing, mine and others!
  - v. **A Law motivation is an INCORRECT** use of God's Moral law.
    - 1. It turns the Christian life into moral self-effort (vs. depending on the Holy Spirit to transform and empower us).
    - 2. It promotes a grim moralism, or an external focus, or hiding sin-problems.
    - 3. No, as Paul tells a church struggling with this in Galatians 3:3 "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"
    - 4. And later on in Ch 5, if you're trying to keep the law to grow spiritually, CHRIST WILL BE OF NO VALUE TO YOU!
  - vi. **A Grace Motivation** is the CORRECT use of the law of "sound" hygienic, healthy doctrine.
    - 1. That which brings true health!
    - 2. Remember, God's law IS GOOD
    - 3. It's all about how we USE IT
    - 4. But when it is Used IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GOSPEL
      - a. Shows the path to true human flourishing
    - 5. Indeed, it is the believer who is most ABLE to live out the law
      - a. Not because they have to, but because they've been freed and empowered by the Holy Spirit to want and be able to
  - vii. Grace takes you further!
    - 1. Contrary to popular idea, Grace motivation actually takes you MUCH FARTHER in terms of spiritual growth and even behavior modification than does Law Motivation.
    - 2. Law motivation starts quicker, easier, but putters out quickly. Folks trying to get by with the minimum amount of effort to appease an angry God.
    - 3. Grace Motivation starts slower, less popular, but soon surpasses the lawkeeper in the marathon of a life of spiritual growth. The grace motivated actually WANT to grow, want to change. Want to follow God's revelation about what's good and right and true, and best for a fulfilling life. Willing to go MUCH farther.
      - a. God knows what he's talking about!

15. So, What do we do with this?

- a. Where do you see yourself misusing the law?
- b. What's a next step for you?
- c. For the non believer
  - i. The law was given for you!
    - 1. Not as a checklist for you to try to keep in order to earn God's acceptance, but rather as an xray to show you just how truly desperate your situation is.
  - ii. So, look at the law as your personal xray.
  - iii. What does it show you
  - iv. What do you need?
  - v. Jesus is the Great Physician, the only in-network referral. He alone can operate on your soul, your deep heart, and perform radical surgery on the cancer of sin that has metastasized all throughout your entire being.

- vi. So run to him, now! Tell him of your need, and ask for his life-saving care.
- vii. AND BE WILLING TO GO UNDER THE KNIFE. Doesn't always feel good. But it's only path to life.
- viii. Why not tell God right now? \_\_\_\_\_
- d. For the Christian
  - i. Quit trying to earn God's favor
    - 1. Desperation to PLEASE God
    - 2. This is utterly against sound doctrine and that which points to the glorious gospel
    - 3. The law was what convinced you to run to Christ!
    - 4. Look exclusively to Christ for your salvation and means of continuance in Grace. Him alone.
      - a. Then notice yourself STILL TRYING TO PLEASE GOD by trying to follow the law – INCORRECT USE OF THE LAW #1!
      - b. Stop Constantly evaluating your spiritual state in terms of your sin behaviors.
        - i. Either despair from sinning again
        - ii. Or pride at efforts to keep some parts of the law (for a little bit)
    - 5. **For me this takes the form of my innate drive to be right, and be seen as right**
      - a. I feel a need to come off as right about things.
      - b. To others.
      - c. And this points to me ultimately trying to be seen as right to God
        - i. Because what we try to get from others almost always shows us what we're trying to get from God.
      - d. But I need to stop trying to please people and God by being right – about whatever IT is in the moment
        - i. Because my righteousness is NO LONGER the foundation for my relationship to God (thank GOD!)
        - ii. So, I need to let HIM be right about things.
        - iii. Including who I am, and what he thinks about me – APART from my rightness!
  - ii. Quit living in Condemnation and Shame when you fail
    - 1. **For me: especially felt when I'm WRONG about something, especially that matters, especially that's public**
      - a. Shame and fear, hiding, easily follow
    - 2. Pay attention to your response to your failures.
      - a. Do you live in shame, begging God for forgiveness he's already patently given?
        - i. Or Do you run back to Christ and thank him that you're still safely and fully his beloved Child?
      - b. Do you punish yourself, sensing (at least half-rightly) that your sin requires some sort of penance?
        - i. This can be as obvious as self harm
        - ii. Or as subtle as shrinking away from God
          - 1. Sensing that it's appropriate for you to feel distant from God for a while after your sin
          - 2. Wouldn't want to offend God by too quickly engaging with him after you did bad.
        - iii. Or do you consciously choose to remember that your sin HAS been paid for, already, by Christ, on the Cross.
    - 3. Do you feel condemned when you fail? Or do you feel conviction?
      - a. A brief word about Condemnation and Conviction:
      - b. Condemnation is for those UNDER the law, for sinners
        - i. Condemnation says "you did bad, so you ARE bad"
        - ii. For the sinner, this is from God!
        - iii. But for the Believer, Condemnation is from the Devil
          - 1. Rom 8:1 -- There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

- c. Conviction is for the believer, for the child of God, the one indwelt with the HS
  - i. Conviction (at least how we're using the term) is from God's Spirit
  - ii. It says "you did wrong, you are still forgiven, so repent and live in line with the law of LOVE which brings life"
    - 1. This is loving discipline, who's aim is to help grow the child of God into a mature, flourishing person
  - iii. Draws you to come closer to God and agree with him – repentance
- d. For me, this means, when I fail, when I get something wrong, and others see it, I have to do the work to DISCERN what voices I hear in my head
  - i. When I hear "You've been found out – you're a hypocrite, a loser, no one is going to like you now, no one will want to follow you now" – I can label that SATAN's voice, and COUNTER IT with truth,
  - ii. Often there's no sin, so I must simply fight that lie with the truth that I'm forgiven, and that God loves me NO MATTER HOW right I am ab. things.
  - iii. Or, when I have sinned, I need to agree with the CONVICTION of the Holy Spirit that what I did was wrong, embrace the forgiveness I STILL HAVE in Christ, and to turn and live differently. Ask human forgiveness when needed.
- iii. Sit and simmer in God's secure and unconditional love for you
  - 1. Might be the most spiritual thing you've ever done – (well, since embracing Christ).
  - 2. It's been God's plan ALL ALONG to bring you to good things. Places of profound safety and rest.
    - a. PSALM 23 – FULFILLED in the Gospel!
    - b. Oh what profound rest is available to those who are safely In Christ!
  - 3. This one ties closely in with the previous one.
    - a. It's a choice to believe what God says about this is true
    - b. I have to choose this perspective CONSTANTLY – especially when I fail
- iv. Live and love in freedom
  - 1. Someone who truly understands their secure standing and unconditional love from God, they don't tend to use it as a license to sin more,
  - 2. They overflow with peace and Joy, and live even more fully in loving obedience to God
  - 3. This is where the Good Works really start to get rocking.
    - a. Living in full Grace motivates your socks off
    - b. The more I reflect and revel in this truth, the more I find MOTIVATION and power to try to DO good!
  - 4. THE GOOD LIFE! – that the Law has been describing all along.

16. In summary, the Law is Good, as long as one uses it lawfully!

- a. For those who have nonChristians, the law is correctly used to show them their sin and drive them to Christ
- b. For the Christian, the law provides moral instruction for us to strive for, no longer trying to earn God's acceptance, but out of gratitude for already having it and out of redeemed desire for the Good Life!

17. Rec Resources:

- a. NT books of Romans and Galatians are goldmines!
- b. Walking in Victory – Dennis McCallum

18. Testimonies

- a. how have you seen this play out, for good or bad, in your life?

Q&A

- b. What might it be like to REALLY live this way in your life? What might be different?