Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning – February 3, 2019

**Nurturing God’s Family**

**Planting, Establishing, and Leading Local Churches**

Practical Principles from The Pastoral Letters

 **“The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.”**

**1 Timothy 1:1-11**

Timothy had been commissioned to remain in the city of Ephesus where Paul had spent two full years (Acts 19:10), in order to correct some false teachers and their misapplication of the Old Covenant.

 While the Law commanded obedience, it gave neither the power nor will to obey. The New Covenant, however, writes the Law “upon our hearts,” and comes with the power of God’s Spirit, so that along with forgiveness, there comes grace for life change (Romans 8:1-11).

 So anything that distracts us from the Grand Plan of God’s grace in Jesus, while claiming to be godly wisdom, is really meaningless discussion led by teachers who know less than they seem to think.

**What are Paul’s key points?**  “Let’s begin with a primer on grace. . .”

✓ Jesus called and sent apostles with His message. vv. 1, 2

✓ Those who distort that message must be challenged. v. 3

✓ Their words fuel only speculation, not the stewardship of faith. v. 4

✓ God’s goal is love via heart-changing forgiveness by faith. v. 5

✓ But would-be Law-teachers are deceived, not grasping that while the Law condemns sin,

it does not justify sinners. vv. 6-10

✓ Our gospel, in contrast, glorifies and blesses God’s grace. v. 11

***What is the Big Idea?***

 *A church is established as its teachings are rooted in*

*the New Covenant gospel of grace as opposed to the Law of Moses*

*and the irrelevant distractions which can flow from it.*

***How do we apply these principles?***

***1. Law or Love?*** The Pharisees hated Jesus, but loved the Law of Moses. He reminded them that they had not kept the Law (John 7:19). Steven also was killed for the same reason (Acts 7:53). The point is that if no one has or can keep the law perfectly, it is foolish to keep insisting on it as a way to be right with God, especially as the New Covenant was destined to replace it (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Love always was the goal, since love fulfills the Law (Romans 13:8-10). Without love, law becomes a path to self-righteousness.

***2. Direction or Distraction?***  Satan does not care how we get distracted from the gospel, as long as we do. These teachers were distracted by myths and genealogies related to the Law of Moses, but what about us? We can be distracted by debates on the age of the earth, the date of The Flood, keeping the Sabbath, the extent of the atonement, Bible translations, or the abuses of prosperity theology and the spiritual gifts. Is anything distracting you from the God’s revelation of grace in Jesus? Philippians 2:1-4; 4:2, 3

***3. Nice Citizens or New Creatures?*** The New Covenant “works” because it provides, by faith, what the Law did not: a clear conscience (sins forgiven), a pure heart (God’s life), and power to change (God’s Spirit). Paul does not say our goal is politeness, but love, a joyful love produced by the New Covenant gifts, not a slavish fear of punishment. It is finished. Rest in Jesus. Hebrews 9:8-14; 10:11-18