

⁸ But we know that the law *is* good if one uses it lawfully, 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, ¹⁰ for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, ¹¹ according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

¹² And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry, ¹³ although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. ¹⁴ And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. ¹⁶ However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. ¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, *be* honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

¹⁸ This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, ¹⁹ having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, ²⁰ of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Introduction

Last week we discovered that false and different teaching had arisen in the Church at Ephesus where Timothy, a young man was called to lead the Church.

We learnt that Paul had prophesied about the danger of false teaching in the Church and wanted Timothy to deal with it firmly.

Another discovery was that it is the responsibility of leaders in the Church and that includes O.I.C. leaders to recognise false teaching and correct it and rebuke the false teachers.

Paul taught us that false teaching leads people to back-slide and wander away from their faith, it also causes dis-unity and problems in the Church.

Finally, we learnt that a re-focus upon the pure and true gospel was a way of correcting false teaching in the Church.

Therefore, what Paul does in v. 8-20 is to focus upon the glorious gospel of grace.

The result of fully understanding the gospel message should result in an outburst of praise to God.

So the main message in this section is that we must hold on to and be excited by, the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is no wonder that Paul said to Timothy that he had to fight sincerely for the message of the gospel.

I will divide the passage into three sections, v. 8-11 tells us that God's Law exposes sin, v. 12-17, explains to us that the mercy of Jesus Christ saves sinners, and in v. 18-20 we are told that God's Church needs protecting.

In these three sections, there is much to discuss for our benefit.

Before we come to the text I would like you to imagine a beautiful garden.

The problem with this garden is that over a period of time, all sorts of weeds have sprung up and completely obscured from view the many amazing flowers that had originally been planted in that garden. You might dismiss the gardener for his negligence, but somebody would need to take out all of the weeds for you to be able to see this beautiful garden again.

This is an illustration of what Paul is trying to do in his letter to Timothy.

Timothy needs to, spiritually speaking, take out all the weeds of false teaching, in order to make the Church garden beautiful again.

1. God's Law exposes sin - Chapter 1: v.8-11.

It is clear from v. 7 that the false teachers were using God's Law in the wrong way.

(v. 7 – N.K.J.)

⁷ desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

We are not quite clear exactly how the false teachers were using God's Law, but what we need to know is how we should understand God's Law.

In v. 8 Paul tells Timothy that God's Law is good if it is used correctly.

Paul then goes on to tell us that the main use of God's Law was to expose sin in people's lives and draw them to the gospel message.

For the benefit of those who are not Christians we need to know where to find God's Law.

(Exodus 20: v. 1-17 in N.L.T. – underline the basic 10 commandments)

Then God gave the people all these instructions:

² "I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery.

³ "You must not have any other god but me.

⁴ "You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. ⁵ You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me. ⁶ But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands.

⁷ "You must not misuse the name of the LORD your God. The LORD will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name.

⁸ "Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ You have six days each week for your ordinary work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.

¹² "Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³ "You must not murder.

¹⁴ "You must not commit adultery.

¹⁵ "You must not steal.

¹⁶ "You must not testify falsely against your neighbor.

¹⁷ "You must not covet your neighbor's house. You must not covet your neighbor's wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor."

In the text Paul highlights a number of sins which roughly correspond to breaking of the 10 commandments.

Although there are other uses for God's Law, the main reason is to convict people of their sin and the need in their life to receive God's grace and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

It is important for us if we are Christians to understand that there are two other purposes for God's Law.

a) God's Law was given to restrain evil in society.

About 1,200 years ago, a young King of England called Alfred, introduced the 10 commandments into English Law.

God blessed "Alfred the Great" because he honoured God's Law and sought to influence a nation for Jesus Christ.

The 10 commandments have been the foundation of Law for western civilization, and also the parts of the British Empire for over 1,000 years.

Sadly, today as countries and governments cancel out some of these laws, our societies are in serious moral decline.

So we must expect society to get more evil in the future.

b) God's Law was given to educate and teach believers to grow in grace.

Although believers are NOT saved and forgiven by obeying the 10 commandments, they can be used as a measuring guide as to our growth in grace.

So as we understand these three purposes of God's Law, then there can be no conflict between the Old and New Testaments.

God's Law is still alive and relevant in God's heart today, **and it also ought to be alive and relevant in our hearts today.**

Illustration

Once a year in Japan you can have a health check on your body.

This is a good idea. We do not have this facility in England.

About 1 year ago I had a health check, and it identified that my cholesterol was a little high.

I was also encouraged to exercise regularly, by walking and doing some sport.

I decided to change to Soya milk for my breakfast cereal, and also to go swimming at least 4 times a week.

The health check is designed to identify problems, but it can't solve the medical problems.

In the same way, the 10 commandments are designed to identify a problem, but it can't solve that problem.

The problem of sin can only be solved through Jesus Christ.

Now what the false teachers were doing was to wrongly teach about the Law which resulted in believers not being convicted of their sin, but actually drifting away from the gospel.

Unless sin is exposed in our lives through God's Law, then the gospel of grace will not be relevant.

So now we can see how dangerous false teaching is in the Church.

It destroys the influence and effectiveness of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. The mercy of Jesus Christ saves sinners – 1: v. 12-17.

In this section Paul tells us how the gospel of Jesus Christ has changed his life.

The great Apostle Paul, whom God has used to write many of the New Testament letters, was once a blasphemer, and a persecutor of God's people.

He calls himself a chief of sinners.

If you want to know how Paul was converted, you can read the story in Acts chapter 9: v. 1-19.

Acts chapter 9: v. 1-19. (N.L.T.)

Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers. So he went to the high priest. ² He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains.

³ As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?"

⁵ "Who are you, lord?" Saul asked.

And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting!" ⁶ Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

⁷ The men with Saul stood speechless, for they heard the sound of someone's voice but saw no one! ⁸ Saul picked himself up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. ⁹ He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink.

¹⁰ Now there was a believer in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, "Ananias!"

“Yes, Lord!” he replied.

¹¹ The Lord said, “Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to me right now. ¹² I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again.”

¹³ “But Lord,” exclaimed Ananias, “I’ve heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem! ¹⁴ And he is authorized by the leading priests to arrest everyone who calls upon your name.”

¹⁵ But the Lord said, “Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name’s sake.”

¹⁷ So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁸ Instantly something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized. ¹⁹ Afterward he ate some food and regained his strength. Saul stayed with the believers in Damascus for a few days.

In v. 16 Paul talks about his conversion **as being a pattern for others** in the future.

So what is the pattern that we see here from Paul’s writings and his life?

a) The Initiative of Jesus Christ - v. 12.

It was Jesus Christ who saved Paul and strengthened him, and commissioned him in gospel ministry. The false teachers were self-appointed, influenced by Satan, but Paul’s ministry and salvation came through Jesus Christ.

The Bible says, while we were yet sinners Jesus Christ died for us. (Rom.5:8)

God took the initiative to reach down to Paul, and God is always reaching down to people, but people are not always willing to come to Jesus and be forgiven.

God sent his Son Jesus Christ into this world, to save us from our sins.

Paul understood this, but do WE understand this? I hope so.

b) Paul’s Sin – v. 13.

Although Paul explains that he acted in ignorance and unbelief at the time, he nevertheless was open and honest about his sin, not to glorify Satan, but to magnify God’s grace.

We too need to be open and honest about our sin.

If we are not a Christian yet, we have certainly broken several of God’s Laws and are guilty, and deserving of His judgement.

Unless we are **honest about our sin in God’s eyes**, we will **never know God’s amazing grace.**

You can’t hide anything from God, He knows all of our hearts and actions, past, present and indeed future.

c) The overflowing grace of Jesus Christ – v. 14.

Paul paints a wonderful picture of a fountain which constantly overflows water into a pool. When we went to Israel we went to a waterfall on the river Jordan.

We stood beside the pool as the water constantly overflowed.

The mercy and overflowing grace of Jesus Christ is available only to those who are convicted and convinced about their sin.

So Paul’s pattern of the Gospel message is still relevant today.

Jesus speaks to us about our sin and need for forgiveness, and when we repent and ask for his forgiveness, God’s wonderful grace is poured into our lives.

God changes us from the inside to the outside.

God changes our heart, so it effects a change in our lives.

Paul was changed from a persecutor of Christians to a disciple of Jesus and a friend of all Christians. Only God can do this.

3. The Church needs protecting – v. 18-20.

In v. 18-20 Paul gives Timothy a commandment, or as the N.K.J. puts it, a charge.

This means that **Timothy does not have any choice in the matter**, he must act on Paul's instructions. Paul says 4 important things in these verses.

Firstly, Paul reminds Timothy that he has been appointed by God for this leadership role in the Church. Timothy has all of the authority of God behind the true teaching of God's word.

Timothy was entrusted with authority by God to act in this matter.

Paul knew Timothy was born again and commissioned by God, so he told him to get on with the job of sorting out the problems in the Church.

Secondly Timothy was told to "**wage warfare**". This sounds serious, and it was serious. However, it is not the warfare of this world, with bombs and guns etc.

It is spiritual warfare.

2 Corinthians 10: v. 3-6 in N.K.J.

³For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. ⁴For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, ⁶and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

Spiritual warfare is always the battle of the mind.

If Satan can influence your mind, it will not be long before you are involved in either wrong behaviour or false and wrong teaching.

Satan's power is in his lies. Once his lies are exposed, and the truth is presented, then Satan's power is broken.

John 8: v. 44.

⁴⁴You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it.

Thirdly - Paul points out the seriousness of the situation. Paul uses an illustration here that many would understand. It concerns a "**shipwreck**".

At this time in history, everything travelled by sailing boat for long distances.

Shipwrecks were common, resulting in the loss of cargo and sometimes the loss of lives.

What Paul is saying to Timothy is that some people have made a shipwreck of their lives because of false teaching. If leadership introduce false teaching, then it can result in not only the shipwreck of their own lives, but the lives of other people whom they teach.

If the captain of a ship steers the ship on to the rocks, then the whole crew is affected by his actions.

Over the last 30 years, I have seen this happen in some lives and it is very sad.

However, the true believers have always come back to the truth of God's word and admitted their mistake.

Finally, in v.20 Paul tells Timothy what he MUST do.

Paul highlights two people that he has had to deal with recently concerning false teaching. These were Hymenaeus, and Alexander. He delivered them over to Satan. The purpose of removing these men from the Church is the hope that perhaps they may repent of their thinking and come back to the true gospel.

Last Sunday, I had to escort somebody very gently from the fellowship room upstairs, and speak to him outside the building of O.C.C.

Through false teaching and bad behaviour, he was banned from attending our private fellowship time on the third floor. This was about 2 years ago.

It was a group decision from Council members.

This man has tried to return recently, but now realises that he can't do it.

I had to speak strongly to him.

It may seem hard, but it is for the physical protection of our ladies and for the spiritual protection of the vulnerable.

Sometimes we need to act firmly and quickly. Failure to do so, will cause more problems.

Application

So what application can we take home today and apply to our lives this week.

1. **We must understand the main purpose of the 10 Commandments.** Just because the whole world is changing their laws to make sin acceptable in society, does not mean that it is right. It also does not mean that God's Law does not have a place in our lives or society today.
God's Law is primarily to show us God's standard for living in a right relationship with our creator.
However, we all know that in some of these laws we have failed.
Therefore, we need both God's forgiveness, and the ability, through God's Holy Spirit to live better lives for His glory.
This can only come through Jesus Christ, and as we surrender to the Holy Spirit in our lives.
Why not, this week, spend time with God's Holy Spirit, and ask him what needs to change in your life, and ask God's Holy Spirit to do the changing, as you yield to Him.
If you are not a Christian, why not come to Jesus and admit you have failed to keep His Law and ask for His forgiveness?
This may be a humbling experience, but it is the only way to get back to a right relationship with your creator.
You can even start the process at the lift sign today, after the service.

2. **We must really understand fully, both in our heads and deep down in our hearts, the overflowing grace of God.**

We all know the acronym of G.R.A.C.E.

It is **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**. Basically God gives us His very best spiritual treasure, and Jesus Christ pays the bill.

Jesus pays the cost of this treasure through His death.

Jesus also receives the punishment that we deserve for our sins.

How should we respond to this?

Paul answers this question in Romans 12: v. 1-2.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Once we have surrendered our life to Jesus and been filled with His love, through His Holy Spirit, there is a natural overflow of praise to God.

You don't have to force it, there is a natural overflow from your heart.

This overflow comes in the form of praise to God, through prayer, singing, and willing service for Jesus.

3. **Those of us who know and love Jesus, who understand the gospel of grace must always fight for the pure gospel in our Church.**

It is never easy to discipline Christians for wrong behaviour or wrong teaching.

However, this must be done, and done in a way that is glorifying to God.