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Stay on the Job, Part 2

Scripture text: 1 Timothy 1

The lawful use of the Law is to expose, restrain, and convict the lawless.

Galatians 2:21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for **if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.**

The Law cannot save lost sinners (Gal. 2:21; 3:21–29); it can only **reveal their need for a Savior.** When a sinner believes on Jesus Christ, he is freed from the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:10–14); and the righteous demands of the Law are met by the indwelling Holy Spirit as a believer yields to God (Rom. 8:1–4).

Galatians 3:10-14 For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "**Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.**" Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them." **Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us--for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"-- so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.**

Romans 8:1-4 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. **For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.** For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. **By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**

Paul (1 Tim. 1:9–10) centered particularly on five of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:

No. 5— *“Honor thy father and thy mother” —
“murderers of the fathers and ... mothers.”*

No. 6— *“Thou shalt not kill [murder]” —“murderers
of fathers and ... mothers ... manslayers.”*

No. 7— *“Thou shalt not commit adultery” —
“whoremongers [fornicators] ... them that defile
themselves with mankind [sodomites].”*

No. 8— *“Thou shalt not steal” —“men-stealers
[kidnappers].”*

No. 9— *“Thou shalt not bear false witness” —“liars
... perjured persons.”*

It is the “glorious Gospel” that saves lost sinners.

Paul had experienced the power of the Gospel (Rom. 1:16), and he had been entrusted with the ministry of the Gospel (1 Thes. 2:4).

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, **for it is the power of God for salvation** to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

1 Thessalonians 2:4 but just as we have been approved by God **to be entrusted with the gospel**, so we speak, not to please man, **but to please God who tests our hearts.**

Law and Gospel go together, for the Law without the Gospel is diagnosis without remedy; but the Gospel without Law is only the Good News of salvation for people who don't believe they need it because they have never heard the bad news of judgment.

The Law is not Gospel, but the Gospel is not lawless (Rom. 3:20–31).

Romans 3:20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, **since through the law comes knowledge of sin.**

2.) Proclaim the Gospel (1 Tim. 1:12–17)

The mention of “the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God” (1 Tim. 1:11, literal translation) moved Paul **to share his own personal testimony.**

He was “Exhibit A” to prove that the Gospel of the grace of God really works. When you read Paul’s testimony (see also Acts 9:1–22; 22:1–21; 26:9–18), **you begin to grasp the wonder of God’s grace and His saving power.**

What Paul used to be (v. 13a).

He was a blasphemer because he denied the deity of Jesus Christ and forced others to deny it. He was a persecutor who used physical power to try to destroy the church. “Murderous threats” were the very breath of his life (Acts 9:1). He persecuted the Christian church (1 Cor. 15:9) and then discovered that he was actually laying hands on Jesus Christ, the Messiah! (Acts 9:4) During this period of his life, Paul consented to the stoning of Stephen and made havoc of the church (Acts 8:1–4).

Act 9:1-4 But Saul, **still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord**, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "**Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?**"

1 Corinthians 15:6-10 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. **Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.** For I am the least of the apostles, **unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.** But by the grace of God I am what I am, and **his grace toward me was not in vain.** On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, **but the grace of God that is with me.**

Paul was injurious, a word that means “proud and insolent.” A modern equivalent might be “**bully.**” It conveys the idea of a haughty man “**throwing his weight around**” in violence.

But the basic causes of his godless behavior were “**ignorance**” and “**unbelief.**” Even though Saul of Tarsus was a brilliant man and well educated (Acts 22:3; Gal. 1:13–14), his mind **was blinded from the truth** (1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:3–4). **He was a religious man, yet he was not headed for heaven!** It was not until he put faith in Jesus Christ that he was saved (Phil. 3:1–11).

Act 22:3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, **educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day.**

Galatians 1:13-14 For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, **how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.** And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so **extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.**

1 Corinthians 2:14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Philippians 3:8-11 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith--that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

How Paul was saved (vv. 13b–15).

How could the holy God ever save and forgive such a self-righteous sinner? The key words are “**mercy**” and “**grace**.” God in His mercy did not give Paul what he did deserve; **instead God in His grace gave Paul what he did not deserve**. Grace and mercy are God’s love in action, God’s love **paying a price to save lost sinners**. It is not God’s love alone that saves us, for God loves the whole world (John 3:16). **It is by grace that we are saved** (Eph. 2:8–9) because **God is rich in mercy** (Eph. 2:4) and **grace** (Eph. 2:7).

Ephesians 2:4-9 But God, **being rich in mercy**, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--**by grace you have been saved**--and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages **he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus**. For **by grace you have been saved through faith**. And this is not your own doing; **it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast**.

What did Paul's "ignorance" have to do with his salvation?

Is ignorance an excuse before God?

Of course not!

The fact of his ignorance is related to a special Jewish law (Lev. 5:15–19; Num. 15:22–31). If a person sinned knowingly "with a high hand" in Israel, he was cut off from the people. But if he sinned in ignorance, he was permitted to bring the proper sacrifices to atone for his sins.

Jesus recognized this principle when He prayed on the cross, **“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”** (Luke 23:34). Their ignorance did not save them, nor did Christ’s prayer save them; but **the combination of the two postponed God’s judgment, giving them an opportunity to be saved.**

Luke 23:34 And Jesus said, **“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”** And they cast lots to divide his garments.

Paul stated that it took “exceedingly abundant” grace to save him!

Paul liked to use the Greek prefix *huper* (meaning “an exceeding abundant amount”), and he often attached it to words in his letters. You might translate some of these as “superincrease of faith” (2 Thes. 1:3); “superabounding power” (Eph. 1:19); “superconqueror” (Rom. 8:37).

This same prefix has come into the English language as *hyper*. We speak of “hyperactive” children and “hypersensitive” people.

2 Thessalonians 1:3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, **because your faith is growing abundantly**, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.

Ephesians 1:19 and what is the **immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe**, according to the working of his great might

Romans 8:37 No, in all these things **we are more than conquerors** through him who loved us.

Paul makes it clear that this salvation is not for him only, **but for all who receive Jesus Christ** (1 Tim. 1:15).

If Jesus could save Saul of Tarsus, the chief of sinners, then He can save anybody! We admire Paul's humility, and we note that he considered himself to be the **"least of the apostles"** (1 Cor. 15:9) and the **"least of all saints"** (Eph. 3:8).

Notice that Paul did not write "of whom I was chief" but "of whom I am chief."

What Paul became (vv. 12, 16).

The grace of God turned the persecutor into a preacher, and the murderer into a minister and a missionary!

So dramatic was the change in Paul's life that the Jerusalem church suspected that it was a trick, and they had a hard time accepting him (Acts 9:26–31). God gave Paul his ministry; he did not get it from Peter or the other Apostles (Gal. 1:11–24). He was called and commissioned by the risen Christ in heaven.

Act 9:26-31 And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And **they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple.** But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists. But they were seeking to kill him. And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus. So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

God saw that Paul was faithful, and so He entrusted the Gospel to him. Even as an unbelieving and Gospel-ignorant Jewish leader, Paul had maintained a good conscience and **he lived up to the light that he had.** So often **those who are intensely wrong as lost sinners become intensely right as Christians and are greatly used of God to win souls.** God not only entrusted the Gospel to Paul, but He enabled Paul to minister that Gospel (1 Cor. 15:10; Phil. 4:13). **When someone obeys God's call to serve, God always equips and enables that person.**

But Paul not only became a minister; he also became an example (1 Tim. 1:16).

In what sense is Paul an example to lost sinners who believe on Christ? None of us has had the same experience that Paul had on the Damascus road (Acts 9). We did not see a light, fall to the ground, and hear Jesus speak from heaven. But Paul is a pattern (“type”) to all lost sinners, for he was the chief of sinners! **He is proof that the grace of God can change any sinner!**

But there is a special application of this to today's people of Israel, Paul's countrymen, for whom he had a special burden (Rom. 9:1–5; 10:1–3). The people of Israel, like unconverted Saul of Tarsus, are religious, self-righteous, blind to their own Law and its message of the Messiah, and unwilling to believe. One day, Israel shall see Jesus Christ even as Paul saw Him; and the nation shall be saved. "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced" (Zech. 12:10). This may be one reason why Paul said he was "born out of due time" (1 Cor. 15:8), for his experience of seeing the risen Christ came at the beginning of this Church Age and not at its end (Matt. 24:29ff).

Romans 9:1-5 I am speaking the truth in Christ--I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit-- that I **have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.** They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and **the promises.** To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, **is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.**

Romans 10:1-3 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them **is that they may be saved.** For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

Paul gave a third responsibility for the local church to fulfill besides teaching sound doctrine and proclaiming the Gospel.