

# 1 Timothy Lesson 3

## 1 Timothy 1:8-17 – The Law, The Gospel, and the Mercy of God

### INTRODUCTION

1 Timothy was written by Paul to Timothy around 62-67 AD, after his first stint in Roman imprisonment (This book is written following the conclusion of the book of Acts). Paul had planted the church in Ephesus, and upon their visit, they found problems that required Timothy to stay put to deal with while Paul headed west. This wasn't written directly to us, but it's preserved for us to understand God, Jesus Christ, and the proper function of an assembly.

Today, we're covering verses 8-17, where Paul informs Timothy of the proper use of the Law, the grace and mercy of God, and a trustworthy statement.

### THE PROPER USE OF THE LAW (1:8-11)

This section actually begins with verse 7; Paul transitions from Timothy's charge to the problem he is facing. Timothy is to address these "some men," men who have turned aside from:

- Having a mind clear and free of corruption
- Having a good and proper evaluation
- Having an unfeigned doctrine that is not subjective but is based on knowledge, objective, and purposeful
- Remembering that the goal of doctrine is love

Instead of holding on to truth, they have turned to empty babble.

This empty babble includes wanting to be teachers of the Law. Now, Paul is going to explain the proper use of the Law.

The common, well-known knowledge is that the Law is useful, advantageous (*kalos* – moral quality), if one uses it lawfully. The adverb *νομίμως* *nomimos* means to properly use or use according to the rules (2 Timothy 2:5). How does one properly use the Law?

The Law is not made for a righteous person. Who is the righteous person? Why is the Law not for them?

δίκαιος *dikaios*

Romans 3:9-10, 23 – There is none righteous before God

Romans 3:26 – The word *just* is the same as the word *righteous*. The verb is also used as *justifier*. God makes righteous (justifies) the one who believes in Jesus (Romans 4:1-5).

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ἄδικος *adikos* – this is the word *unrighteous*, which is used in 1 Corinthians to be antithetical to a believer (1 Corinthians 6:1, 9). In verse 9, notice that the unrighteous are identified by their sins.

When it says that the Law is not made for a righteous person, this is not pointing to their activity but their position; the only one righteous before God is the one who has the righteousness of God, the one who is made right by God.

How has the Law been used improperly?

First, it is misapplied when someone treats it as a means of obtaining salvation, to obtain righteousness before God (Romans 10:1-4; Acts 13:39; Galatians 3:21). Second, it is misused when it is thought to bring about spiritual maturity or completion for blessing or avoidance of curses (Galatians 4:9-11; Romans 6:14).

The Law is good in its moral quality because it reveals God's righteousness. It is also good because it was designed to show humanity the utter impossibility of achieving a righteousness that could earn salvation. The glorious gospel of the blessed God (verse 11) gives the Law an important role in its message: the Law demonstrates humanity's hopelessness apart from God's grace, which is revealed in Jesus Christ.

How is the Law used properly?

The Law is for those who need instruction in the righteousness of God, to understand that they need a savior (Romans 3:19-20).

### THE GRACE AND MERCY OF GOD (1:12-14)

Paul acknowledges that Jesus is the one who strengthened him. *Strengthened* is “ἐνδυναμώ *endunamoō*,” which means to give ability. Is the ability in miraculous powers? No, this is in knowledge, understanding, and wisdom of God (Acts 9:22; Romans 4:20; Ephesians 6:10; 2 Timothy 2:1, 4:17).

The verb *considered* is a strange word. It is “ἡγέομαι *hēgeomai*,” and, in the lexicon, this means “to be in a supervisory capacity (lead, guide)” or “to engage in an intellectual process (think, consider, regard).” Every translation and commentary that I have reviewed has this as “think, regard, consider.” I am going to suggest a different understanding here. There is a lot of nuance and syntax to review (lexical range, use of the accusative case, the role of the participle, etc.), but I am just going to tell you my thoughts. The active leadership of God, who took someone who was in rebellion, and put Paul into faithful service seems to fit better than

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God considering Paul as faithful, and therefore putting Paul into service. This could be translated, “He led me (into) faithfulness, appointing me into service.”

Paul then highlights the mercy of God by recalling his past as a blasphemer: one who spoke evil against Jesus, even forcing others to do the same (see Acts 26:11), a persecutor: one who aggressively pursued and harmed Christians, and a violent aggressor. The phrase *and yet* marks a dramatic contrast. Despite his past, Paul received mercy. The word *mercy* here refers to the Lord permitting Paul to serve in the administration as an apostle. We know that God shows mercy in the act of salvation as well, but here, this is not about obtaining eternal life.

Mercy was shown despite Paul being a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent man, and this is in the context of “putting me into service.” This is reiterated in verse 16.

Now, Paul turns his attention to the grace of God and uses this statement as a segue into the trustworthy statement. Paul describes God’s grace here as an “over-abundance.” He credits everything he is to God’s grace (I Corinthians 15:10). Faith and love are obviously the perpetual theme. Notice that in the NASB, the word *found* is not in the text. This should be simply translated “faith and love in Christ Jesus.”

#### A TRUSTWORTHY STATEMENT (1:15-17)

By the end of Paul’s ministry, the church had developed well-known doctrinal statements — this is a “trustworthy statement.” The Greek is “πιστὸς ὁ λόγος – pistos ho logos” and underscores that the message can be depended upon. The first appears here in I Timothy 1:15; others are found in 3:1, 4:8-9, 2 Timothy 2:11-13, and Titus 3:5-8.

This statement is worthy of full acceptance. This refers to receiving the message into the mind with agreement. There is nothing to doubt about its truthfulness.