

The Lawful Use of the Law (1 Tim. 1:8)

Intro: Paul in his first letter to Timothy addressed the problem of some teachers in Ephesus who “*wanted to be teachers of the Law*” but who used it improperly as do many teachers in the religious world today. It prompted him to make this comment on 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. (1 Tim. 1:8-11)

By “the Law” Paul appears to be speaking of the Laws of Moses which we have been reading together this week. Paul clearly states that there is a right way and a wrong way to use that Law. The proper way to use the Law is to do so “*according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God*”. But what does the gospel tell us about the proper and the improper use of the Law? The gospel teaches us that...

The Law may be used to establish the sinfulness of mankind and his condemnation by God.

Throughout Paul’s writings we can see his acknowledgment of the Law (because it includes a written statement of the everlasting covenant or moral law) as a standard of judgment for the alien sinner. In Romans Paul sets forth the message of the gospel and gives us an illustrated explanation of this function of the Law.

In Romans 2:1-3:20 Paul sets forth the Law’s demand upon the Jew and the implied obligation of the Gentile for righteousness, showing that neither Jew nor Gentile lived up to the standards taught in the Law, and thus both came under the condemnation of the Law.

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. (Rom. 3:19-20)

In Rom. 3:21-31 he shows that the gospel was revealed “*apart from the Law*” and is a remedy for the sin that occurs “*under the Law*”.

Thus, it may be said that the gospel does not “*nullify the Law*” but instead “*establishes the Law*”.

In Roman 4:15 he shows that “*the Law brings about wrath*”.

In chapter 5 Paul shows that the Law continued the work of the “*patriarchal law*” in defining man’s moral obligation and condemning the transgressor. Thus, in Romans 5:20 he shows that the Law came in that “*the transgression might increase*”.

Therefore wherever the Law is read it sounds forth the sinfulness and condemnation of mankind.

Thus, we properly use the Law when we use it to establish the sinfulness of mankind and his condemnation by God.

The Law may be used to make men wise unto the salvation that is in Christ.

You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim. 3:14-15)

How does the Law give one the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith?

The Law reveals man's need of a Savior.

Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. (Gal. 3:21-24)

The Law pre-announced in prophecy the identifying features of the Christ and His kingdom.

Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." (Luke 24:44)

Since the Law was designed to make men aware of sin and lead them to faith in Christ, it follows that...

The Law may not be used as the grounds of righteousness for the believer.

Paul shows that the man who confronts the Law will realize that he is a sinner and that God has provided a Redeemer in Christ. Thus, he will come to faith in Him and be released from the Law as a basis for righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Rom. 10:4)

When a person comes to Christ in baptism he is "released from the Law" and "joined to Christ" as His head, being guided by the teaching of the Holy Spirit as given through the apostles of Christ.

Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God. For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter. (Rom. 7:4-6)

This of course is the answer to those who insist that the Christian must keep the Law and in particular the 4th commandment, “Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy”. Christians serve in the newness of the Spirit’s NT revelation and not in the oldness of the letter (OT law). This is the answer to those who insist that the Christian must worship in the forms of the OT Law like “burning incense, lighting candles, or instrumental music”.

When the Law is being used as a standard for the Christian’s righteousness, it is an improper use of the Law.

However, the Law may be used to instruct God’s people in the unchangeable principles of righteous.

We may properly use the Law to define the nature of God’s created institutions.

Earlier in the year we spoke about how the apostles went “Back to Genesis” for instruction on our created purpose, the relationship of man and woman, the function of civil government.

For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. (Eph. 5:31)

We may properly use the Law to define the nature of God’s commanded morality.

Jesus and his apostles appealed to the two great commandments of the Law as the basis of the Christian’s life.

And He said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets. (Mt. 22:37-40)

In Mk. 7:20-23, Jesus spoke of things that defile the man (such as fornication); but we are dependent upon the Law to define what constitutes fornication (Cf. Lev. 18:1-30).

We may properly use the Law to define the nature of God’s government of people.

Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. (1 Corinthians 10:11)

For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (Romans 15:4)

Conclusion: As we read the Law together, we are doing what is in harmony with the gospel’s teaching. The gospel teaches us to be good students of the OT Law. However it is important to “use it lawfully” (1 Tim. 1:8).

When we are confronted with the Law of God we are able to see that we are condemned as transgressors; but through Christ God has provided a way of

salvation by grace. You can live “under grace” if you will “baptized into His death and be raised to walk in newness of life”.