

Paul's Epistles to Individuals

Lesson 3 – 1 Timothy 1:8-20

I. The Purpose of Law (vs. 8-11)

In the previous verses, Paul by inspiration convicted those who were clinging to the Law of Moses and attempting to pervert the gospel by binding its conventions on Christians. Here he stipulates that he is not preaching against “law” as a matter of course and not against the Old Law specifically. He is teaching the truth in regard to the role of the Old Law in Christianity.

A. *The Law is Good if Used Lawfully (v. 8)*

The Jews had charged Jesus with blasphemy (**Matt. 26:57-68**), including seeking false witnesses to testify against Him. They had consistently accused faithful gospel preachers of speaking against the law and had also induced false witnesses against them (**Acts 6:8-15**). It was for this reason that Stephen was stoned and ironically, Paul was present and in agreement (**Acts 8:1**). Jesus' disciples were accused of violating Jewish traditions by the Scribes and Pharisees (**Matt. 15:1-2**) and Paul was accused of all sorts of insurrections (**Acts 24**). Paul clearly stated that he did not teach against the Mosaic Law (**Acts 24:13-14**) but he does teach the truth regarding the Old Law's place (**Rom: 10:4, Gal. 3:24-26, Gal. 4:1-7**). Those who did not accurately understand or teach this reality were not using the law (Moses' Law) in a lawful way.

B. *The Law is Not for the Righteous (v. 9)*

Continuing the thought from the previous verse, the contrast is further explained. The righteous man is one made righteous by faith in Christ and therefore does not require the earthy ordinances of the Old Law (**Gal. 5:18**). In the past, those who were subject to the Mosaic Law were judged by it (**Rom. 2:12**) but the Gentiles, who were not subject to that Law, still were to do those things pleasing to God by virtue of having the “work of the law written on their hearts” (**Rom. 2:15**). The false teachers' clinging to the Old Law was at odds with its purpose and the principle that God does not show partiality (**Rom. 2:11, Acts 10:34**).

C. *Law Convicts the Sinful (vs. 9-11)*

The phrase, “...having known this” (**v. 9**), shows the subsequent phrases to be based on the previous ones. The Mosaic Law as discussed here, has commonality with the New Law, the “perfect law of liberty” (**James 1:25**) in that one who was only a “hearer” of the Law and failed to do it (**Rom. 2:13**) was judged by it (**Rom. 2:12**), so the people of God will be judged by the law of liberty (**James 2:12**) if they are merely “hearers” of it rather than “doers” (**James. 1:22-25**). All of those listed here in **1 Tim. 1:9-10**, are doing things “*contrary to the sound doctrine; according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust*” (**1 Tim. 1:10-11**). Therefore, the Old Law, made for the Jew, defined righteousness and convicted the sinner through a system of physical ordinances while the New Law defines righteousness and convicts sinners by defining faith and obedience, regardless of their physical lineage (**Rom. 2:28-29**). So, Paul is indicating that “law” defines and shows men as being righteous or unrighteous. He identifies the “sound doctrine” of “the gospel” as the measure, not the ordinances of the Mosaic Law. It is important to understand that the list of behaviors provided here is, among other things, “contrary to sound teaching” (**v.10**). This is the “teaching”, sometimes called “traditions” or “doctrines” that should be held fast and obeyed (**1 Cor. 11:2, 2 Thes. 2:15, 1 Tim. 4:6, 16**) rather than the dangerous false doctrines which should be avoided (**Rom. 16:17, Eph. 4:14**).

II. Paul's Thankfulness for Christ (vs. 12-17)

In **verse 11**, it is clear that Paul has been "entrusted" with the gospel. Notice in **verse 12**, the order of events. Paul was 1) considered faithful, 2) put into service, 3) strengthened, and 4) thankful.

A. *Paul Was Willing (v. 12)*

Paul was not forcibly drafted into service by God but he was confronted with the truth, obeyed and was baptized (**Acts 9, Acts 22**). Paul was faithful (obedient) before he was put into service. He was strengthened along the way (**Phil. 4:13**) and thankful (**1 Thes. 5:18**).

B. *Paul Was Undeserving (vs. 13, 16)*

In spite of his history of blasphemy, persecution and violent aggression (**v. 13**), the foremost of sinners (**v. 15**), Paul was still extended mercy. This mercy was for a purpose not only beneficial to Paul. "...in order that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience, as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life" (**v. 16**). Paul was an imperfect vessel to accomplish God's perfect work, preaching that Jesus came into the world to save sinners (**v. 15**).

C. *Paul Was Thankful and Praising of God (vs. 12, 17)*

Paul had no easy life as an apostle and preacher of truth. He however knew the source of his strength (**Phil. 4:13**) and was thankful to Christ (**v. 12**), praising God eternally (**v. 17**).

III. Charge to Timothy (vs. 18-20)

Paul commanded and charged Timothy as he began in verses 3-4. He is instructed to 1) fight the good fight, 2) keep the faith, and 3) a good conscience.

A. *According to the Prophecies (v. 18)*

Timothy had received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the apostles' hands (**1 Tim. 4:14**) as described in the story of Simon the sorcerer (**Acts 8:14-24**). As a part of this event, there was apparently prophetic statements made regarding Timothy's actions and Paul reminds Timothy to stay true to those things.

B. *Some Fall Away (vs. 19-20)*

It is evident that the risk of losing faith was real. Although little is known of Hymenaeus and Alexander, what is known is that they once were faithful and had shipwrecked their faith, likely either by teaching or subscribing to the Judaizers. Paul said he had "*delivered them to Satan*" (**v. 20**). This language is also used regarding the immoral man in Corinth (**1 Cor. 5:5-6**). Hymenaeus and Alexander were "*delivered to Satan*" so that "*they may be taught not to blaspheme*" (**v. 20**).

The Bible shows us several reasons for such discipline, including:

- 1) A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump (**1 Cor. 5:6-7**),
- 2) that he may be ashamed (**2 Thes. 3:14**),
- 3) to cause Godly sorrow unto repentance (**2 Cor. 7:9-10**),
- 4) that others may fear (**1 Tim. 5:19, Acts 5:5,11**)
- 5) to avoid being a partaker in his evil deeds (**2 John 1:10-11**), and
- 6) to watch for the souls of those who remain in the flock (**Heb. 13:17, Acts 20:28-29**).