

GUARDIANS OF THE MINISTRY

1ST TIMOTHY 1:8-17

Notes on 1 Tim. 1:8-17

In this section Paul will speak of the law and its proper use. He will insist that it is given for lawbreakers and not law keepers. He will then use himself, one who could be judged by others to be a very “righteous” man, as an example of the point he is making, going so far as to claim that his previous life and actions make him “foremost” among sinners! If Jesus can save and use me, Paul is saying, He can and will save anyone. Even you!

v.8 - the law... Paul contrast the proper use of the law with its illegitimate use by the wannabe teachers of the law of v.7 who use it to generate worthless discussions and endless speculations rather than to restrict sin and promote love. **...uses it lawfully...** Not just the good law itself but also how it is used is important...

v.9-10 - lawless and disobedient... ungodly and sinners... unholy and profane... This list of various types of sinners is loosely based on the Ten Commandments... It is for people like this, and not for those who are righteous and **just...** It is the murderer and liar who can make lawful use of the law. The good guy best keep his mouth shut until he has something to confess and repent of... **sexually immoral... practice homosexuality...** these are translated “adulterers and perverts” in the NIV, and the idea is that both heterosexual and homosexual aspects of immoral sexual activity (against the 7th commandment) are covered... **enslavers...** kidnappers or slave traders violate the 8th commandment by “stealing” people... **sound doctrine...** means teaching that is healthy and wholesome... sin exists and is practiced in contradiction of the truth that comes from and is found in God...

v.11 - the gospel of the glory of the blessed God... This is the source of sound doctrine in the Church... This is the message God has graciously entrusted to Paul who has passed this trust on to others like Timothy...

⁸ Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, ⁹ 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, ¹⁰ the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, ¹¹ in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

Christ Jesus Came to Save Sinners

¹² I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, ¹³ though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶ But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. ¹⁷ To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

- 1 Timothy 1:8-17

v.12 - I thank... Christ Jesus... It is typical of Paul to burst into thanksgiving when he considers his own experience with Christ who has given him **strength**, judged him **faithful** and actually **appointed** him to service for Him...

v.13 - blasphemer... Paul had denied Christ and tried to force others to do the same... **persecutor...** Paul had hunted down Christians so they could be arrested and executed... Why? Because he had been **ignorant** and **unbelieving** in the face of God’s truth revealed in His Son, Jesus Christ...

v.14 - faith and love... these gifts of God’s grace to him replaced his ignorant unbelief and insolence against God...

v.15-16 - The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance... Paul uses this phrase five times in the Pastoral Epistles and nowhere else in his writings. It introduces, most likely, a quote from a pre-existing Christian hymn or creed... We might well hear believers in Ephesus singing “**Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners**”... **I am the foremost...** Paul presents himself as one who is nothing but “guilty” under the law. And this, he concludes, is precisely why Christ in **mercy** chose him and empowered him for the special work he is carrying out: Paul is now Christ’s instrument for displaying His **perfect patience** and grace.

v.17 - Paul concludes this section with a “doxology,” a “word of glory” to God... **Amen...** Jewish word, signifying agreement.

Read & Reflect - 1:8-17

First Reading: What do you think about Paul the Apostle himself as you read this section?

Search & Consider

1:8-11 - a. Having spoken against the false “teachers of the law” in v.7, what does Paul now say about the law and its “lawful use”?

b. Read Romans 3:19-20 & Galatians 4:21-24. How do these verses shed light on 1 Timothy 1:9?

c. What parallels to you see between Paul’s list of sins and the Ten Commandments?...

EXODUS 20:3-17

1 TIMOTHY 1:9-10

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1. No gods before Me...	1.	6. Do not murder...	6.
2. Make no idols...	2.	7. Do not commit adultery...	7.
3. Do not misuse My name...	3.	8. Do not steal...	8.
4. Keep the Sabbath Day holy...	4.	9. Do not give false testimony...	9.
5. Honor your father & mother...	5.	10. Do not covet what belongs to your neighbor...	10.

d. We are told that such sins, and others like them, are contrary to something. Contrary to what?

1:12 - For what 3 things does Paul thank Christ Jesus? Why are these significant to Paul?

1:13-16 - a. What does Paul say he once was? Why did he behave this way?

b. What did Jesus do that changed things for Paul?

c. According to the “trustworthy saying,” how was this consistent with Jesus’ overall mission in the world?

d. Why does Paul say Jesus did this even though Paul was “foremost” among sinners?

1:17 - How does Paul finally respond to this personal miracle of God’s grace in Christ? What does he say about God?

Apply

1. How do you think most people tend to use the law? To identify their wrong actions & attitudes? To claim their general goodness? Give some examples you have seen?

2. According to Paul's definition, when have you made "lawful" use of the law? When have you made "unlawful" use of the law?

3. Why is it important for us to let God's law (or even the law of the state) do its rightful work for us of convicting us of wrongdoing? How might false teachings lead us to ignore what the law is telling us?

For Small Group Discussion - 1 Timothy 1:8-17

- A. OPENER...** Who in your group has the most recent speeding ticket? Was it deserved? Has anyone gotten a ticket they didn't deserve? Who has the least speeding tickets in their driving career? Why are there speeding laws? So people can feel good about themselves? To protect our lives from the impatient attitudes of people completely different from us?
- B. 1 TIMOTHY 1:8-17...** Share your Personal Study Guide answers above... As time permits, you may also want to focus on these questions...
1. How do you suppose the "lawful use of the law" Paul is describing differed from the way the "certain men" of verses 3-7 were using it and teaching it?
 2. What sorts of things might we like the law to say to us (That's OK. I don't mind. You're a good person anyway. Oh sorry, I didn't see that. Did you just do something? I forgive you. Nobody's perfect, so don't worry about it. It's not as bad as what some other people are doing...)?...
 3. What does Paul indicate the law said to him? What did Jesus say to him?
 4. What do you think of the idea that the law only has one word it can say, and that is "Guilty!" (So the words of healing and redemption we need to hear must come from somewhere else.)
- C. FINAL THOUGHT...** How might the law, with its one-word vocabulary, help to lead a person to Christ?

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The law is for lawbreakers, not for law keepers. If I think of the law and use the law to tell myself and others that I am really quite a good person, a law-abiding citizen, one deserving of praise for my commitment to and carrying out of what is right, I am making “unlawful” use of the law. I like to say it like this: In truth the law only has one word it can speak to us, and that word is “GUILTY.” The best we can hope for from the law is silence.



Elsewhere, like in Romans 3:20, Paul declares that no one is truly just and righteous, and so the real purpose of God’s law is to reveal our ultimate need and lead us to our Savior (see Galatians 3:21-24)... Proper use of the law, then, includes self-indictment leading to repentance and faith rather than deluded self-congratulations and condemnation only for others...

The good news in this is that our sin, in all its forms, is in fact contrary to something else, *sound doctrine*. And this word “sound” is a medical metaphor word meaning “healthy.”

We know of what *illness* is because there is *health*. We know when a body is functioning poorly, because there is such a thing as a body that functions in a *sound* manner. There is such a thing as a healthy body, and this body functions according to its original, intricate, impossibly complex, amazing and miraculous design. It is like this with sin. Our sin. We know what it is because there is righteousness and goodness and justice and lovingkindness. We know what it is because there is God. And God has designed us for these things, not for sin. The contrariness of sin, all of it (see the 10 Commandments and 1 Timothy 1:9-10), points us to what it is contrary to—*sound doctrine*, healthy and wholesome teaching, ideas and attitudes and instructions consistent with the truth of God.

So here is some more good news. Our sin, then, under the watchful eye

Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

- Galatians 3:21-24

and utterly non-creative one-word voice of the law—*Guilty!*—is contrary to something else: *the gospel of the glory of the blessed God*. Sin

and law leave us stranded, cornered, defeated... until... we discover what it has all been pointing us toward all along, by the will of God—The power of the Holy Spirit and the now-completed work of Christ the Son: THE GOSPEL, the Church’s bottom-line *sound doctrine*, the Good Message of salvation and eternal life in, by and with Jesus Christ. So, as Paul himself discovered and marveled at, the saving work of God’s Son comes with the law not only as its assertive ally *against* our sin, but also as its assertive change-agent moving us *toward the remedy* for our sin.

Because of Christ who

took our just penalty for sin upon Himself, the condemning word of the law against us—*Guilty!*—is silenced. Its echoes will die completely, and then all we will hear is the voice of Christ. And His vocabulary is unlimited in the extreme... *Loved!... Saved!... Welcomed!... Healthy!... Alive!... Glorious!... Faultless!... Blessed!... Faithful!... Whole!... Beautiful!... Eternal!... Complete!...*

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. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

- Romans 3:19-20

The principle purpose of the law is theological or spiritual. It is 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, frightened, and worn down, and so may long for grace and for the Blessed Offspring [Christ].

- Martin Luther, Lectures on Galatians (1535)