

## Warning

Our passage this morning is a challenging passage for me. I have a tendency to be detail oriented and this is not a theology class. I also can lean toward a legalistic attitude at times because of my background of being raised in cults. The Bible is precious to me, all of it, Genesis to Revelations. I get frustrated with people who decide they know more than God and write books as if they are from God but in truth their writings are from the hearts of prideful men seeking something other than God's glory and what He desires for His people. This includes Mohammad the founder of Islam, Joseph Smith's Book of Mormon, Charles Russell's rewrite of the Bible, the Metropolitan Church where there is no sin and many others among churches. **Perversion of truth is what Paul fought against, wrote against and counseled Timothy and Titus and many others to stand firm against. He also instructed them to do so with the love of Christ.** This is my goal this morning to stand firm for God's truth, but to do so in the love of Christ. Being careful to understand love of truth alone can lead to an attitude of legalism and love for people before love of God can lead to a broad application that stretches the boundaries in order to make people feel they are loved and accepted even though their lives are lived steeped in sin and rebellion against God. You will be able to determine how well the truth is preached this morning in God's love, defined by His Word, when I am done.

Paul is preoccupied in this first chapter of his letter to Timothy with maintaining the truth of the gospel and teaching sound doctrine. His approach has two fronts: first,

to teach sound doctrine and second, to refute false teachings that lead to false doctrine. Our task as Christians and as a Church of our Lord Jesus Christ is exactly the same today as when Paul wrote this letter. Mankind is the same today as when Adam fell and Moses wrote the Ten Commandments and when Paul wrote this letter and today as we live in a society that has lost its moral compass and yet wants to find spiritually in everything but the true God. I would even argue for some who claim they do not believe in God, they in truth do, but do not want to be held accountable by Him. They want to live in their sin and not be made to feel bad by their sin. By living a life based on the lie of sin they serve the father of lies whose desire is to rob God His glory by damaging people through sin. This places them in a position of no hope of having a relationship with God because they do not worship Christ. For those who like the idea of a god, they do not want to come to God, but instead they expect God to come to them and be what they want.

Most societies, especially those in what are considered to be developed countries, have moved gradually to a more pluralistic concept toward religion. Christianity influenced both their laws and moral ethics, but today the influence of the Church has waned and it has been replaced with political correctness. We have the freedom to do as we please with only a few exceptions; do not hurt a child or animal and do not steal money unless you are a politician. **Relative truth is the mark of our postmodern society. The most prized virtue of our society has become tolerance.** It embraces tolerance except for those who believe there is absolute and eternal truth, for these society has little to no tolerance. You and I are called by Christ to be truth bearers. Because we love Christ and the truth of God, the world feels threaten by us and responds as Christ said it would when He walked among men. The world has continued to react just as Jesus said it would throughout the “church age” to this

very day. Jesus said, <sup>18</sup> “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you... <sup>21</sup> But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. <sup>22</sup> If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. <sup>23</sup> Whoever hates me hates my Father also.” (John 15:18-19, 21-23) Christ taught the truth in love and did not hate those who hated Him, but held to the truth. We are called to do the same.

### **Warning - False Teachers**

Let me read Paul’s instruction to Timothy found in verses 3 to 7. “As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, <sup>4</sup> nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. <sup>5</sup> The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. <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.” Some of what we read here is clear, but some we need to delve into a little deeper to gain a more complete picture of what Paul is saying.

Paul urges Timothy to stay in Ephesus in order to stop false teaching. Paul calls their teaching “different doctrine”. This was not just an Ephesian problem for Paul wrote to the Galatians, “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a **different gospel**— <sup>7</sup> not that there is

another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.” (Galatians 1:6-7) Paul went on to say that the teachers of this **different gospel** were accursed, meaning they are condemned to hell. Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth, “I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. <sup>4</sup>For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a **different spirit** from the one you received, or if you accept a **different gospel from the one you accepted**” you will be led astray from the true Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:3-4) Within a few years of the founding of the Church people began teaching new concepts that were not consistent with true doctrine and today this problem persists. The structure of Paul’s writing here indicates that the true doctrine already exists and it is by the true gospel of Christ that one can judge if what is being taught is true or false or different. What is the purpose behind those who teach a false or different doctrine? Paul reveals this a little later in his letter, chapter six beginning in verse 3 reads, **“If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, <sup>4</sup> he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.** He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, <sup>5</sup> and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.” (1 Timothy 6:3-5) So, Paul devotes the majority of this first chapter to dealing with the problem of false teachers and the need to hold true to the teachings of Christ. As Christians we do not live under the condemnation of the law but the grace of God.

## Warning - False Teachers and the Law

Luke recorded in the Book of Acts about five years before this letter Paul's warning, Paul said, "I know that after my departure *(from Ephesus)* fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup> and from among your own selves will arise men **speaking twisted things**, to draw away the disciples after them." (Acts 20:29-30)

Paul's warning had come true, so he sends Timothy to Ephesus. Paul writes in verse 7 that these men "desire to be teachers of the law." This could be in a positive or negative statement. There is great need for men to teach God's moral law found in the Ten Commandments and Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. It is by the teaching of God's law that we become conscience of our sin and our desperate need for a Savior. Once we come to Christ and experience His love, we learn how one can love their neighbor. We know that the law is good when it is applied properly. The law defines what is right from wrong, what is legitimate and illegitimate. Here in Paul's letter "teachers of the law" is a negative statement. Lets look at the wrong use of the law.

## Warning - Wrong Use of the Law

Paul has charged Timothy to stop the false teachers from teaching a "different gospel." Timothy is to stop the false teachers, verse 4 says, from devoting themselves "to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith." These men were using Jewish myths to develop doctrine that lead people away from Christ. This is exactly what Mohammad did when he used false Jewish myths to write stories in the Quran. Here in Ephesus because of the efforts of Paul, Timothy and others these false teachers failed. However, Mohammad was much more successful in taking people

away from worshipping the true God evidenced by the size of Islam. Refuting false doctrine when it begins is critical. These men teaching a **different doctrine** in Ephesus wanted people to believe that they had salvation by inheritance. John the Baptist addressed this very point, “**Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.**” (Matthew 3:9) John is making the point it is about approaching God with a repentant heart, believing in the coming Messiah and does not have anything to do with being a descendant of Abraham. Genealogies had been kept up to the birth of Christ to prove the prophecies of the Old Testament that said the Messiah would come from the lineage of King David. Now that Christ had come genealogies are no longer important. There is nothing wrong with knowing one’s genealogy, but it has nothing to do with knowing Christ. Jesus answered the Jews who thought they were saved because of Abraham saying, “**If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing the works Abraham did,<sup>40</sup> but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did.**” (John 8:39-40) Writing myths to show favor from God and to show how special the prophet and his followers are is what men do to turn people from the true God. The most obvious examples would be Islam and Mormonism.

These men, who Paul wanted Timothy to stop from teaching a **different doctrine**, were not the Judaizers he wrote of in Galatians. Those men taught salvation by law-obedience and works. The goal of these false teachers here in 1 Timothy is to take peoples focus off of Christ and place it on myths, genealogies and so that they would have their own following. **False teaching has two consequences. First, false teaching obstructs faith and love of Christ. Second, false teaching promotes**

controversies through myths and genealogies. In verses 4 and 5 Paul states their purpose is, “an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, <sup>5</sup> and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.” A true teacher reveals God’s plan for salvation and is a steward of God’s Word. A true teacher knows the power is in God’s Word, not himself, and revelation and faith are gifts of God. The end-all of Christian teaching is love; because of God’s love for His children He sent His only Son, Jesus, to pay the ultimate sacrifice of love for our salvation so that we would love Christ and through Christ have a loving relationship with God the Father and by this learn how to love our fellow man.

The decisive criteria to determine if a teaching is true, is to determine if it promotes the glory of God and if it benefits His church. The teaching and doctrine of false teachers may appear to do one of these, but in truth it does neither. False teaching promotes speculation and controversy and it focused on the individual.

### **Right Use of the Law**

Let me now shift our focus from the wrong use of the law to the right use. In contrast to the false teachers ignorance as seen in verse 7, “desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions” Paul sets forth his knowledge. Reading beginning in verse 8, “Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, <sup>9</sup> understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless.” From this we understand that the lawful use of the law is for the lawless. All law is designed for those whose natural tendency is to not keep the law but to break it.

The law targets not the saint but the sinner. John Calvin wrote that there were three reasons for the law. First, the law has a punitive purpose to punish the violator. It exposes the offender before their peers for who he really is. The sinner's only hope is to repent and lay at the mercy of God for they are indeed guilty. Second, the law restrains evildoers. Evildoers neither want to be exposed before their fellow man nor do they want to experience the punishment society inflicts on a lawbreaker. The law is a deterrent and protects society, even though the heart of the lawbreaker may remain unchanged. The third reason Calvin thought was the principle and proper purpose of the law. Calvin wrote, "The law is the best instrument both to teach us the Lord's will and to exhort us to do it. For by frequent meditation upon it believers will be aroused to obedience, be strengthened in it, and be drawn back from the slippery path of transgression." Calvin's point is the three functions of the law are punitive in order to condemn the sinner and drive them to Christ. Once the law has exposed sin and condemns the lawless, God breaks their heart so they are driven to Christ for forgiveness and once they come to Christ they desire to be law-abiding before God.

The fact that laws are for the lawless applies to all laws. We have speed limits to limit the reckless drivers from hurting others. Have you ever broken a speed limit after you were saved? Then you are a lawbreaker, but your hope is in Christ. I must confess speeding is a transgression I repent of on a regular basis. Praise God that He sees me through Christ for I am convicted by my weakness and sin. We have fences to prevent people from trespassing. This makes for good neighbors who respect each other's property and privacy. **If people could be trusted to respect one another's rights, there would no need for laws to safeguard them.**

The same is true of God's law. God's law outlines what is prohibited and outside of the boundary of right behavior and levies sanctions against the lawless. Paul illustrates what lawlessness is with eleven examples of law breaking. Lets begin by looking at the first six words Paul uses: Lawless, Disobedient, Ungodly, Sinners, Unholy and Profane. **Lawless** or lawbreakers are those living without regard for the law. This can refer to the fourth commandment, **“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”** (Exodus 20:8) Lawless people live without regard for God's laws, of which the Sabbath is one. **Disobedient** people are those who are rebellious by their nature. These break the third commandment, **“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.”** (Exodus 20:7) Their god may be money or job or fame. **The ungodly** are those who live without regard for God and His teachings. They break the first commandment, **“You shall have no other gods before me.”** (Exodus 20:3) People are to live worshipping God only. **Sinners** are those living outside of God's covenant of grace and whose sins are not forgiven. Their behavior alludes to the second commandment of idolatry. **The unholy** are those that live apart from God and their godless lifestyles damage them by living outside of God's protection and the **profane** are those whose lives are not only focused on the secular instead of the godly, but they also blaspheme the true God. This describes the lives of unbelievers and this describes my life before God saved me. We should not expect unbelievers to behave like believers and when they offend God it should not surprise us. Paul's words describe those who are living for themselves without regard for God and often without regard for their fellow man, which is much of our society today.

The next five examples relate to commandments 5 to 9 of the Ten Commandments. **“Those who strike their fathers and mothers”** violates the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment to

honor your parents. **Murderers** break the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment, taking another's life without just cause. **"The sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality"** breaks the 7<sup>th</sup> commandment. Sexual relationships are to be between a husband and wife. Adultery, fornication and homosexuality are practices that damage all those involved and often those in their lives that are not directly involved. **Enslavers** are worst of thieves. They steal people violating the 8<sup>th</sup> commandment. **Liars** and **perjurers** violate the 9<sup>th</sup> by bearing false witness.

The tenth commandment of covetousness is not included in the practices Paul lists, maybe because it is a sin of the mind instead of action. But in order to make his list comprehensive and not leaving a loophole Paul ends in verse 10 with and **"whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine."** This is nothing less than the entire breath of scripture as Paul says in verse 11, **"in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted."** It is interesting that **Paul, a New Testament writer, says that to violate the Ten Commandments found in the Old Testament is also a violation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.** The moral standards of the gospel and the moral standards of the law are the same. One problem the church is facing with its people today is that of saying that the gospel of Christ sets aside the law. This simply is not true. Paul writes, **"What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! <sup>16</sup>Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?"** (Romans 6:15-16) We are free from the condemnation of the law and we obey the law out of our love and obedience to Christ instead of by the threat of punishment. As Paul wrote a little later in Romans, **"For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup>For God has done**

what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> **in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us**, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” (Romans 8:2-4)

We see that there is no conflict between the law and the gospel in the moral standards, which they both teach. There is no conflict in our need to be obedient to God. The difference is in salvation. **Before salvation the law condemns.** Once we are saved the gospel justifies us through Christ our Savior. This should bring fuller meaning to Paul’s words, **“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”** (Philippians 1:21) God calls His children, Christ calls His followers, His beloved and Paul instructs fellow believers to live as Christ lived, to love as Christ loved. Christ’s life and purpose was to honor God His Father and our purpose should be the same. When we live to honor Christ then our lives become a life of worth and purpose. We are to fight the good fight and hold fast to the truth of God found in His Scriptures and the sound gospel of Jesus Christ. When one lives in obedience to Christ when they die they will hear their Lord and Master Jesus Christ say, **“Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.”** (Matthew 25:21) This is my hope, for my hope is in Christ. This is my hope and desire for your lives as well. Amen!