

17.1a First Timothy Discussion

What does it mean: "the law is not for the righteous"?

...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 (1.9)

Law has a lawful use, Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully (1.8)

Therefore, the antithesis is specific and the law is otherwise *for* the just.

What is the antithesis? Cf. vs. 3-8. In *1 Timothy 1:9*, we have to ask, "in what sense is the law not for the righteous?" given that there is a variety of "antithetic" texts (texts that speak negatively about the law; texts that seem to oppose the law for the life of a Christian). In other words, we can ask the question this way: "in what sense are we not under the law"?

1) First, the law is good and has a proper use (1:8). Therefore, we have duty to the law. This further makes us seek a peculiar sense from the context for not being under the law. Difficulties in passages like this one call for a seeking faith (cf. how parables call us to seek in order to find).

2) Second, the phrase "not for the righteous" (1 Tim. 1:9) has a legalistic (outside of grace) context (vs. 5-7). It is not difficult to take it in the sense of its function as a taskmaster in a falsely informed legalism (vs. 6-7). Therefore, with regard to the unrighteous it excites a wicked heart, bad conscience and insincere faith (via the contrast of its proper work in the believer, v. 5). In this sense, the law is not for the righteous. A paraphrase would be this: "the condemning/taskmaster function of the law in a false legalistic use is not for the righteous." (This is an attempt to find a negative function of the law that is distinctively appropriate in this context). So, Berkouwer:

Paul was responding to those "teachers of the law" who forgot that the law itself is a taskmaster for sinners. These people manipulated the law (by trying to make it more "legal") to such an extent that they understood neither "what they are saying" nor the things about which they make assertions" (1 Tim. 1:7). Paul's objection to this legalistic practice is evident from what he says about "the divine training that is in faith" as well as the goal of admonition: namely, a "love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith: (1:4-5). The interest is by no means the "antithesis" of spontaneity and God's law! For the only antithesis we find is that between faith and love, on the one hand, and the practice of legalism, on the other (*Sin*, 164-165).

What are some other "antithetic" texts and what positive lessons do they give us? There are many senses in which we are *not* under the law (they may overlap). However, these all serve to show us the ways we *are* under the law. See the sermon on this topic: 1-21-2001

- Not promise form but *fulfillment form* [Mat.5.17]
- Not vain use of Pharisees but *actual commandments of God* [Mk.7.8, 13]
- Not misuse for justification but good use for *sanctification*[Rom.3.21, 28; 8.1-4]
- Not under its aggravation of bondage but for *freedom*[Rom.5.20; 6.14; 1Tim.1.9]

We are under the law as summarized in the word of God in general in both OT and NT in its New Covenant, new wineskin form. We are under the law/word of God as summarized in the Ten Commandments. We are under the law of love to God and our neighbor. It is simply a matter of living out our baptismal commitment to live under the authority and commandments of the triune God (Matt. 28:19-20).