

"Authentic Freedom" - 1 Timothy 1:8-11

But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, 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, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust. (1 Timothy 1:8-11)

Paul is continuing his condemnation, his warning against false teachers within the church. He has urged Timothy to make sure that no other doctrine is taught but the pure gospel of Jesus Christ. These false teachers saw themselves as professors of God's Law. They had strayed from the pure Gospel and ...

... have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm. (1 Timothy 1:6-7)

We, too, must be on our guard because Satan and his servants have been trying to pervert the Gospel for 2,000 years. And one of his favorite tactics is to appeal to a false interpretation of holy scripture, to twist the true meaning of God's words. It worked with Grandma Eve when he said,

"Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" (Genesis 3:1)

He even tried it with Jesus!

and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'HE SHALL GIVE HIS ANGELS CHARGE OVER YOU,' and, IN THEIR HANDS THEY SHALL BEAR YOU UP, LEST YOU DASH YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'" (Matthew 4:6)

Of course, Jesus would have none of that, because He knew exactly what scripture meant. We need to know what scripture says. We need to know what scripture means. We need to test every teaching, because ...

... evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. (2 Timothy 3:13)

And one of the most common tactics is to mount an assault on the freedom we have in Jesus Christ. Remember, *if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. (John 8:36)* In Jesus, we find a glorious freedom. Now, this does not mean we are free to do anything we want to do, No, instead, we are free to do what Jesus wants us to do because He gives us new hearts, hearts that are sensitive to His perfect will. And that, my friends, is **authentic freedom**.

So, Paul writes:

But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, (1 Timothy 1:8)

The first question we need to ask, then, is what is the purpose of the Law? Obviously, it is possible for us to use the Law inappropriately, and we need to avoid that. We need to make sure that we are using the Law lawfully.

Any law, be it civil law or Biblical law has a primary purpose of restraining evil. Why do we have speed laws on our highways? Yes, to keep people from going too fast. And we have state troopers to enforce the laws. Sometimes, it even works.

We human beings are totally depraved, and so, we are natural born scofflaws. Left to our own devices, we would engage in behaviors that are harmful to ourselves and others, harmful to society. We are sinners, and the sooner you acknowledge that, the sooner you can let Jesus take care of it for you.

If left to our natural devices, society would quickly devolve into total anarchy. The strong would completely exploit the weak. We would live in constant fear of attack and so, God provided civil law as part of His common grace.

For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. (Romans 13:3-4)

Here in Montana, government is often pretty unpopular, but we need to recognize that every government is God ordained. We'd be in serious trouble without it.

God's Law is designed to restrain evil too. There are a lot more than just 10 Commandments. You knew that, didn't you? The Levitical Law contains 613 Commandments. 248 are positive commandments, things folks are supposed to do. 365 are negative commandments, things that folks are not supposed to do. The Pharisees of Jesus' day, prided themselves on keeping the Levitical Law fastidiously. But Jesus said, "Not so fast, boys!"

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire. (Matthew 5:21-22)

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matthew 5:27-28)

As He continued with the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus intensified the Law with regard to divorce, swearing oaths, retaliation, love. The effect was to demonstrate that nobody could keep the Law perfectly, nobody except Jesus.

You know, I've had a number of people tell me that they believe they will go to heaven because they try to live according to the Ten Commandments. Well, good luck with that, because you can't do it! And trying isn't good enough.

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:23)

*... by the works of the law **no flesh shall be justified.** (Galatians 2:16b)*

While God's Law can restrain evil to an extent, it is completely inadequate to bring people to a saving relationship with Almighty God.

But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came,

we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. (Galatians 3:22-24)

You will not be saved until you recognize the fact that you cannot save yourself. You cannot live a life that is perfectly pleasing to God. God requires perfection. If you violate the smallest tenant of God's Law just once during your life, you are guilty of the whole thing. And your just sentence is eternal death. The Law is a stern tutor who drives us to faith in Jesus Christ.

So, let me summarize: The Law is designed to restrain evil, so we don't destroy ourselves before we come to Christ. And the Law is designed to teach us how desperately we need a Savior.

Any self-proclaimed teacher who applies the Law in any other way is a servant of Satan. (I know that might sound a little strong, but it is what it is.)

... knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, (1 Timothy 1:9a)

What could Paul mean by that? Doesn't the Bible say that there are no righteous people? Yes, it does.

For there is not a just man on earth who does good And does not sin. (Ecclesiastes 7:20)

As it is written: "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NO, NOT ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS; THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS AFTER GOD. (Romans 3:10-11)

Nobody can claim to possess true righteousness in and of himself. That's why Jesus gives us His righteousness.

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

When you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, His righteousness is imputed to you. You are justified and made righteous by faith in His finished work, and because you are made righteous, the Law no longer applies to you. You no longer stand guilty under the Law's requirements. Sin's penalty has been completely canceled, because Jesus took the hit for you.

But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:25-29)

There have always been false teachers who will attempt to add something more to the perfect Gospel of Jesus Christ. "Oh, so you have faith in Jesus Christ. That's all well and good. But if you want to keep your salvation, there is something more you need to do." And then, they start to pile up the legalistic requirements. For the Galatians, it was circumcision. For others, it is legalistic Sabbath-keeping, or maybe it's tithing. There are actually some churches that demand to see their member's tax returns to make sure they are donating at least 10%. I'm pretty sure that wouldn't fly here, nor should it.

Maybe it's dietary laws. You need to eat certain things. You need to abstain from certain foods and you'd better not drink, smoke or run with women that do. For heaven's sake,

don't go to movies. Don't play cards, There's trouble here in River City, with a capital T, and it rhymes with P and it stands for Pool. Don't vote for a Democrat, you sinner! Don't go to a church that sings contemporary praise songs. Godly music has to be at least a hundred years old. And it has to use Elizabethan English. That's why we use only the 1612 King James Version of the Bible here. (I think it was the one that the Apostle Paul used.)

I hope you know this is all idle talk, just like the utterings of those ...

... desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm. (1 Timothy 1:7)

Paul, writing to the Galatians, says this:

*Stand fast therefore in the **liberty** by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. (Galatians 5:1)*

False teachers, so often, want to bring us back to a yoke of bondage, after Jesus Christ has set us free!

Free from the law—oh, happy condition!

Jesus hath bled, and there is remission;

Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall,

Christ hath redeemed us once for all.

There is great freedom in Jesus Christ. But authentic freedom does not mean you can do whatever your sinful flesh desires. It's called antinomianism. That's not freedom; that's bondage, the bondage of sin.

Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. (John 8:34-36)

Without Jesus Christ, you can do nothing but sin. When you make Jesus the Lord of your life, He begins to remake you from the inside out. He sends the Holy Spirit to convict you of your sin and of righteousness and of the judgment to come. And little by little, He conforms you to the very image of Christ. You begin to see the fruit of the Spirit in your life, the fruit of salvation.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)

Instead of trying to conform to an external list of rules, an endless list of dos and don'ts, when you follow Jesus, His lifestyle begins to become your lifestyle. You begin to love God more and more. You begin to love your neighbor as yourself. And you begin to find peace and experience joy, no matter what your circumstances, because you know that Jesus has overcome the world. You know that the penalty for your sin has been paid in full. You know that you have been promised an inheritance that is absolutely out of this world, a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells, It will be our playground, and we will get to enjoy it with resurrected bodies that will not age, get sick, die, or ever want to sin, in a place where ...

... the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:3-4)

That is authentic freedom. It is the freedom Jesus purchased for you and for me on the cross at Calvary. He offers it to us as a gift of grace.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)