

## Lawlessness

To be lawless is to be contrary to the law or to act without regard to the law. Laws are necessary in a sinful world (I Timothy 2:9 ESV) Understanding this, that 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."

I John 3:4 defines sin as lawlessness: "Everyone who sins breaks the law, in fact, sin is lawlessness." To commit sin is to be lawless; that is, the sinner breaks God's law. In this way, lawlessness is a rejection of God. Satan, who models the ultimate rejection of God, will one day empower the Antichrist, called "the lawless one," whose rise to power "will be in accordance with how Satan works" (2 Thessalonians 2:9).

Lawlessness is contrasted with righteousness in verses such as Romans 6:19, 2 Corinthians 6:14, and Hebrews 1:9. The righteous, who have the nature of Jesus Christ, hate the deeds of lawlessness. Lot, a godly man living in Sodom, "was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard" (2 Peter 2:8). The psalmist said, "I abhor the assembly of evildoers and refuse to sit with the wicked" (Psalm 26:5). Christians are to be law-abiding (I Peter 4:15).

When a society ignores the law, lawlessness is the result, and chaos ensues. The time of the judges after Joshua's death was marked by upheaval, oppression, and general disorder. The biblical historian puts his finger on the reason for the tumult. "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit" (Judges 21:25). The riot in Ephesus is a good example of lawlessness in action (Acts 19). The rioters were confused and unsure even of

why they were rioting (v. 32), in their lawlessness, they were ignoring proper legal channels (v. 39) and, of course, breaking the law (v. 40).

God has a purpose for establishing human government "to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right" (I Peter 2:14). Rulers are God's appointees to maintain order and promote righteousness in a civil society. "Consequently, **whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves**" (Romans 13:2). In other words, **lawlessness is condemned in Scripture.**

The Bible connects man's lawlessness and rebellion against God with his need for God's forgiveness. In Romans 4:7, Paul (quoting Psalm 32:1) says, "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered" (ESV). **God's righteousness is imputed to us at salvation, and God forgives us of our lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works**" (Titus 2:14 ESV). **Our lawless deeds resulted in Christ's death, but God's grace overcomes our lawless hearts.**

In the judgment many will stand before Christ claiming a connection with Him that exists only in their own minds. They will rehearse their good deeds done in His name, only to hear Jesus declare them to be "**workers of lawlessness**" whom Christ never knew (Matthew 7:23 ESV). At that time, **those who practice lawlessness will be cast "into the blazing furnace,"** while those who are covered by the righteousness of Christ "will shine like the sun" (Matthew 13:41-43). **Christ will have the ultimate victory and will eliminate lawlessness forever.**