

CHAPTER 6

Lawlessness



- *skyrocketing crime rates *larceny (theft)
- *shoplifting *vandalism (destruction of property)
- *arson (setting homes or buildings on fire)
- *murder
- *illegal drug traffic *little discipline in schools
- *campus demonstrations *striking workers
- *lack of respect towards police, teachers and those in authority
- *profanity *disobedience to parents
- *pornography
- *immorality *rape *unwed mothers
- *abortion
- *breakdown of families *divorce
- *homosexuality
- *street riots *lack of respect and honor towards country
- *churches no longer believing and preaching and teaching the Bible

Romans 1:29-32; Mark 7:20-23
1 Timothy 1:9-10
2 Timothy 3:1-5

What is Lawlessness?

A lawless person is one who breaks, violates, disobeys or transgresses the law. This can be done ignorantly or deliberately. For example, a driver may not see a red light and may go right through the intersection without stopping. Another driver may see the red light but then deliberately act as if it were not there. Even though both drivers broke the law, the first driver did it unknowingly, whereas the second driver did it willfully.

In the New Testament the term "lawless" is used to describe those who knowingly, deliberately and willfully rebel against the laws of God and man. These are people who despise and defy the law. They refuse to be under God's rule and God's government. They refuse to surrender to God's Word and God's will. They want to make their own laws and be their own king and follow their own way. The lawless person cries out in his heart, "not God's will, but my will be done!" Lucifer wanted his own will rather than God's will (see the five "I WILLS" of Isaiah 14:12-14).

The Greek word for lawless is *anomos* (*a*=without; *nomos*=law; and thus *anomos* means without law or lawless). In the New Testament (King James Version) this word is translated in different ways ("lawless," "unlawful," "wicked," "transgressor") but it always conveys the basic meaning of lawless. The noun (*anomia*) is also translated in various ways ("unrighteousness," "iniquity," "transgression of the law") but each time it carries the basic meaning of lawlessness. We will look at some of the New Testament verses where these words are found.

Lawless People are Those Who Do What is Right! [In Their Own Eyes]

The period of the judges was a very sad chapter in Israel's history. It was a time of great lawlessness and wickedness. The reason those days were so terrible is given in Judges 17:6 and 21:25 (read these verses carefully). Did these lawless people do what was right? _____ Did they do what was right in God's eyes? _____ Did they do what was pleasing in God's sight? _____ These lawless ones "did that which was right _____ _____ _____ _____." The children of Israel made up their own laws and followed their own rules! Each man wanted to be his own king!

Answer true or false:

1. _____ Man should be his own ruler and make up his own laws.
2. _____ Whatever man decides is right must be right.
3. _____ God is the Ruler; man is to be ruled by Him.
4. _____ God wanted to be Israel's king (1 Samuel 8:5-7).
5. _____ Israel wanted God to be their king (1 Samuel 8:5-7).
6. _____ God's Word reveals what is right and what is wrong.
7. _____ God gives His laws and commandments to make men miserable and unhappy (Deuteronomy 6:24; 10:13).

Those Who Practice Lawlessness

Throughout history men have been characterized by lawlessness! Long ago Lot lived among the citizens of Sodom. Were these God-fearing, law-abiding people who loved righteousness and hated sin (2 Peter 2:6-7)? _____ What kind of deeds did these people practice (2 Peter 2:8)? _____ (Lawless!) Did God allow their lawlessness to go unpunished (Genesis 19:24-25)? _____

Is the law made for righteous men or for lawless men (1 Timothy 1:9)?

_____ If men were righteous they would need no laws. Those who do no wrong need no laws. If nobody ever threw their trash along the roads and countryside, then there would never be a need to have "no littering" signs! If everyone drove their cars slowly and safely, there would not be a need for speed limit signs! Laws are for the lawless and for the speeders and for the litterbugs!

Religious people can be very lawless! In Matthew 23:28 the Lord Jesus was describing the religious scribes and Pharisees of His day. How did these Jews appear outwardly?
 _____ Inwardly they were full of hypocrisy and
 _____ (lawlessness). These outwardly righteous people were the same ones who later committed the most unlawful deed history has ever known. Peter, speaking to the Jews in Acts 2:23, reminded them that they took Jesus, and "by _____ (lawless) hands" they crucified Him and slew Him. They murdered the Messiah (Acts 3:13-15)!

Another group of religious but lawless people are described in Matthew 7:22-23 (the word "iniquity" means "lawlessness"). How do you know these people were religious (Matthew 7:22)? How do you know these people were lawless? (Hint: See Matthew 7:21.) Whose will did they do? The will of God or the will of self? Did they do what was right in God's eyes or what was right in their own eyes?)

Lawlessness Today and Tomorrow

The period of the judges was a time of great lawlessness. What about today? Consider the following passage found in 2 Thessalonians 2:3,7-8 (the following translation is based upon the Greek text):

2 Thessalonians chapter 2:

3) Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it* (the day of the Lord--see verse 2) will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness (or "the man of sin") is revealed, the son of perdition...

7) For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.

8) And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the lord will slay with the breath of his mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of his coming.

In other words, Paul is saying that the forces of lawlessness are already at work, but there is something holding back or restraining lawlessness. Someday the Restrainer will be "taken out of the way" and then lawlessness will increase as never before. If you think these are lawless days, wait until then! The Lord Jesus described this future period of unprecedented lawlessness in Matthew 24:12: "And because _____ (lawlessness) shall _____, the love of many shall wax cold."

To illustrate this, think of a large dam. The dam holds back (restrains) the water. Some water is allowed to pass the dam (through the spillway or through pipes at the base of the dam), but not too much. The water represents **lawlessness**. The dam represents **the Restrainer** (God the Holy Spirit who lives in believers). Today there is a certain amount of lawlessness, but it is controlled and kept in check. Someday (perhaps soon) the dam will be "taken out of the way" and the forces of lawlessness will pour forth like a flood! This will happen when the true believers are taken to heaven to be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; John 14:3; Revelation 3:10).

A similar illustration is that of a **vicious dog** (representing the forces of lawlessness) on a **leash** (representing the Restrainer).



When the leash is on the dog, people passing nearby are safe because the dog can only go so far. When the leash is "taken out of the way" watch out! If the dog is unrestrained, then he can bite people and cause harm.

How does God restrain lawlessness today and what part do Christians play in this (Matthew 5:13-16)?

Salt in Bible times was very important. Not only was it used to make foods taste better, but it had another purpose. In Bible times salt was used to keep food items from becoming corrupt and spoiled. The salt did not prevent them from spoiling, but it would slow the process. In this corrupt world, how are believers like salt? (Today we have the benefits of refrigeration to keep foods from spoiling, and we also have freezers which can keep foods in a frozen condition for a long time.)

In your classroom in school or at your place of work, how can you be salty? When a believer has a godly walk, the unsaved people around him will sometimes watch their language and be careful about the kind of stories they tell. If the believer had not been there, they would not have been so restrained. There is coming a future day when God's believers will be suddenly removed from the earth, and with the "salt" gone, the world will be unrestrained in the direction of evil and lawlessness (2 Thess. 2:6-7).

The believer is also compared to light (Matt. 5:14-16). Where do we get our light from (John 8:12)? As we are in a very dark and wicked world, what are we to do (Phil. 2:15)? We are like the moon whose light is not its own, but is reflected from a bright sun. Our light is reflected from another kind of Sun (Malachi 4:2), the Son of God (see 2 Cor. 4:3-7). In Matthew 5:15 believers are warned about hiding their light.

What Does God Think of Lawlessness

Christ's attitude towards lawlessness is clearly revealed in Hebrews 1:9: "Thou hast

_____ righteousness, and _____ iniquity (lawlessness)!" God hates sin and God hates lawlessness. Believers need to learn to love the things God loves and hate the things God hates! In 1 John 3:4 we find these words (as translated directly from the Greek text): "Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness!" Yes, sin is lawlessness and lawlessness is sin (sin=lawlessness; lawlessness=sin)! Sin can be defined as wicked rebellion against God's law, against God's will and against God's Word! This wicked rebellion is sin. This is what God hates!

The Doom of the Lawless Ones

What terrible words will lawless people someday hear? See Matthew 7:23 where the words "ye that work iniquity" may be translated, "ye workers of lawlessness." The Lord Jesus will someday say to certain people: "I never knew you: "D_____ F_____ M_____." Were these people saved or unsaved? _____

According to Matthew 13:41-42, what will be the doom of those who do iniquity (those who practice lawlessness)? _____

Remember what happened to the lawless Sodomites! God destroyed their entire city (Genesis 19).

Good News: God Can Save the Lawless!

Consider Mark 15:27-28. When the Lord Jesus was crucified, He was numbered with the **transgressors** (the lawless ones!). A lawless criminal died on each side of the Lord. Both of these men were guilty of having committed lawless deeds that were worthy of death. Both were being justly punished for their unlawful crimes! What happened to one of these lawless men (Luke 23:39-43)? What do you suppose happened to the other?

If you are a believer in Christ, think about your unsaved days. Were you lawless and disobedient (Titus 3:3)? Did you do what was right in God's eyes or in your own eyes? Did you direct your own life or did you let God direct your life? Did you rebel against God's Word and God's law and God's will?

Read Romans 4:7; Hebrews 8:12; 10:17. The word "iniquities" in all these verses means "lawlessness" or "lawless deeds." Is God able to save and forgive lawless people? _____ The good news is that the Lord Jesus is able to redeem us from all _____ (lawlessness) and purify unto himself a **peculiar people** (a people for His very own possession) zealous of good works (Titus 2:14)! We were once lawless, but now we can be on fire for the Lord to do good works (those things that are right in his sight)! We once yielded our bodily members as servants to iniquity or lawlessness (Romans 6:19). Now that we are saved, what can we do instead (Romans 6:13,19)?

Only the living God can transform a lawless sinner into an obedient saint! Praise the Saviour!

