

**1st Timothy 1: 5-11; “Using the Law Lawfully”, Sermon # 3 in the series –
“Honoring God in the Church”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on
February 16th, 2014, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

The last time that I spoke to you I began to show you that we as a local church must be good stewards of God's truth. It is a good and accurate administration of God's truth, in the context of the local church, that establishes edification and every good thing in the growth of Christ's Church. Each of us has a responsibility (especially the pastor) of guarding against false doctrine and strange doctrine. Each of us has the responsibility of thinking upon, and spreading to others, the truths that will really build and grow the church; especially the pastor. Each of us should teach and spread God's truth with right motives. And right motives can only come from a pure heart. For out of a pure heart comes love, which is the end, or the purpose of all good commands and charges. Without love we are nothing as believers. Out of the motions of a heart purified by grace, proceeds the maintaining of a good conscience and a sincere faith. How can we truly love one another if our conscience is always troubling us, or if our faith is hypocritical and insincere? No, love is a confident and a sure grace, which flows from a heart purified by faith in Jesus Christ. Love will be the way that God's commands can be kept to His glory. Psalm 119, verses 97 and 98 say this: “Oh how I love Thy law, O Lord; it is my meditation all the day. Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than my enemies for they are ever with me.” The law of God defines for us what obedience to God is. The law is good if one uses it lawfully our text says. Grace will permit us to keep God's commandments and so we want to come this afternoon to see and to understand how the law of God relates to all men. Here in these verses the apostle Paul has given us 3 categories of people who need to understand how the law relates to them. The 1st Category is the righteous person. The 2nd Category is the lawless person. And the 3rd Category is those who would preach and share the gospel. May the Lord enable us through this study to better understand the difference between law and grace; but also to see how they complement each other in God's plan for us becoming holy men and women of God.

1st of all – Let us think together of how the law relates to the righteous person.

Verse 9 – “Knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous man.” A righteous person is one who has been justified freely by God's grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. A righteous person is also one in whom: ‘A principle of divine grace is implanted in the heart of Christian, and from the knowledge and love of God, he chooses the things that are pleasing to God, and is ardent and active to do His will.’ “The righteous person has been forgiven of his sins and they have been declared righteous by faith in Jesus Christ.” (End of Quote - Matthew Poole) Let us remember that the righteous man has been regenerated, and the love of God has been shed abroad in His heart by the Holy Spirit. A person's receiving this gift of the New Heart did not take place by the works of the law, or by any strength in themselves to keep the law. As John Gill says in his commentary on this verse – “The words *δικαιω νομος ου κειται*, may be rendered, “the law does not lie upon a righteous man”, or against him.” “It does not lie as a weight or burden on him; its precept does not lie on him, as a task to be performed; nor does its penalty, the curse, lie on him as a punishment to be bore by him: it does not lie upon him, nor against him, as an accusing law, its mouth is stopped by the righteousness of Christ, by which he is denominated a righteous man; nor as a terrifying law, and bringing into bondage by its threats and menaces; nor as a rigorous law, obliging to obedience in a forcible and compulsive way; seeing there is no need of it, the righteous man delights in it, and cheerfully serves it, and the love of Christ constrains him to obey it freely.” “And much less does it lie on him, or against him as a cursing or condemning law, since Christ has redeemed him from the curse of it.” (End of Quote) What Gill is saying here, goes hand in hand with 1st John 5, verse 3- “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” “And His commandments are not burdensome.”

Let me ask you whether you understand that the law is not for a righteous person? This means that God did give it either to justify you or to give you spiritual life? The law of God does have application to all people in that He gave it to show all men his righteous requirements. This is what He expected of His special people Israel in the Old Testament times. But it is also what He expects of all people in their natural state; in the state in which He created them. God created Adam in the beginning with a heart, upon which, God had written His commandments. But in the Fall of mankind at the beginning of the world, Adam brought sin into his very being, into his very nature, and because of this, the ability to perfectly keep God's law and to do what God expects was destroyed. Therefore each of us, as we are when we are born are constituted sinners, and we have no spiritual life in ourselves. This does not mean that God loses his right to command you, to expect that you would keep His law. But God knew that you, and all mankind, would not be able to do it with a sinful nature misdirecting you away from God's holy and good law. And He knew that you would at many points either not be able to keep his law, or not want to keep His law, and therefore He sent Jesus to be your Savior. He who believes in Jesus is not condemned. He who does not believe in Jesus is already condemned, because he cannot keep God's law perfectly. But with Christ's grace, all of your sins are forgiven, and God now sees you in Christ who is perfect, and has perfectly kept God's law on your behalf. When you believe in Jesus, your faith in Him is counted for righteousness, and you are given spiritual life to love and go about to keep all of God's commandments. The requirement of what God expects has not changed, but the way that it is fulfilled in you is changed. You were made to die to the law through the body of Christ, and now you are not only not condemned, but you now have the life and strength to attempt to do God's will at every point in your life. This is true freedom. This is the law of liberty; having faith in Jesus Christ.

If you have come to see this, as a Christian, you have rightly understood the difference between law and grace, and it will keep you from great discouragement as you go about to live your Christian life. Dear Christian, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Therefore rejoice. You are not under the condemning power of the law, as you are if you are outside of Christ. This is very freeing. It does not mean that you continue in sin that grace might abound. God forbid that this should be so. But it means that you have Christ's grace and righteousness covering you at every point, during every moment of every day. And you have His Holy Spirit working in your heart to change and transform you to become more like Christ, every day. Turn with me over to Galatians Chapter 3, verse 8. "And the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed.'" "So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham." "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.'" "But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for the just shall live by faith." "Yet the law is not of faith, but the man who does them shall live by them." "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

Now I hope that you can see from these verses that God's plan even from the beginning of the outworking of the plan of redemption, was that He would justify the Gentiles by the works of the law, but by faith. It is interesting wording here: "The Scripture foreseeing" what God would do; that is, that He would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand. This Old Testament gospel was that "in Abraham all the nations would be blessed". This was what Abraham believed even though he could not understand how God would bring it about. He was being taught on the most basic level that salvation is of the Lord, not of man. His wife Sarai was barren, but God would give them Isaac. And you and I must be taught this blessed truth as well, so

that we are blessed with believing Abraham. Salvation is based upon a promise, not by our attempts to keep God's law.

What a terrible thing it is to be under the law. To be under the law is to be under the curse of God. You are under a curse because you do not continue in all things which are written in it, to do it. If you were able to keep God's law perfectly, you would obtain eternal life. But if there is one thing that you do or you don't do to keep it, it is all over for you. No eternal life. A righteous person not only cannot be justified by trying to keep the works of the law, and cannot receive spiritual life by trying to keep the law, but they cannot serve God rightly unless they have the Holy Spirit working in their mind and heart. No, Christ must redeem you from the curse of the law so that you might receive the promise of the Spirit's working in your heart through faith. This is how tremendously important faith is; faith in Christ not only saves you from your sins and justifies you in the sight of God, but faith builds and confirms and establishes the good work of the Spirit in your heart. And it leads to a sincere repentance of sin where that is needed, and a more complete obedience to God's commandments where that is being pursued. Certainly God is sovereign in His working in this regard, but how often it was that the Lord Jesus had to remind His disciples of their need to exercise faith. How often do we, His own disciples, fall into thinking that we have to attempt to keep the law after we are saved, in order to stay saved, or in order to keep receiving God's blessings; as though we could fall away from grace. This kind of thinking does not truly honor God because it does not believe or honor God's faithfulness in terms of what He has promised to do for us who are trusting in Christ alone for our salvation. It is a denial of the finished work of Christ on your behalf, dear Christian. It is also a denial of God's stated promise that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Christ. Once you have received the Holy Spirit, you will never lose Him. He is there to dwell with you forever. John 14: 6 – "If you love Me, keep My commandments." "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you." So you see, once you are sealed with the Holy Spirit, having believed in the gospel of Christ, you receive the Holy Spirit to abide with you forever. You will no doubt fail Jesus at many points, but Jesus never fails. You may lose the sense of God's presence because you have failed at some points to keep God's commandments. But that does not mean that you have fallen away from grace. For, even when you are faithless, He is faithful, it says in 2 Timothy 2: 13, "for He cannot deny Himself". He cannot deny, nor will ever deny, His finished work at the cross, and His ongoing work in His application that work to your soul in sanctification, to make you holy, once you have believed. You see, justification is not sanctification, but the two are linked. They should not be confused or mixed in terms of how we come to have eternal life. We have eternal life only by faith in Christ's finished work. But justification is the perfect covering of Christ's righteousness; the umbrella of His righteousness under which God's Holy Spirit works to bring us to greater measures of faith and obedience leading us on to holiness. Trust and obey, for there's no other way, to be happy in Jesus, than to trust and obey.

Now 2ndly – Let's think together of how the law relates to the lawless person.

Verse 9 – "Knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers, of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine." The law was made for the lawless. It was made for those who do not know what God requires or do not understand the definition of sin. The teachers of strange doctrine at Ephesus were not handling the law lawfully. It was not given so that men could boast in having it, or hearing it read, for "it is not the hearers of the law who are justified, but the doers of the law who are justified." God's law shows all men what God expects of them, but if you are to be justified in the sight of God, you must do what God expects. It is when a person knows what God expects and sees that they are falling

short of doing it, or realizing that you are breaking His commandment by doing what God forbids, this brings conviction of sin. This is one of main purposes that God gave His law, was for the lawless, those who don't know what God expects and what God commands. The law convinces men that they are guilty before God. Romans 3: 19 – “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.” When this happens, when the law is preached and understood, all self-justification ceases and all people in every place become convinced that they are guilty before God.” The law begins at the beginning and starts with the crudest of sins and ends with fulfilling its purpose even in the life of the believer. Our text gives us 6 kinds of sinful people in 3 pairs who sin by breaking the 1st table of the law; and then follows 8 descriptions of sinful people who are breaking the 2nd table of the law. Under the 1st table we find mentioned the lawless, the insubordinate, the ungodly, sinners, unholy, and the profane. A lawless person lives as though God does not expect anything of him. An insubordinate person refuses to do what God commands. An ungodly person is content to live without God in all their thoughts. Sinners are those who cultivate the thoughts and passions of the sinful nature so that it is notoriously bad. “The men of Sodom were wicked and sinners against the Lord.” (Genesis 13: 13) The profane are those who consider holy and sacred things common, and treat them irreverently or with disdain. Under the 2nd table sins we find those who strike or murder their parents, those who are involved in sexual gratification outside of marriage, kidnappers, and perjurers (that is those who would lie when they are under an oath). The purpose of identifying all of these categories of sin is in order that not only the worst of sinners would be convicted of their sins, but also that “the best”, most moral of sinners, would be convicted of their sins. The “best of sinners” are those who are the subtle, the skillful, and the most secret, in their sins. Having said this I now need to turn your attention to the **3rd Category of people who need to know how the law relates to them – Those who preach and share the gospel.**

Many people in Paul's day desired to be law teachers. They did not understand what they were saying, nor the things which they affirmed. And so, in closing, let me give you several guidelines for using the law in preaching and sharing the gospel. 1st – Although God's law is holy, righteous, and good, we must remember that it is not designed to save sinners. We must never preach and share men's obligation to keep God's law as the gospel. It will produce moralists or legalists, but not Christians. It will make men proud Pharisees, but not humble Christians. Parents, it is particularly important that you stress with your children that just learning what is right and wrong, and their being a compliant child, is not enough to save them or to enable them to do what is right from the right motives. A child may be very proud of their knowing what is right and looking down on others who are not doing what is right; seeing themselves as superior, when all the while there is great pride ruling in their heart. The elder brother in Luke 15 is a good example of this. He always kept his father's commandments as yet did not see his need to be saved from his more secret sins. 2nd – We must remember in our preaching and sharing to define sin and pray that God will convince and convict both the worst and the most moral of sinners. Many people in our day are gross sinners who have never been plainly told that they are under God's wrath and anger, because of these things. The law prepares the way for the gospel. And finally – We must remember to highly esteem God's law because Christ did. He magnified it, it says in Isaiah 44: 21, and made it glorious because of His obedience. “The Lord was well-pleased for His righteousness sake to magnify the law and make it glorious.” To us it now becomes the perfect law of liberty because we who trust in Christ are walking in love to Him who kept all the commands of God perfectly. We serve in newness of the Spirit rather than in the oldness of the letter. We are going past and going beyond the sign-posts of obedience which are given to us in the 10 commandments, to the obedience of the heart. We are learning to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and learning to love our neighbor as ourselves, because of the grace which Christ supplies.