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The Pauline Paradox Series – Part 5: Galatians

Welcome to the section on Galatians in the Pauline Paradox Series.

Galatians is considered to be the foundational Holy Grail in the typical understanding that the whole Law of God, or the Torah, is no longer for God’s people.

If you suggest to the average Christian that they should observe Leviticus 11, for example, the most common response is “read Galatians.”

So we will read Galatians. Let’s read it together. Let’s not only read it, but let’s test everything.

Let’s test the validity of the common understanding of Galatians.

We will not just select verses of Galatians, as is often done. We will read and expose the context as well.

We understand that Galatians already appears to be so clear and understandable to many. We will ask for patience and thoughtful consideration of the material presented.

We expect that there may be two types of persons interested in watching this teaching.

The first type might be one who does not understand or agree that those in the faith should be observing the Torah, or the whole Law of God. To those that fall in this group, we strongly recommend that you start at the beginning of the Pauline Paradox Series, as there is a lot of foundational material included in prior parts of this series that we will be using in this teaching.

The second type of person watching this teaching might be one who already understands that we are to be observing the Torah, but still wants to be able to better understand and explain the

difficult words of Paul. To those in this group, we still recommend beginning at the start of the Pauline Paradox Series. However, we do not consider it to be absolutely necessary.

You may also find that we move quite quickly in this teaching. Because we intend to cover the whole letter to the Galatians, we are forced to cover points quickly and concisely. As a result, we will not be dwelling too long on any of the points or material. Because of that, you may find value in watching the teaching more than once to better absorb and test the presentation.

Lastly, before we get started, be aware that there will be parts of Galatians that you may have wished that we would cover in more detail, but instead, we simply move forward.

The goal of the Pauline Paradox Series is to call the whole Body of the Messiah back to the whole Word of God. This, in essence, is what we believe the ministry of Yeshua (Jesus) was all about, apart of his actions on the cross or torture stake. Thus, we will mostly be focusing on the verses in Galatians that are often used to produce modern doctrine about the Law of God.

To do this effectively, we feel that showing how Paul's letters are consistent with the same message of the Messiah is very important.

Here is how this teaching will proceed.

- First, we will start by examining the context Paul offers to us in chapters 1 & 2.
- This context will continue to build throughout the letter to the Galatians and allow us to better understand some of the more challenging verses. We will spend a LOT of time on context.
- Also, the teaching will then be segmented into sections focused on examining each of these verses using the established context:

Galatians 2:3-5 - Did Paul Teach Against Circumcision?

Galatians 2:14 - Should We Live as the Circumcision Party, Jews, or the Gentiles?

Galatians 3:10 - Is God's Law a Curse or Did We Curse Ourselves?

Galatians 3:23 - Was God's Law a Schoolmaster that Has Been Abolished at the Cross?

Galatians 4:9 - Is the "Law of God" Actually "Weak and Beggarly Elements?"

Galatians 4:21-22 - Do We Place Our Trust in God or in Man?

Galatians 5:1 - Is the Law of God "Bondage" or "Freedom?"

Galatians 5:4 - Is Observing God's Law Falling From Grace?

Galatians 5:18 - Does the "Spirit of God" Actually Lead Us Away from the "Law of God?"

This teaching will be longer than most. So you may consider using those subsection markers as an opportunity to pause your viewing and pick up the teaching as your time allows.

So let's begin.

Galatians chapter 1...

Establishing the Introduction to the Context of Galatians

Galatians 1:1

Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ (Messiah Yeshua) and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— and all the brothers who are with me,

Here we see that Paul opens by establishing his credibility, thus placing the necessary weight and value on what he needs to communicate to the Galatians.

Continuing on...

Galatians 1:2-9

To the churches of Galatia:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Messiah Yeshua), who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are **turning to a different gospel**—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to **distort the gospel of Christ (Messiah)**. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, **let him be accursed**. As we have said before, so now I say again: **If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed**.

Paul certainly grabs attention in the first few verses. Paul accuses the Galatians of going after a different gospel. Not only that, but Paul speaks curses to those that preach a different gospel.

Later, we will find out what the “different gospel” is, and how it defines all of Paul’s correction to the Galatians going forward.

Galatians 1:10

For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Paul mentions that he is interested in God’s approval, not man’s approval. This is to highlight the honorable intent related to his correction to the Galatians. In addition, it appears to hint that the errors of the Galatians might be rooted in the social and religious pressure of appeasing others. This is further evident when Paul said this earlier:

“...but there are **some who trouble you** and want to distort the gospel of Christ.”

And...

“**If anyone is preaching** to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.”

From this, we can begin to understand that the Galatians were being influenced by a doctrine stemming from a certain group of people. Or perhaps the Galatians are being lead astray by multiple people with multiple doctrinal errors.

We don’t know exactly just yet, but more will be revealed later...offering us some more clarity.

Later we will find that there is a certain group of people teaching doctrines of men and a “different gospel.”

Before then, Paul wants to highlight that he too was once influenced by the doctrines of others as a Pharisee. He mentions that he was zealous for the traditions of his fathers and he had done many things in error.

However, once the truth was revealed to him, he did not consult with anyone, nor let himself be influenced in the wrong direction again.

In fact, we will find that the group bringing in a “*different gospel*” to the Galatians, is closely related to the doctrine Paul used to subscribe to in his former life as a Pharisee.

Paul is literally saying...*“I have been there, done that...and thus, I am the best person available to you to show you some of the same errors you are falling into...”*

Paul reviews this with the Galatians, early in his letter, to establish credibility once again, and also to build more trust with the Galatians that the gospel he preaches is the correct gospel. And again, he is also making it clear that in his own past he has made the same mistakes that the Galatians are presently making...suggesting he is worth listening to...and that his concerns are valid.

Galatians 1:11-17

For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man’s gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ (Messiah Yeshua). 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. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

You can see here that Paul appears to be making a strong case that the gospel the Galatians are following is related to Paul’s former life as a Pharisee. That is not completely established yet, but at this point it seems to be hinted.

Paul continues...

Galatians 1:18-24

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord’s brother. (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!) Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only were hearing it said, “He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.” And they glorified God because of me.

In chapter two Paul continues his story. He is leading up to a point that is intended to resonate with the Galatians. It is a point that is intended to illustrate the corruption of the gospel that the Galatians are entertaining.

That is as much context that we are going to be able to introduce through the first chapter. The second chapter begins to introduce some of the controversial verses, in which Paul appears to be telling the Galatians that they are not to be observing the Law of God, starting with circumcision.

As we enter into each of these particular verses, we will once again highlight some of the context from chapter 1 as well as bring in the new context that continues as the letter proceeds.

Unfortunately, we do realize that this will introduce a lot of redundancy in this teaching, but this is necessary in order to properly emphasize the context. Since context is the key to understanding Galatians, we feel that it is better to over emphasize, than under emphasize and risk that you, as the audience, might miss a valuable connection.

Galatians 2:1-5 - Does Paul teach against circumcision and thus teach against God's law?

Galatians 2:1-5

Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain. **But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.** Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery—to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

Does Paul teach against circumcision and thus teach against God's law?

Is circumcision against the truth of God?

Is circumcision bondage and against freedom?

Is circumcision against the gospel?

Think about those questions for a moment...

The issue of circumcision is perhaps the most complicated subject to study in the New Testament. We do have a separate teaching dedicated to this subject and we encourage you to consider testing it. (*Circumcision: The Eternal Sign*)

The matter of circumcision is actually not that complicated, it is simply that most have not studied the debates surrounding circumcision in the first century.

Some Jewish sects made it a requirement for salvation and a mark to enter their doctrinal denomination.

One such group mentioned in Scripture is referred to as the “Circumcision Party” denomination.

If you were part of the “circumcision club” then you were saved. If you were not in their club, then you were an unsaved outsider.

On the other hand, Scripture (and Paul) teach that circumcision is not to be practiced as a requirement of salvation.

This topic will require covering a lot of material in an effort to fully cover all possible confusion surrounding this topic.

Galatians 2:3-5 is often cited to “prove” that converted Gentiles are no longer to be circumcised according to the Law of God.

It is often taught today that it is the “*false brethren*” that were observing the Law of God and the “*false brethren*” were successfully compelling the Galatians to observe God’s law, which of course, brings them back into “*bondage*,” which is then said to be contrary to the freedom they have in Christ.

It is often interpreted here, as an example, that Paul and Titus did not yield to those compelling them to keep the Law of God so that the truth of the gospel would continue.

Thus, it is concluded that observing God’s law is bondage and against the gospel. This is what seminaries teach, that God’s law is bondage.

If such understanding is valid then the following statements should pass the Scriptural test:

- 1) The doctrine of the group influencing the Galatians observes and keeps the Law of God.
- 2) Observing God’s law is bondage.
- 3) The freedom that we have in Christ Jesus (Yeshua) is freedom from God’s law.
- 4) Observing God’s law is against the gospel.
- 5) Paul taught against circumcision because it is part of the Law of God.

Before we begin testing these interpretations of Galatians chapter two, it might make sense to consider that there is a chapter 1, which we read only moments ago.

Chapter 1 builds and sets that context that leads into chapter 2. We must consider that this is a letter and it is intended to be read as a letter.

The real problem established in the first chapter is that the Galatians were abandoning the heart of the gospel message (the true process and way of salvation itself).

Galatians 1:6-9

I marvel that you are **turning away** so soon from Him who called you in the **grace of Christ, to a different gospel**, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to **pervert the gospel of Christ**. But even if we, or an angel from heaven,

preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, **let him be accursed**. As we have said before, **so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed**.

Paul overemphasizes that the Galatians should recognize the importance of the true gospel, which is the same gospel Paul teaches. He then follows with this warning:

Galatians 1:10-12

For am I now seeking the **approval of man, or of God?** Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ (Messiah Yeshua).

Paul distinguishes between pleasing men and pleasing God. Paul states that the gospel he preached is not from men, but from God. Thus, the false doctrine that is confusing the Galatians, is from men and not God. The only reason the gospel from men exists is to please men, not God.

That being said, is the Law of God from God or from men?

This is an important question, so please take a moment to consider what needs to be asked here.

Whatever corrupted the Galatians is from man, not from God.

The Law of God came from God. Circumcision came from God.

But something that corrupted the Galatians came from man.

If the whole supposed point of Galatians is to teach against God's law then why is Paul stating that he is teaching against doctrines according to man?

What we will discover is that as we progress through Galatians is that Paul is not teaching that we should not keep the Law of God...what Paul is teaching is that there is a right reason, and many wrong reasons, to observe the Law of God.

This will become clearer as we proceed.

So far, after reading most of Galatians chapter 1, it appears that Paul is teaching against the doctrines of man, not against the Law of God. Paul continues establishing this context:

Galatians 1:13-14

For you have heard of my **former conduct** in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and *tried to* destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly **zealous for the traditions of my fathers**.

Paul is pulling from his own personal experiences in Pharisee doctrine (Philippians 3:5). Paul was one of the most esteemed Pharisees of his day and was training under the top teacher in Pharisee doctrine.

We learn of the genesis of Paul's persecution of the Church in the Book of Acts. Paul was actually a witness to the stoning of Stephen that is described in detail in Acts 6:8 and Acts 7:60.

It is worth mentioning that in Acts 6:12-14 we learn that Stephen was "*falsely accused*" of teaching that Yeshua (Jesus) changed the Law of God (see *Pauline Paradox Part 1*).

If this is a false accusation, this of course means that Yeshua did not change the Law of God...

Yet supposedly it is now "correct teaching" that Yeshua (Jesus) changed the law of God.

According to today's popular doctrine and understanding, what was a false accusation for Stephen is now considered to be true accusations according to the modern mainstream Church.

What really happened, is that the Law of God never changed.

Instead men's misunderstanding and application of the Law of God changed because of the Jewish sects like the Pharisees.

This is Paul's point, and Paul knew better than anyone because he was raised in such a doctrine. That is the reason he emphasizes his background to set the context.

His point is that he knows better than anyone the errors the Galatians are entering into.

Thus Paul is setting the foundation of his correction to the Galatians. Paul is not preparing to declare that observing the Law of God is in error, but that the common false first century doctrine surrounding the intent and purpose of the Law of God is in error.

In Galatians 1:14 Paul specifically mentions that he became even more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of his fathers. This, in fact, is the crux of the whole problem that Paul is attempting to address.

Paul was persecuting the Church because they abandoned and taught against Pharisee doctrine.

In Paul's day, the two dominant Jewish sects were the Sadducees and the Pharisees.

Yeshua (Jesus) taught against Pharisee, and other such doctrine (oral law/Talmud), that was against the Law of Moses. This began to shake up the religious power groups which were the mainstream seminaries and teachers of the first century. In an effort to maintain their power over the people, they fought back against the Church with violence.

In the first century, mainstream Jewish leadership practiced something called the "oral law" (Talmud).

Paul later refers to this doctrine as the "works of law" (see *Qumran document 4QMMT (4Q394-5)*) or "commandments of men."

Yeshua (Jesus) also referred to the "oral law" as "traditions of the elders" that violates the "law of God" (Mark 7; Matthew 23).

There is much that can be said about the "oral law." However, at a very basic level, the "oral law" consisted of doctrines, teachings, and commandments of men that much of mainstream

Jewish leadership of the first century elevated above the commandments of God.

In some cases the “oral law” even contradicted the commandments of God.

This major issue of the first century is also the point and purpose of Yeshua’s (Jesus’) teaching in Matthew 5, His rebuking in Mark 7, and many of His other points of contention with Jewish leadership during the length of His ministry.

The critical point to remember here is that there is a clear difference between the “commandments of men” and the “commandments of God.”

Mark 7:6

He answered and said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: *‘This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. **And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men***”

Mark 7:9

He said to them, “***All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.***”

Mark 7:13

making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.”

It is the Word of God that we are to follow, not the doctrines and traditions of men. Even in Mark 7:10, specifically, we see our Lord appealing to what was written by Moses as the Word of God.

We must remember that it is every word that came out of the mouth of God, (which happened at Sinai), that is to be food for us (Matthew 4:4). He also taught us to teach all nations to obey everything, (not just some things), that He commanded (Matthew 28:19-20).

In Galatians, Paul refers to the false doctrine as “elements of the world,” and “commandments of men” with both being bondage (Galatians 2:4; 4:3).

The doctrine that Paul is teaching against in Galatians, is a form of the same doctrine that Yeshua (Jesus) also taught against.

This all leads to Paul’s closing of Galatians chapter 1:

Galatians 1:23-24

But they were hearing only, “He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once *tried to* destroy.” And they glorified God in me.

We already know that the persecuting began with Stephen and that Stephen was **falsely** accused of teaching that Yeshua (Jesus) changed the Law of God.

Paul left the Pharisee doctrine and began practicing true faith.

It should be becoming rather clear that Paul’s letter to the Galatians is not teaching against the Law of God.

Instead Paul is teaching against men inappropriately using the law of God to create a different gospel.

Paul states the Law of God is good if it is used correctly.

Paul also said this in another letter:

1 Timothy 1:8

But we know that the law *is* good if one uses it lawfully...

One reason that the law exists is to define sin, not to provide us salvation.

1 John 3:4

Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.

Romans 3:20

...for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

Thus Paul can not be teaching against the law of God or he is in fact promoting lawlessness. Paul is not teaching against what defines sin for us.

This is just one example of why Peter himself gave us a serious warning about misunderstanding Paul as it relates to the law of God. This is a warning from Peter that most theologians have ignored:

2 Peter 3:14-17

Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, since you know *this* beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the **error of the lawless**

Paul is certainly not against the Law of God. For example, Paul also wrote:

Romans 3:31

Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.

Romans 7:12

Therefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

Romans 7:14

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.

Romans 7:22

For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.

For the sake of those who have not watched The Pauline Paradox Parts 1 & 2 we repeated some of this information in this series to make a point. For more information on how Paul taught that we should keep the Law of God, please refer to those earlier teachings.

Paul believed and taught in the Law of God.

At this point it makes sense to summarize what we have covered so far:

- 1) There are several points that we still need to test to Scripture as it relates to Galatians 2 and circumcision
- 2) Paul is afraid that the Galatians are turning away from the true gospel.
- 3) The false gospel presented to the Galatians is similar to the doctrines and commandments of men that Paul subscribed to when he persecuted the Church in Pharisee doctrine.
- 4) We learned that the first century believers (starting with Stephen) were falsely accused of teaching that Yeshua (Jesus) changed the law of God.
- 5) We learned that Yeshua (Jesus) taught against the doctrines and traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees while still teaching that the Law of Moses is still true and valid.
- 6) We learned that the doctrine and traditions of the Pharisees were against the Law of Moses which Yeshua (Jesus) also called the Word of God.
- 7) Paul stopped persecuting the Church and left the doctrines of the Pharisees. Like Yeshua, Paul now teaches against the Pharisee doctrine.
- 8) Peter warned us that Paul's letters could be misunderstood without a proper foundation (Word of God) and twisted to teach others to break God's law.
- 9) Paul actually teaches the Law of God in his letters.

Circumcision is an “**everlasting**” Biblical commandment in outward application:

Genesis 17:7

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and your seed after you in their generations for an **everlasting covenant**...

Genesis 17:13

He that is born in your house, and he that is bought with your money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an **everlasting covenant**.

Circumcision has also always been intended for inward application:

Deuteronomy 10:16

Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked.

Deuteronomy 30:6

And the Lord (YHWH) your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord (YHWH) your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

Jeremiah 4:4

Circumcise yourselves to the LORD (YHWH), and take away the foreskins of your heart, you men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem.

We are to delight in God's law inwardly first:

Romans 7:22

For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.

Our circumcision must begin in the heart, otherwise we are being motivated for the wrong reasons in practicing God's law.

Romans 2:29

but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

The whole problem with first century dominant Jewish leadership is that their mainstream doctrine taught and focused on outward obedience and the written law for their own glory and praise and failed to focus on what was more important, faith in God's Word that gives God glory and praise. It is the faith in God's Word that produces the true desire to observe God's commandments in a love for God (1 John 5:2-3).

So why then does it appear that Paul is teaching against circumcision in Galatians 2?

He isn't.

This is the exact same situation that presented itself in Acts 15 when Paul took this same issue of circumcision to the Jerusalem council.

We will need to review Acts 15 to completely appreciate and understand the background of this situation.

Some of you may have already watched our *Acts 15* teaching as a recommended teaching to complement the Pauline Paradox Series. Because the events leading up to Acts 15 begin in Galatia, and further sets the context of the letter to the Galatians, we feel it is necessary for a short review. Also, the focus of Acts 15 is centered around the circumcision doctrine circulating in Galatia, making it relevant to the verses in Galatians 2.

The Galatians are already familiar with the situation presented in Acts 15, which is why Paul uses it as an example. Many today are not familiar enough with Acts 15 to understand how it applies to the letter to the Galatians.

We need to understand what Paul is attempting to teach the Galatians about this false doctrine and the false gospel that has become the subject of debate and frustration to Paul.

This circumcision story starts off in Antioch (which is in Galatia):

Acts 14:26-28

From **there they sailed to Antioch**, from which they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had accomplished. When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. And **they spent a long time with the disciples.**

While in Galatia some men come from Judea with this gospel for the Galatians:

Acts 15:1

Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "**Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.**"

Already it should be clear that this is not a matter of whether we should or should not observe the Law of God, but rather if the Law of God assists in salvation.

Let us say that again because many today misunderstand this due to doctrinal bias. We are sticking to what Scripture reads, not what others inject into their reading of Scripture.

In Acts 15, this is not a matter of whether we should or should not observe the Law of God, but rather if keeping specific aspects of the Law of God, such as circumcision in this case, is what merits our salvation.

This is a dominant theological problem of the first century and not so much in the Christian churches today...so try to place yourself in their shoes...into their culture...and into their debate at hand. If you are unable to see Acts 15 from the position of the Jewish culture and what is actually being said, and instead rely on modern doctrine and interpretation, then you will struggle with what is actually taking place.

There is a difference between correctly observing the Law of God because of our faith and the incorrect doctrine of legalism, which attempts to earn salvation by forfeiting grace.

Paul and Barnabus decide to leave Galatia to bring this matter to the Jerusalem Council.

On the way to Jerusalem they meet up with a different group that is contrary to the other group we saw in verse 1. This new group are believers in the Messiah and understand grace.

As believers they obviously understood the true gospel, which is salvation through faith by grace alone (Ephesians 2:8). Yet, they still believed that one should keep the law of God, not for salvation like those in verse 1, but in obedience because of our salvation.

Acts 15:5

But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."

So these two positions were submitted to the Jerusalem council, keep God's law for salvation (verse 1, legalism) or keep God's law in faith after salvation (verse 5, obedience in faith by grace).

After some debate, Peter offers his input.

Acts 15:7-11

After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

Peter establishes in Acts 15 that it is by faith that we are saved and that there is no Biblical difference between Jews and Greeks as it relates to salvation.

Paul teaches the same once we read past Galatians 2 and enter into Galatians 3.

In the first century, mainstream Jewish leadership had a problem with the idea that Gentiles could simply have faith and thus become believers regardless of what commandments they were or were not immediately obedient to.

Peter makes the point that no one has been able to bear the burden of the gospel that teaches that we must keep God's law in any capacity to be saved.

Peter is NOT saying that observing Law of God as God commanded is a burden, but that trying to keep the law of God for salvation is a burden that NO one can accomplish.

The point would be is that all have fallen short and thus we need grace through faith.

Peter states that the Gentile converts have been given the Holy Spirit in their faith, thus they will begin to learn and practice God's law AFTER faith is established because that is the whole point of the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:26-27; John 14:16-17; 26, 15:26; 16:13, 17:17, Psalm 119:142, Jeremiah 31:31-33).

So, all of this that we have said so far, would obviously rebuke the position offered in verse 1. Thus Peter would declare that legalism is a false doctrine. Many would subscribe to that today. Those teaching that circumcision is necessary for salvation teach a doctrine that does not hold up.

This leaves us with the position established in verse 5.

Acts 15:5

But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."

The point that these "believing" Pharisees were trying to make is that converts should still be told that following the Law of God is part of being a believer.

Most Christians would agree with that today, would they not?

We all agree that we should not murder, or lie, etc. That does not make one a "legalist."

These Pharisees were "believers" meaning they were in God's plan of salvation.

They are not “legalists” like the false brethren in verse 1.

These Pharisees have true faith in order to be defined as believers. Thus James must still address the point established in Acts 15:5 and rule against the point in Acts 15:1.

In Acts 15:14-18 James makes it clear that he understands that it is prophetic that the nations should begin to come into the faith.

James also makes it clear that we cannot place heavy expectations on new converts as they come into the faith.

Thus in some aspects James agrees with the position of those in verse 5; yet there is a critical clarification and distinction that James wants to emphasize. This distinction is important.

Remember, those in verse 5 said that new converts should keep the law of God, but not keep the law of God for salvation, like those in verse 1.

James clearly states that it should not be made difficult for a new believer. Here is his decree or decision:

Acts 15:19

["Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles..."](#)

So the solution James offers must be simple and easy for the Gentile converts, but still be in agreement with the position established in verse 5 and against the position established in verse 1.

In verse 20, James instructs Gentiles that are turning to God to turn away from cultic temple sun god practices and ways.

Acts 15:20

[but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.](#)

James did not list these instructions to Gentiles by accident. These are all related to the context of what occurred daily in the pagan sun god temples in the gentile regions.

There is a fantastic book resource worth considering titled *“The Lifting of the Veil”* that focuses on the historical and cultural meaning of Acts 15:20-21.

[*\(The Lifting of the Veil – Avram Yehoshua – Trafford Publishing\)*](#)

James found it critical to at least set the compass of the Gentile converts in the direction that is of God and not part of their sun god culture. They are told to leave all of that behind. The Galatians were mixing sun god worship with worship of our one true God.

These are all practices that were common in the cultic temple ways and practices related to the pagan sun gods. We cannot follow the ways of sun gods and the ways of the true God. The ways are not compatible and God considers that spiritual adultery.

Paul also deals with this exact same issue in Galatians chapter 4:8-11 because the Galatians were turning back to their old ways of worshipping false gods.

Galatians 4:8-9

But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how *is it that you turn again* to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you **desire again to be in bondage?**

The bondage Paul speaks of is the following of and turning back to their previous ways of false sun god worship.

James needed to address this problem first because believers cannot sit at the table of God and the table of devils. The top commandment of all of God's law is found in Deuteronomy 6:4:

Deuteronomy 6:4

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD (YHWH) our God, the LORD (YHWH) is one! You shall love the LORD (YHWH) your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

James made it clear that the Gentile converts needed to recognize that there are no other gods, that there is only one true God and that we are to love Him with all of our whole heart, all of our soul, and all of our mind.

We cannot divide some of our heart, soul, and mind after sun god ways and at the same time devote ourselves to God. It is the opposite of faith, which is one of the reasons Paul was so rightfully concerned for the Galatians in his letter.

If the Gentile converts would cease their false god ways, then the believers in the faith who were teachers of the Law of God (like those in Acts 15:5) would allow them back into the synagogues to learn the rest of God's law.

How do we know that James believed the converted Gentiles should learn the Law of Moses every Sabbath? That is how James actually brilliantly incorporated his agreement with those in verse 5 into his decision:

Acts 15:21

"For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

Once the Gentile converts prove that they only have a heart for God and abandon their cultic sun god ways, they will then learn the rest of God's law every Sabbath. This is how James made it easy on the new converts.

This is similar to how most Christians evangelize today. We preach and teach the good news that frees us from the bondage of our sin through faith by grace.

So, learning and applying God's law is a process in the faith of a believer, it is NOT an overnight event.

Committing and trusting in God's Word is all that is necessary for salvation. But once we enter into the plan of salvation, we should want to learn how to practice God's perfect Word in our lives....and that of course, takes time.

It is through that same commitment and trusting in God's Word that directly causes a new believer to seek out God's ways so they can be applied in their life.

In the first century, learning these ways primarily happened on Shabbat when the Law of Moses was read (consider the commandment in Matthew 23:1-3 as well).

Thus learning God's ways is a process in faith that is already established. The point James is trying to make clear to those in verse 5 is that no one can be expected to learn and apply all of God's law overnight, but the expectation of following the only one true God must be set and established immediately.

There are some that teach that Acts 15 teaches against the Law of God. It is taught that James only made his decree to appease Jews and verse 21 is always ignored and rendered meaningless as if James was simply a rambling lunatic.

What is even more interesting is that when Peter and Timothy left to deliver the decree that James issued, Paul actually circumcised Timothy before they delivered the decree to those that are found in Acts 15:5.

Acts 16:1-4

Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, *the* son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father *was* Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him. **And he took *him* and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.** And as they went through the cities, **they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.**

Why?

Because the decree of James proved the position of those in Acts 15:5 to be correct, Paul and Timothy both agreed that Timothy should be circumcised because all of the Jews already knew that he was a Greek.

How awkward would it have been for Timothy to be issuing a decree that states that Gentiles were to learn the Law of Moses each Sabbath and still not be practicing the Law of God himself?

Timothy felt as though he was ready to outwardly submit to his already inwardly circumcised heart.

Now remember that many still somehow teach that Acts 15 did away with circumcision thus declaring both groups of Jews in Acts 15:1 AND those in Acts 15:5 to be wrong. Meaning, people teach that James must have inserted a new, but unspoken, debate that supposedly taught that the Law of Moses is not for the converted Gentiles at all. Verse 15:21 is also not cited and basically deleted for theological consideration because it simply does not fit a law abolishing paradigm.

What this means is that we have Paul and Timothy, in Acts 16, leaving to go issue the decree to the Jews that supposedly teaches that Gentiles do not need to be circumcised, but right before they leave, Paul actually circumcises Timothy, a converted Gentile. It simply does not add up.

Why in the world would Paul and Timothy be issuing decrees to Jews that supposedly abolishes circumcision for Greeks and then feel it necessary to circumcise a Greek before they even begin? That would be the definition of insanity and hypocrisy. Keep in mind, this is what modern Christian seminaries teach as doctrine today.

Some even teach that Paul is simply trying to please believing Jews by circumcising Timothy. That makes no sense at all either. These Jews are already believers, this was not an evangelizing mission so there is no motive for Paul “pleasing” anyone.

In addition, would Timothy have actually allowed himself to be circumcised for such an absurd reason if it was not because God commanded it? Why would Luke have documented this in Acts if it was not important and related to the decision in Acts 15, the same decree that they are leaving to deliver?

In addition, Paul already declared that his motive is to please God not men, thus there is not even a need to debate this:

Galatians 1:10

For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

Acts 16 is not about pleasing men, it is about pleasing God.

Paul circumcised Timothy because the decree they were issuing teaches that Timothy should want to be circumcised in the flesh if his heart is truly already circumcised inwardly for the Word of God. This is what he would learn in the Sabbath each week as Moses (Law of God) was read from the Moses’ Seat.

You can now see how Acts 15 actually proves that all of God’s people are intended to observe the law of God, including circumcision.

What we need to determine is why was Timothy circumcised and Titus not circumcised in Galatians 2.

What was the difference?

Unless Paul is random and operating under no principles then Paul establishes a governing difference somewhere for us to understand and apply.

We have learned several things after this lengthy examination of the doctrine being presented to the Galatians. The circumcision presented to Titus was not a physical circumcision in faith to represent his circumcision of the heart (Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6) but instead a false circumcision into a false doctrine that taught that circumcision was necessary for salvation. That is the problem. Even Abraham was 99 before he was circumcised.

Titus, in Galatians 2, was being compelled by false doctrine to be circumcised in the flesh and taught that circumcision was necessary for salvation, just like those in Acts 15:1.

This is why Paul uses the phrase “*not forced.*”

Let’s read...

Galatians 2:3

But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.

Circumcision should NEVER be forced. It should always be a matter of the heart, out of a desire to follow God, not because one believes that it is necessary for salvation and then forced to do it.

We covered the “*circumcision for salvation*” doctrine in the very first verse of Acts 15 while they were in Galatia...and this is a letter to the Galatians.

This is not a coincidence. This is the false doctrine that Paul was dealing with in Galatia. It was a doctrine that taught that the Law of God was for salvation.

Circumcision for salvation is simply bad doctrine. Not only might Titus not be ready to practice outward circumcision (because he is not completely inwardly circumcised), but his circumcision should not even be remotely connected to salvation as the reason he is being circumcised. Such a practice must be stopped. Thus Paul runs to the Jerusalem council to expose and put an end to this doctrine (Acts 15).

We could even draw from our understanding of baptism. Most believers today understand baptism as a critical practice for a new believer, but most would not state that baptism is required for salvation.

That would be a works-based salvation.

The new believer is encouraged to be baptized when they are ready, as an outward sign of their inward belief in the Word.

The same process holds true for circumcision.

Circumcision is an outward practice of our inward circumcision of the heart (Deuteronomy 10:16).

The problem here at hand is that others were “compelling” Gentile converts to be circumcised...thus making it a motive of fear, not a heart for God.

Thus Paul needed to put a stop, NOT to the commandment of circumcision, but to the misuse and misapplication of the commandment of circumcision. That is a critical difference, yet it is not too complicated to understand if we stop just to consider it.

If Titus would have been circumcised by this group, then he would, in effect, be stating that he agreed with their gospel of being circumcised for salvation. When we are to be circumcised, we are to be circumcised as evidence of the circumcision of our heart in obedience to our faith, not as a vain attempt to earn our salvation.

The Circumcision Party, or Works of Law, is the group that taught this false doctrine.

This is later revealed after Galatians 2, and their doctrine is also spelled out in detail in the Dead Sea Scrolls (4QMMT).

They incorrectly taught that to be in the family of Abraham, one needed to be circumcised in the flesh first.

This is revealed in Galatians 3 and Acts 15. Instead, Paul taught in Galatians 3 that one needs only to have faith in the one true seed, the Word of God, and thus be circumcised in the heart, to be in the family of Abraham.

This simply means that we place our full faith and trust in the Word of God, not in our actions. Then and only then, do we have rights to the promises of Abraham. Our actions are actually the evidence of our faith in the Word, not our faith in and of itself (see James 2).

Paul was constantly re-teaching the true process of inward, then outward circumcision. He was forced to do this as it was a common, incorrect belief in the first century that it was only the outward circumcision that mattered. Paul taught that it is inward obedience and conversion first:

Romans 2:28-29

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

We are not to be circumcised in the flesh until we are fully circumcised in the heart (fully desire the Law of God) and are no longer stiff-necked (Deuteronomy 10:16; Deuteronomy 30:6).

Those of the Circumcision Party were only circumcising to boast in the flesh of their works:

Galatians 6:13

For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.

To Paul's point, if one is keeping God's law only outwardly, as written, then they are missing the whole point of God's law which is an inward transformation first. We are to keep God's law to please God, not to please men. If we are keeping God's law simply to boast, then we are not keeping God's law as intended.

Again, this is why Paul establishes this mindset in the very first chapter of Galatians.

Galatians 1:10

For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

Contrary to much of the doctrine dominant in Jewish leadership in the first century, God's law, starting with circumcision, is not a means to salvation in any capacity. Salvation is by grace through faith. Once we have faith in God's Word, it is then that we practice God's Word. We are to still walk in God's law to produce good works, but we cannot place the cart before the horse. We are to keep God's law not for salvation, but because of our salvation.

Ephesians 2:8-10

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, **not of works, lest anyone should boast**. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for **good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them**

It is the Law of God prepared beforehand that we are to walk out in our lives, (Leviticus 26:3, Deuteronomy 8:6; 11:22; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9; 30:16; Psalm 119:35; Luke 1:6; 2 John 1:4; 2 John 1:6)

Now we are really beginning to understand and appreciate the difference between a true application of circumcision, and a false application of circumcision.

This is why Paul states what he does in 1 Corinthians 7:19

1 Corinthians 7:19

Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.

This is a very confusing statement by Paul because circumcision is actually a commandment of God as an inward and outward commandment.

However, if we fully consider everything that we have just reviewed, we discover that Paul is once again just teaching against the doctrine of men that teach circumcision actually means something as it relates to salvation. In reality, to Paul's point, it does not. Circumcision is simply evidence of faith in the Word.

Believing that circumcision provides salvation changes our obedience to men instead of to God. That is a problem. When we believe that our obedience and men's doctrines can save us, we have consequently misplaced our faith. What Paul is stating, is that only what God's commandments say and teach actually matters, not what men say and teach. We are to be servants to Christ, not to men. Just a few verses later Paul even makes this very clear:

1 Corinthians 7:23

You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

Isn't that language very similar to Paul's language to the Galatians? Isn't being a slave to men instead of Christ (Word made flesh) bondage?

Galatians 2:3-5

Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was forced to be circumcised. And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus (Messiah Yeshua), that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

“Is God's law bondage or are doctrines and commandments of men bondage?”

Answering that question correctly will also correctly determine if Paul is teaching against the Law of God, or commandments of men in his example of the situation surrounding Titus.

Perhaps now is an appropriate time to address the points mentioned in the beginning of this study that we still need to test to Scripture. If these points fail to pass, then we know that Paul is teaching against commandments and doctrines of men and not teaching against God's law. Given the amount of Scripture we have already covered, these points should be already rather easy to test, but the goal of this study is to not leave any room for confusion.

If what has been said so far is correct then the following should pass the Scriptural test:

- 1) The doctrine of the group influencing the Galatians observes the Law of God.
- 2) Observing God's law is bondage.
- 3) The freedom that we have in Christ Jesus (Yeshua) is freedom from God's law.
- 4) Observing God's law is against the gospel.
- 5) Paul taught against circumcision.

1) Does the doctrine of the group influencing the Galatians observe the Law of God?

We need to answer this because it is assumed, in mainstream doctrine, that the Galatians are being compelled to observe the Law of God. It is not considered that the Galatians are simply being compelled to follow a different gospel and a doctrine that is contrary to the Law of God. Consider reading Galatians 6:12-14.

Galatians 6:12-14

As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these *would* compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

Paul makes it clear that this group does not even keep the Law of God themselves. They simply teach circumcision to boast in converts according to their false doctrine. It would be no different than a group with false doctrine today compelling new believers to be baptized into their doctrine.

Baptism is certainly not wrong, and it is a Biblical practice. Yet, to have those that teach and believe false doctrine and a false gospel go and baptize us certainly sends about as wrong of a message as can be sent.

If you are baptized by those who believe you must be baptized to be saved, those watching are going to believe that you also believe that you must be baptized to be saved. It is only logical.

Likewise, if you are circumcised by those who believe that you must be circumcised to be saved, people are also going to believe that you also believe that circumcision is necessary for salvation.

This is the same issue presented before Titus. He chose not to be forced to be circumcised for the wrong reasons (meaning for salvation). On the flip side, Timothy was circumcised for the right reasons (obedience from faith).

2) Is God's law bondage?

Paul clearly accuses the false gospel and doctrine of the Jewish sect Circumcision Party/Works of Law to be bondage in Galatians. We have a choice. Either the Law of God is bondage and thus Paul is teaching against the Law of God, or men's doctrine related to the Law of God is bondage and thus requires correcting.

Scripture declares God's law to be freedom.

Psalm 119:44-45

So shall I keep Your law continually, Forever and ever. **And I will walk at liberty**, For I seek Your precepts.

James 1:25

But he who looks into the perfect **law of liberty** and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

James 2:12

So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the **law of liberty**.

Thus Paul simply cannot be declaring God's law to be bondage. Freedom/liberty is the opposite of bondage. We simply cannot ignore that. As established earlier, God's law defines sin. Sin is defined as bondage in Scripture. This is why God's law is liberty. If we walk in God's law we are not sinning. This actually leads us into the next point that we need to test to Scripture.

3) Is the freedom that we have in Messiah Yeshua, freedom from God's law?

As John 1:14 states, the Word became flesh. Yeshua is freedom because He is the Word in the flesh. The Law of God is the Word. Walking as Christ walked is walking in the Word of God. Thus it logically follows that the freedom we have in Christ is the Word, which is contrary to the false doctrines and commandments of men. Walking in the Word is the opposite of sinning. Sin is bondage. Walking as Christ walked (not sinning) is freedom. Christ did not afford us the license to break the law of God. He is to be our example in the Word of God, not our excuse to not keep the Word of God.

4) Is observing God's law against the gospel?

So much Scripture could be presented here to prove that God's people are to observe God's law. Psalm 119 is perhaps the best testimony to that understanding.

Let us ask this, is it good news that our Creator gave us perfect instructions to follow, or is it bad news?

We just spent a great deal of time setting the cultural and historical context of Galatians using Scripture. The rest of Galatians will now be much easier to understand, as this context is the key to understanding everything going forward.

Let's continue with Galatians 2, resuming in verse 6.

Galatians 2:6-10

And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

Starting in verse 11, we have another interesting situation develop. Please remember the context of everything up unto this point.

There is a compelling and powerful religious group that teaches that physical circumcision is what merits salvation. This group, the "Circumcision Party" as they are called, is causing doctrinal problems in Galatia.

Galatians 2:11-12

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, **fearing** the circumcision party.

Do you see how powerful and influential this circumcision party doctrine was? They actually feared this group...

Galatians 2:14

But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

This leads us into the next topic in Galatians.

Galatians 2:14 - Should We Live as the Circumcision Party, Jews, or the Gentiles?

Galatians 2:14 is often cited to suggest that Paul is teaching that believers should live like the Gentiles and not as Jews.

This is done to support a faulty theological doctrine that creates a divide in the purpose, delivery, and design of God's law.

In such a scenario, the Jews obviously represent the Law of God, and Gentiles represent not following the Law of God.

Thus, those who do not want to live according to God's established ways in His Word, declare the Law of God made void through their faith.

Or they simply pick and choose which commandment “system” they want to obey based on several different manmade doctrines.

Thus which commandments are still in effect is simply a matter of opinion.

In either case, they side with their understanding of Paul by declaring that we are to not be like the Jews (that Law of God as written by Moses) but instead like the Gentiles (either no law or a different “system of commandments”)

As we proceed through this study, we will discover that Paul is actually teaching the exact opposite of what is described in the above.

It should be immediately mentioned that from the beginning, any Gentile coming into the faith was always intended to adopt the same law as the natural born Israelite. There is no difference between an Israelite and an Egyptian, Moabite, Greek, etc. in the faith.

Numbers 15:15-16

One ordinance shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger who dwells with you, an ordinance forever throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger be before the LORD. One law and one custom shall be for you and for the stranger who dwells with you.’

Exodus 12:19; Exodus 12:38; 12:49; Leviticus 19:34; 24:22; Numbers 9:14; 15:15-16; Numbers 15:29; ie: Ruth; Isaiah 42:6; 60:3; Matthew 5:14; Ephesians 2:10-13; Acts 13:47; Romans 11:16-27; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 37; 1 John 2:10; 1 John 1:7)

Therefore, if Paul was in fact teaching that converted Gentiles were to not keep the same Law of God as the Jews, He is then violating God’s established Word as written by Moses.

This would be quite odd because Paul himself taught that he believed and practiced everything written in the Law and Prophets when he was accused of not teaching and practicing the Law of Moses:

Acts 24:13-14

Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me. But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.

That would certainly mean that Paul believes Numbers 15:15-16 to still be true, unless Paul was lying.

However, let’s pretend that we still did not believe Paul on this matter and that one could still be convinced that they should live as Gentiles and that meant they are not to observe the law of God in the faith.

Let’s test that doctrine, even to its surrounding text. First, we need to cover the basics.

Galatians 2:14 mentions several different groups of people common in first century Galatia. It would make sense for us to understand each group well to enable us to discern the doctrines and belief systems of each.

We have three specific groups we need to understand fully:

- 1) The “Circumcision Party”
- 2) The “rest of the Jews” - Jews such as Paul, Peter and Barnabus
- 3) Gentiles

Group 1) The “Circumcision Party”

Galatians 2:12-13

For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with **the Gentiles**; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, **fearing the party of the circumcision.**

The **rest of the Jews** joined him in **hypocrisy**, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.

Peter used to eat with the Gentiles (Acts 10-11), but now after delivering the decree of Acts 15, Peter is playing the hypocrite by sitting with the Circumcision Party. The Circumcision Party has a manmade law, not from the Law of God, that a Jew is not to eat with Gentiles.

Peter is doing this because he “*fears*” them. It is implied that Peter must fear them because he knows that the decree James issued calls the Circumcision Party nothing better than false teachers.

Remember, this is related to the same group that made false accusations against Stephen, and then dragged Stephen out of the city gates to stone him. There was certainly valid reasons to be fearful.

Given the amount of influence and power this group had in the first century, it would not take much for this group to assemble a list of **false** accusations against Peter just like what was done to Stephen in Acts chapters 6 & 7.

We need to understand what the Circumcision Party believed and practiced to fully understand why Paul reacted the way he did.

The “Circumcision Party” believed that it was only through God’s law (starting with circumcision) that Gentiles could be saved as proselytes.

Acts 15:1

And certain *men* came down from Judea and taught the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”

False teachers (“Circumcision Party” - Galatians 2:7-12; 5:12 and “Works of Law” - Galatians 2:16; 3:2; 3:5; 3:10) began promoting their doctrine (“oral law”) in Galatia that required Gentiles to be circumcised in a certain way.

They also taught that all commandments of God coupled with commandments of men need to be followed before one can be justified for salvation.

This is certainly the doctrine (or “false gospel”) that Paul is teaching against in the letter to the Galatians. Paul mentions several times that the false doctrine of salvation through the law is the core error that the Galatians have been misled to believe.

Galatians 2:16

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

This theme continues throughout Galatians: (i.e. Galatians 2:21; 3:2; 3:3; 3:5; 3:11; 5:4)

“Works of Law”

Qumran document 4QMMT (4Q394-5) gives us some insight to a Jewish sect in the first century called “Works of Law.”

The Jewish sect of Works of Law believed many things in their doctrine that were contrary to God’s law and also taught that Gentiles could not be saved.

They were, in effect, not living God’s law in faith but in fact living their own invented law-which was a twisted form of God’s law (similar practice of the 6 sects of the Pharisees).

Their doctrine was related to those of the “Circumcision Party” or perhaps they are of the same group and same beliefs.

This would be why Galatians 6:13 states that this group that is supposedly teaching God’s law for salvation does not even “keep God’s law themselves.”

In the end of Acts 15 we read that James declared the doctrine presented in Acts 15:1 as false doctrine, that it is faith that saves us, not circumcision as the doctrine of the “Circumcision party” teaches. This is the exact same thing Paul is teaching in his letter to the Galatians.

Galatians 6:13

For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.

In summary, the two main problems with the “Circumcision Party” are that they present a false gospel (salvation by works) and they do not keep the Law of God themselves. They only keep circumcision in the flesh to boast in the flesh. In reality, the whole point of outward circumcision according to the Law of God is to be a demonstration of our inward circumcision. God’s law is to be practiced as it was intended to be practiced, not as a means to salvation, but out of love for God (1 John 5:2-3).

Group 2) Jews Such as Paul, Peter and Barnabus (Believing Jews)

In Paul’s letter to the Romans, Paul declares that those that subscribe to the doctrine of salvation by circumcision simply to boast in the flesh (outward only) are not true Jews. We just read that this belief and practice is the root doctrinal error of the Circumcision Party. This false doctrine

misleading the beliefs of the Galatians. Thus, Paul does not consider the Circumcision Party as true Jews. He simply can not according to his own definition in the context of this false circumcision doctrine.

Romans 2:28-29

For **he is not a Jew who is one outwardly**, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; **but he is a Jew who is one inwardly**; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God.

Paul was constantly dealing with the false doctrine of the Circumcision Party in his letters. Those of the Circumcision Party do not keep God's law themselves, but only do certain works to boast in the flesh. Paul's point is that we are to be circumcised in the heart first. This is what the Law of God already taught:

Deuteronomy 10:16

Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked.

Deuteronomy 30:6

And the LORD (YHWH) your God will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your seed, to love the LORD (YHWH) your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, that you may live.

Jeremiah 4:4

Circumcise yourselves to the LORD (YHWH), and take away the foreskins of your heart, you men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The Circumcision Party focused on outward application only, not an inward transformation as being necessary first.

In a previous example, we mentioned that this would be equivalent to being told today that a person had to be baptized to be saved, instead of being saved inwardly through faith. Obviously such doctrine does not stand the test in the first century and nor does it today, whether it be for circumcision, baptism, or any other commandment of God.

The Law of God is only good if it is used in the way it was intended to be used:

1 Timothy 1:8

But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully...

The law of God is not designed to save us. It is designed to define sin, bless us in obedience, and curse us in disobedience.

As Gentiles coming into the faith, once we are circumcised of the heart, then and only then are we are to be circumcised in the flesh. The Circumcision Party had it all backwards. Outward circumcision is nothing if we are not doing it out of circumcision of the heart first as found and taught in the commandments of God. Paul taught the same to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 7:19

Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.

We even learn just a few verses later that the reason that Paul has to teach the Corinthians that circumcision and uncircumcision is nothing is because they were also being taught the same false doctrine as the Galatians. Circumcision cannot save us from our sins. Circumcision unto salvation is a doctrine that causes us to follow men, to be in bondage to men. We were redeemed and bought on the cross.

This is why in the context of circumcision in 1 Corinthians 7, it concludes with the following:

1 Corinthians 7:23

You were bought at a price; **do not become slaves of men.**

If we follow such works-based salvation false doctrine, we are simply just obeying men, becoming slaves to men, instead of being slaves to God. This was a massive problem in the first century.

Acts 5:29

But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men.

In the first century, mainstream Jewish leadership practiced something called the “oral law” (Talmud). Paul later refers to this doctrine as the “works of law” (see *Qumran document 4QMMT (4Q394-5)* or “*commandments of men.*”

Yeshua (Jesus) also referred to the “oral law” as the “traditions of the elders” that violates the “law of God” (Mark 7; Matthew 23) or the Word of God.

There is much that can be said about the “oral law.” However, at a very basic level, the “oral law” consisted of doctrines, teachings, and commandments of men that much of the mainstream Jewish leadership of the first century elevated above the commandments of God. In some cases the “oral law” even contradicted the commandments of God. This major issue of the first century is also the point and purpose of Yeshua’s (Jesus’) teaching in Matthew 5, His rebuking in Mark 7, and many other of His other points of contention with Jewish leadership during the length of His ministry.

The critical point to remember here is that there is a clear difference between the “commandments of men” and the “commandments of God.”

Commandments coming from men, are commandments of men...not commandments of God.

Commandments coming from God are commandments of God, or the Law of God...not commandments of men.

You might be surprised how often you might see Christian seminaries today confusing and merging together such simple definitions...causing all sorts of problems.

To illustrate through Scripture again...

Mark 7:6

He answered and said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘ *This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in*

vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men

Mark 7:9

He said to them, “**All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.**”

Mark 7:13

making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.”

As you can see, just like today, these things were often confused even in the first century. The commandments of men were merged together with the commandments of God. It is the Word of God that we are to follow, not doctrines and traditions of men. Even in Mark 7:10 specifically, we see our Lord appealing to what was written by Moses as the Word of God. We must remember that it is every word that came out of the mouth of God (which happened at Sinai) that is to be food for us (Matthew 4:4).

In summary, Paul does not consider anyone a real Jew unless they have an inward desire to keep God’s commandments for God only, not for men. Outward only Jews kept God’s law not for their love for God (1 John 5:2-3) but simply to boast in the flesh. Thus, they had no faith in God, but sadly only faith and love of themselves, in their ways, through their commandments.

Paul, Peter and Barnabus would have qualified as a true Jew according to Paul’s definition. Paul, Peter and Barnabus observed God’s law because of their inward desire, not because of the false outward motivation of the Circumcision Party. They rejected the “*oral law*,” the same “*oral law*” that Paul rejected coming out of his previous Pharisee doctrine when he was zealous for the “traditions” of his fathers (see Galatians 1:14).

3) Gentiles

The group of the Gentiles is the easiest to define. Paul defines that group in the very next verse:

Galatians 2:15

“We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles...”

Paul contrasts the true Jews (the “we”) with the Gentile sinners. Thus, in the context here, the Gentiles referenced were not saved but were still in the bondage of their own sin. Now we understand that there were Gentiles who were also believers, but that is not in the context here. According to Paul, the true Jews know salvation by faith and they follow the Law of God. It is Paul’s desire that Peter is an example to the Gentiles, not an obstacle.

The Summary of the Three Groups:

1) Circumcision Party – They present a false gospel of salvation through God’s law starting with circumcision. They place their faith in themselves and their traditions in error. In addition, they also do not keep God’s law themselves (sinners).

2) Jews - Jews such as Paul, Peter and Barnabus – This is the group that Paul associates himself, Peter, and Barnabus with. Paul defines a true Jew as someone who is circumcised of the heart, meaning that their heart is fully “cut out” for God. One with a circumcised heart has every desire

to keep God's ways, not for man or for himself, but to love God. They do not practice the traditions "oral law" that is contrary to the Law of God as written by Moses. This is actually the whole point of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-33; Ezekiel 36:26-27), which is to bring us back to the Law of God.

3) Gentiles – The Gentiles, or unbelieving Gentiles in this context, are also called sinners by Paul himself. They are not yet saved. In this regard they are like the Circumcision Party, but still differ in culture and doctrine.

Now we are better enabled to examine the verse in question:

Galatians 2:14

But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

Now there are some who like to interpret this as Paul in essence saying:

"If you are a Jew and have rightly abandoned the law (which means you're living like a Gentile), why do you compel the Gentiles to keep the law like a Jew by only eating with the Jews?"

Due to this interpretation, it is commonly understood that this is a passage that supports the doctrine of the law being abolished. But verse 15 exposes the fallacy of this interpretation when Paul contrasts the Jews with Gentiles and identifies the Gentiles as being sinners.

Galatians 2:15

"We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles..."

Thus, Paul declaring that Peter was acting like a Gentile can only be interpreted as being highly negative.

Paul was calling Peter a sinner and setting for himself as a hypocritical example for the Gentiles.

Acting like a Gentile is NOT a good thing...because according to Paul, Gentiles are sinners and DO NOT keep the Law of God...

Likewise, in the same context, Paul identifies himself, Barnabas, and Peter as the "true Jews" not the Jews of the Circumcision Party whom, according to Paul's doctrine, are not true Jews. The true Jews are Paul, Barnabas, and Peter.

Now that we have defined the groups in Galatians 2:14, this understanding should be very clear.

Galatians 2:14

But when I saw that they (*Circumcision Party*) were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel (*presented false gospel*), I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew (*true Jew*), live like the Gentiles (*sinners*) and not like the Jews (*true Jew - us*), how is it that you compel the Gentiles (*sinners*) to live like Jews (*true Jew - us*)?"

Paul is in effect asking Peter, "How can you expect the Gentiles (sinners) to act like the (true) Jews if you are acting like Gentiles (sinners like the Circumcision Party) yourself?"

The KJV reads:

"why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"

The Nestle-Aland Greek text (based on older manuscripts) reads:

"How can you compel the Gentiles to live as do the Jews."

So the question wasn't "*Why are you over there trying to get Gentiles (Torah breakers) to live like Jews (Torah keepers)? Don't you know the law is abolished?*"

The real question was "*How can you ever compel the Gentiles to keep the Torah (like true Jews are supposed to) if you are a sinner yourself?*"

Both Greek texts are compatible with the latter understanding, but the Nestle-Aland text would contradict the common Christian interpretation of these verses. (Torah = Law of God)

This is a massive departure from how this verse is usually interpreted. Many want to associate themselves as Gentiles.

But if we are believers, then we are no longer Gentiles but have become citizens of the commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13).

We have been removed from the wild olive tree (the Gentiles) and grafted into the cultivated olive tree (Romans 11) - Israel (Jeremiah 11:16). We have left the nations (Gentiles) and have been adopted into the family of the one nation of God (Israel). Thus, we are to follow the same instructions given to Israel from the beginning. One Nation, One Law.

The Rest of Galatians 2:

Concluding chapter 2, Paul continues to teach against the false doctrine of the Circumcision Party who teach a works-based salvation.

Galatians 2:16-17

nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.

"But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? **God forbid!**

Paul teaches the same thing other letters:

Romans 6:15

What then? **shall we sin**, because we are not under the law, but under grace? **God forbid.**

Romans 3:31

Do we then **make void the law** through faith? **God forbid:** yea, we establish the law.

In chapter 1 Paul states how he, as a Pharisee, had to come out of such false doctrine himself.

Galatians 2:18

"For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor."

Paul then goes on to say that he died to the law to enable him to live for God.

Galatians 2:19

"For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God.

That seems confusing, but we also know that Paul teaches the same thing in Romans 7 that he is teaching in Galatians 2:19.

Romans 7:9

I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, **sin revived and I died.**

Does this mean that Paul discards the Law of God? That Paul killed the Law of God? No, absolutely not. **"God forbid!"** The law is designed to kill us so that it produces an inward desire to live to God instead of for our self. It is through the law that we realize that we are sinners. This is what it is supposed to do, and for that, it is good.

Romans 7:11-12

For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed *me*. **Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.**

Paul then teaches that because the law kills him by exposing his sin, that the desire to keep the Law of God and desire to hate the law of sin is the natural result in our faith:

Romans 7:13-25

"Has then what is good (Law of God) become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good (Law of God), so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For **I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.** But I see **another law** in my members, **warring against the law of my mind**, and bringing me **into captivity** to the **law of sin** which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin."

With this, we realize that Paul is certainly not teaching against the Law of God in Galatians 2:19, but describing the correct process that the Law of God is to serve; as a guide on how we are to live and love God...The Circumcision Party made it about salvation...a process they perverted and twisted.

Galatians 2:19

"For through the Law I **died to the Law**, so that I might **live to God (serve through the Law of God)**).

Paul explains the Law of God in this way for a very important reason. The Circumcision Party reads God's law and simply does God's law to boast outwardly. Without faith, God simply does not recognize such works as obedience, but instead men's faulty religious systems under the guise of God's ways.

Paul's point is to prove that God's law is designed to convict us by defining and exposing our sin. At that time it is to force us to realize that we are sinners; thus it cannot be a means to salvation. God's law is to point us to the means to salvation (Christ). We then put on the mind of Christ (Romans 7:25; 1 Corinthians 2:16) in our faith, which is serving the Law of God because of our salvation, not for our salvation.

Galatians 2:20

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Paul concludes that practicing God's law for salvation nullifies the grace afforded to us through faith.

Righteousness unto salvation is through Christ alone.

Galatians 2:21

"I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

However, just because we have faith that affords us grace and righteousness unto salvation by Christ, does not mean that we are no longer to practice the righteousness of the Law of God.

Galatians 2:17

"But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? **God forbid!**

Romans 3:31

Do we then make void the law through faith? **God forbid:** yea, we establish the law.

It is because of the righteousness afforded to us by grace that we actually practice righteousness. Christ becomes our example to follow the Law of God, not our excuse to not follow the Law of God.

1 John 3:7

Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

Now that we know this, we do not want to forget this!

2 Peter 2:20-21

For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior (Yeshua Messiah) Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, **to turn from the holy commandment** delivered to them.

To summarize what Paul is teaching in Galatians as simply as possible, it could be said that *“Obedience is the fruit of salvation – not the root of salvation.”* (Matthew 7:16)

Obedience is not our salvation, but the evidence of it. It is simply how we *“will know them by their fruits.”*

Galatians 2:20

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

Moving on to Galatians 3...

Galatians 3:1-4

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ (Messiah Yeshua) was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?

Paul’s point, contrary to the Circumcision Party, is that we are not made perfect by obeying the Law of God, but by the inward faith that we have. We obey the Law of God because of our inward faith.

Galatians 3:5-9

Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?— just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

Paul cites Abraham as validation for his teaching. Remember, Abraham was in the faith BEFORE he was circumcised. Circumcision is not what causes your faith, faith is what causes you to want to be circumcised.

Even still, the “*believing*” Abraham kept the Law of God...

Genesis 26:5

...because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.”

Here we enter into the next section that requires significant discussion...

Galatians 3:10-14

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.”

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

So is God’s Law a curse, or are we cursed for breaking God’s Law?

We need to read and apply what Paul is saying here. Let’s go back to the beginning of the Bible and see what God says His Law is intended to do:

Deuteronomy 11:26-28

Behold, I set before you this day a blessing **and a curse**; A blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD (YHWH) your God, which I command you this day: **And a curse, if you will not obey the commandments of the LORD (YHWH) your God**, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which you have not known.

God’s Law blesses and curses.

(Deuteronomy 11:26-27; Psalm 112:1, 119:1-2, 128:1; Proverbs 8:32, Isaiah 56:2; Matthew 5:6, 5:10; Luke 11:28; James 1:25; 1 Peter 3:14; Revelation 22:14)

This is where the concept of the “*curse of the Law*” originates. Paul is not inventing something new, nor is he calling the “Law of God” a curse.

We are not cursed in obeying the Law of God. We are cursed when we break the Law of God.

The curse is clearly not the Law; the “*curse*” is clearly stated to be a result of our transgression of it.

Have we all broken God’s Law? Yes! So we all have to deal with being under the “*curse of the Law*”.

If we never deal with the curse that we are all under, then we will go through the second death at the Great White Throne Judgment.

1 John 3:4

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: **for sin is the transgression of the law.**

God's Law can only do three things: bless, curse, and define sin.

Here is how it works...

The curse of the Law is the second death. Because of our sin (breaking God's Law), we all deserve death (Romans 5:12). However, once we have faith in the finished work on the cross, we enter into His grace and are no longer under the "law of sin and death (curse)" (Romans 8:1-3).

Yeshua (Jesus) died on the cross to take away our sin and what results from sin, the curse, the death, not God's Law.

This is simply all Salvation 101 teaching right? This is nothing new. We all should already know that Yeshua (Jesus) died on the cross for our sins, taking away the curse of the second death by grace.

Why does Paul need to teach something that seems so simple and elementary to us? Verse 3:11 makes it clear.

Galatians 3:11

But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

The Galatians were trying to be **justified** by the Law of God by theological and social pressure coming from the Circumcision party and Works of Law doctrine.

Obviously anyone trying to be justified by God's Law needs to be taught the process of salvation (through faith by grace) all over again.

Paul makes it clear that we are to live by God's Law, by faith – not for justification. Anyone trying to be justified by God's Law, instead of being justified in faith by God's grace, is still under the "*curse of the law*" (law of sin and death). The only way to not be under the "*curse of the law*" (law of sin and death) is to come into faith in the Word of God, and then you will come into God's grace in the work on the cross.

Again, the Law only does three things: defines sin (obedience or disobedience), curses us, and blesses us.

Once the Law defines sin for us, we then realize that we are under the curse of the Law (law of sin and death). We then realize that we require a Savior to remove that curse (second death). This is where grace offers us salvation to remove the curse of the Law in our faith. If the Galatians believe keeping the Law saves, then they are not going to realize that they need a Savior to save them. This is exactly what Galatians 3:22-25 teaches us, which is the next often cited point of confusion in Galatians (Law as a "schoolmaster").

Now that the curse is abolished after our faith is established, where does that leave us in respect to the "Law of God?"

We are still left with the "Law of God" defining sin (disobedience) and blessings (obedience), since the curse (Deuteronomy 11:26) is now gone. This is why Scripture focuses so much on the blessings of the "Law of God" for the obedient believer.

(Psalm 112:1, 119:1-2, 128:1; Proverbs 8:32; Isaiah 56:2; Matthew 5:6, 5:10; Luke 11:28; James 1:25; 1 Peter 3:14; Revelation 22:14).

It is the unbeliever that is still under the curse of the law (second death)(law of sin and death). The Spiritual mind is after the “Law of God” (freedom from sin), and thus receives all of the blessings in obedience to God’s Law.

Clearly God's Law is not a curse, but we cursed ourselves by not obeying it (law of sin and death). That is why we need a Savior; the Savior did not come to abolish God's Law, but to take away the curse we deserve from not obeying.

Moving on in Galatians...

Galatians 3:15

Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man’s covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it.

Paul makes a point that no one can add to or take away from covenants between men...how much moreso is that true of covenants with God?

Think about that for a moment. If man’s covenant cannot change, then neither can God’s covenant. They are built on mutual promises. That is Paul’s point here.

Nothing in the Word of God changes between us and Him. The new covenant is simply about the House of Israel coming back into the covenant. For more on that, we recommend our teachings [“The Lost Sheep”](#) and [“What is the Gospel?”](#)

Galatians 3:16

Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ.

According to our Messiah in Luke 18:11... the “*seed*” is metaphorically defined as the Word of God. This makes sense because a seed is full of instructions, or DNA if you will. This grows into a tree, or people (Mark 8:24), and then people follow those instructions, which is our fruit. We could go a lot deeper than that, but you get the picture.

Paul’s point here is that there is only one Word of God for everyone. There is not a set of instructions for the Jews and a separate set of instructions for Gentiles...yet people still make that mistake even today...

Numbers 15:16

One law and one custom shall be for you and for the stranger who dwells with you.’ (also see Exodus 12:49)

Thus the Word of God was the same for Abraham as it was for the Jews, and the mixed multitude, at Sinai.

Why is that important?

Because it proves a point for Paul.

Abraham came into faith FIRST and THEN he was circumcised. There is no difference in how it was then, or at Sinai, or even today, which is Paul's next point.

Galatians 3:17-18

And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

So if the law is not a means to salvation...if it was not required for Abraham to be circumcised to come into the faith...and the law is the same as it was for Abraham, those at Sinai, and those today...then what is the purpose of the Law of God...the question logically follows, so Paul begins to answer it...

Galatians 3:19-21

What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.

The law is given to us to point out our transgressions, to expose our sin. We covered this in the teaching on Romans in the Pauline Paradox Series. The law is given to us through mediators.

In the English text it sometimes says angels, but the word is more literally known as messengers.

Moses acted as a messenger and mediator of the Torah, or Law of God.

Yeshua, to whom the promises were made, also did the same.

For more information on how Moses was a type or foreshadowing of Yeshua, we recommend the teaching [The 4th and 7th day](#).

So, since the Law of God points out our sin which demands our death, is it against God's promises for our salvation?

Galatians 3:21

Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not!

So, the promise of God is offering us grace...and thus, we have it being said right here, that practicing the Law of God is NOT against grace. It is simply that the law of God does not afford us grace, but points out the reason we need grace, since we have all broken the law of God...which is Paul's next point...

For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.

Then Paul begins to discuss how the Law of God leads us into grace...which is a subject of verses that are often confused.

Let's examine Galatians 3:22-25:

Galatians 3:23 - Was God's Law a Schoolmaster that Has Been Abolished at the Cross?

This is where it will be very helpful to have watched all previous parts of the Pauline Paradox Series. If you haven't, and the next section is still a struggle for you, we again recommend you watch the series in order.

There are seven laws Paul teaches in his letters. If you do not understand these different laws and how they all relate, then you will misunderstand this section.

Galatians 3:22

But the Scripture has **confined all under sin**, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ (Messiah Yeshua) might be given to those who believe.

So, according to Paul, Scripture concludes that all are "*under sin*." Paul also states the same thing in Romans 3:10-20.

All those who do not know the way of peace (Romans 3:17) and have no fear of God (Romans 3:18) are unbelievers. God's law declares (since all are unrighteous and have broken it) that the whole world is under the law as they are guilty (Romans 3:19).

Thus it is unbelievers that are under the law. Unbelievers (without faith) are "*under the law*" because of their disobedience.

If we go back to the charter of God's law, we find out that means the "*curse of the law*" (Deuteronomy 11:26) and Paul also refers to this as the "*law of sin and death*" (Romans 6:14; 8:1-3).

Deuteronomy 11:26-28

Behold, I set before you this day a blessing **and a curse**; A blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD (YHWH) your God, which I command you this day: **And a curse, if you will not obey the commandments of the LORD (YHWH) your God**, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which you have not known.

Gods law blesses and curses:

(Deuteronomy 11:26-27)(Psalm 112:1)(Psalm 119:1-2)(Psalm 128:1)(Proverbs 8:32)(Isaiah 56:2)(Matthew 5:6)(Matthew 5:10)(Luke 11:28)(James 1:25)(1 Peter 3:14)(Revelation 22:14)

Because we all have been disobedient we all are under the curse of the law as intended.

Going back to Galatians 3:22, since "*all are under sin*," then all are under the law of "*sin and death*" since death follows sin (Romans 5:12; Galatians 3:10-13).

There is a critical reason that Paul states, in verse 22, that we were all once "*under sin*."

The reason is because that is the context.

Is the context God's law?

No.

Why?

Is God's law sin? God forbid (Romans 7:7). We are under sin!

Thus we know that the next verse is not about God's law, but the "*law of sin and death*." Watch what happens when we apply the context correctly.

This (being under the Law of Sin) is what we need to recognize before we have faith.

We learn earlier in chapter 3 (Galatians 3:10-13) that sin places us under the curse (the second death) of the law (Romans 5:12) and that in faith we are no longer under it (Galatians 3:10-13; Romans 6:14, 8:1-3).

So in 3:10-13 Paul explains the fact that we are no longer under the curse of the law in faith. In 3:22-25 Paul teaches us the purpose of the "curse of the law" (law of sin and death). Watch.

So,

Galatians 3:22

But the Scripture hath concluded all **under sin**, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

Leads into...

Galatians 3:23

But before faith came, we were kept **under the law** (sin: see verse 22), shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

So, before we had faith, we were under the law (of sin). Verse 22 defines what we were under, which is sin.

Sin is defined as breaking God's law. Paul already explained the consequences of sin a few verses earlier in verse 3:10:

"Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law (live under sin), to do them."

Thus if 3:22 says all are under sin then by what Paul just taught us a few lines earlier we must then conclude that I am under the curse (death) of the law because of my sin (law of sin and death) which Paul already said the solution is the finished work on the cross by faith (3:13).

Therefore this must be the "*law of sin and death*" and we are cursed and thus we need a Savior to rid ourselves of this curse.

Do you see how context defines everything?

Many just quote verses 23-25 and ignore verse 22 and they never consider which law Paul is declaring us to be under **before** our faith. Remember, we are “under the law” before our faith.

If being “*under the law*” was about keeping God’s law, what in the world would keeping God’s law have to do with being before we come into the faith? Before faith we knew nothing about God’s law.

That is why Paul is “*difficult to understand*” to those who are “*ignorant*” and “*unstable*.” Right here is just another example in which readers of Paul abolish God's law and “*make the error of lawless men*”(2 Peter 3:15-17)

The “*law of sin and death*” is the “*curse of the law*.” It is the result or consequence of breaking God’s law that we did not even know existed before our faith.

Before faith we are in bondage and do not even know it until we read or hear God's law. Faith is “shut up” or “closed” to us until the moment that we realize that we are in bondage under the penalty of God’s law.

It is when we realize that we are in prison (law of sin and death, cursed, bondage) that we realize that we need to be freed.

We cannot realize that we need to be freed until we realize that we are in bondage. Who is going to escape from a prison unless they know they are in prison! That is the first thing that the Law of God is to teach us (as the schoolmaster)...we are ALL guilty of breaking it and thus deserve death.

This is exactly what Galatians 3:24 teaches us.

The “law of sin and death” escorts us or brings us to Christ by pointing out that we are in bondage/cursed. It is not until the “law of sin and death” teaches us that we are cursed and in bondage that we come to Christ in faith as our Savior, otherwise we would have no reason to come to Him (this is all Salvation 101 kind of stuff).

Galatians 3:24

Wherefore **the law was our schoolmaster** to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

We need the “*curse of the law*” or “*law of sin and death*” to teach us that we are in bondage (under sin-3:22) in order to “*escort*” us to our Messiah. It is to teach us to have faith and trust in His perfect grace as the perfect practicing of the Word made flesh who became the curse for us on the tree.

Galatians 3:25

But **after that faith is come**, we are **no longer under a schoolmaster**.

After that faith has come, we are no longer under the curse (law of sin and death). Before faith we are under the law of sin and death (curse) and after faith we are no longer under the law of sin and death (curse).

Let's even pretend for a moment that the “*schoolmaster*” is the “*law of God*” instead of the “*law of sin and death*.” Here is what the verse would be saying:

Before faith = we are under the "law of God."
After faith = we are not under the "law of God."

Does that even make any sense? Of course not! When we apply the context here is what happens:

Before faith = we are under the "law of sin and death (curse)"
After faith = we are not under the "law of sin and death (curse)"

Paul is saying the same thing as in Romans 8:2.

Romans 8:2

For the **law of the Spirit** of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the **law of sin and death**.

It was the "law of sin and death" that places us in bondage, not the "law of God." Why would we need to be freed from the "law of God" when Scripture calls the "law of God" freedom?

Do we need to be freed from freedom? Again, does that make any sense?

In fact, God's law is called freedom in Scripture (i.e. Psalm 119:45).

Why would Paul be teaching us we need to be freed from freedom itself? What a twisted mess men's doctrines have created for us to untangle!

The "*law of sin and death*" is a result of our disobedience to God's law.

How do we know this? Because Deuteronomy 11:26-28 states that when we are disobedient to God's law we are then cursed. Scripture defines any disobedience to the "law of God" as sin (1 John 3:4).

The curse we are all under is the curse of the second death waiting for us at the Great White Throne judgment in the end.

Thus it is our sin/disobedience that brings us into the curse/death, or as Paul brilliantly calls it, the "*law of sin and death*."

We all already know all of this if we have been a believer for more than a day.

We already know that without first realizing our sin, that we will not realize a need to be escorted to our Messiah.

Why would we conclude Paul is teaching anything different to the Galatians, who have obviously forgotten that the way to salvation is by faith instead of by keeping God's law?

If they obviously forgot the way to salvation, then Paul has to teach them the way to salvation all over again.

Where does Paul state that the problem is that they were keeping the law in obedience?

He doesn't!

Not once does Paul say that it is a problem that they were keeping the Law of God.

Paul states it was a problem that they were trying to be justified and saved by keeping the Law of God....meaning, correct law, but for the wrong reasons.

Keeping the law for salvation was the problem Paul needed to address.

In summary:

1) Verse 10 makes it clear that sin is what places us under the curse.

2) Verse 22 makes it clear that it is sin that we are under.

3) Verse 23-25 makes it clear that the curse (the law of sin and death) teaches us that we need a Savior.

Once we establish faith in our Savior then we are no longer under the "law of sin and death (the curse)"

We know that God's law is not sin. Paul even tells us that in Romans 7:7 so that we do not misunderstand him.

So when Paul says that sin causes the curse (verse 10), and it is sin that we are under (verse 22), we must carry that context throughout his teaching (verses 23-25).

If being under sin is the context in verse 22, then we cannot institute a new context and state that it is not the "law of God" that we are no longer under anymore because the "law of God" is not sin.

Galatians 2:23-25 is not stating what many believe it is stating. Abolishing God's law would serve NO practical purpose and would contradict countless verses, including Paul's own words.

If we would just read verse 22 we would understand the context to be the "law of sin/death" not the "law of God."

We all know that if we sin (break God's law) that we deserve the curse. We all know that we need to realize (or be escorted, or be taught) that we sin before we run to the Savior. We all know that after faith that we are no longer under the curse (second death).

This is actually not really complicated at all, but because people have confused and twisted Paul's writings into something confusing and complicated (as if God was the author of confusion).

We have entered into a theological mess. Paul needs to teach the gospel to those who have forgotten the true gospel. The Galatians forgot that we are to be justified by faith and then we practice obedience to God's law because of our faith.

This is all Salvation 101. Why does Salvation 101 even need to be taught to the Galatians? Because they had false teachers come into their camp to begin convincing them to follow men's false doctrines/ways (or pleasing men) and by salvation by works (legalism-justification by

works).

Paul is teaching against justification unto salvation by works...

Galatians 2:16

Knowing that a man is **not justified by the works of the law**, but by the faith of (Messiah Yeshua) Jesus Christ, even we have believed in (Messiah Yeshua) Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh **be justified**.

This theme continues throughout Galatians: (i.e. Galatians 2:21; 3:2; 3:3; 3:5; 3:11; 5:4)

Paul is teaching about not trying to please men by observing their false doctrine...

Galatians 1:10

For do I now persuade men, or God? **or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.**

This theme also continues throughout Galatians: (i.e. Galatians 1:10; 1:11; 2:3; 4:3; 4:9; 6:12; 6:13)

Thus the solution to these “*error correcting*” themes is for Paul to teach “*Salvation 101*” to the Galatians because they obviously let themselves forget the “*truth of the gospel.*”

As we already stated, even the false teachers who were trying to compel the Galatians to follow their doctrine did not follow the law themselves (6:13).

They followed the “*oral law*” (commandments/traditions of men) which was contrary to God’s law (Mark 7, Matthew 23).

Consider this, the very fact that Paul considered it a problem that the false teachers did not even follow the “law of God” should mean something to us.

Paul is stating that false teachers do not follow the “law of God”, yet many that conclude Paul, himself, is teaching against the “law of God.”

How could Paul have a problem with those who do not follow the law of God themselves, and then Paul advocate for the very same position?

Paul refers to the “*law of sin and death*” as an “*escort.*”

It was quite a brilliant usage of the word by Paul in the first century. It has lost all of its intended meaning today except for those who enjoy linguistic study.

The word translated as “*schoolmaster*” or “*tutor*” (or in some cases “*guardian*”) in verses 24-25 is the Greek word *paidagogos*.

This is the term for the office or position of the person who would keep a person under guard (bondage) and escort a child to school. Once at school he would leave this person (the *paidagogos*) and continue to learn at school. (see any interlinear such as Strong’s)

Is this not how it works in God’s plan of salvation?

We start off under the law and we are under its bondage before faith (the curse/law of sin and death). Because of this we realize we need to be freed from the world's ways and find freedom in God's ways by placing our faith and trust in Him. Once we do that the law of sin is no longer placing us under guard/bondage, but we then go to "*school*" because we want to learn God's Word and how to apply it so we can become more like our Lord.

Paul was simply using a Greek metaphor to speak of the value of the "*Law of Sin and Death*" prior to coming into the faith.

Being "*under the law*" as in under the "*law of sin and death*" is just Paul's way of saying the same thing we would say today if we broke a U.S. law and were caught.

Consider this as well...

The U.S. has laws, perhaps a 100,000, or maybe even a million of them that we are accountable to. God just has a couple hundred commandments, just a dozen or so more than what mainstream Christians keep.

Imagine if you break a law; let's say you commit treason.

(Biblically, that would be going after other countries/gods).

You are then placed in jail to await your judgment of death, as treason is punishable by death.

(Likewise, according to the law of God, that defines your sin, also contains a law for your death.

This is the law of sin and death according to Paul)

It is not until you are read the law, and convicted of the law, that you realize that you are absolutely guilty by the law and now under the curse/bondage/prison (or/the penalty) and the trial will be fair.

You are now under the penalty (the curse/bondage/prison) of the law (*the law of sin and death*) and a guard (*paidagogos*), representing the authority of the law, is standing outside of your jail cell while you await your death sentence.

At this point you realize, the only way to not be under the law (or penalty of the law), is to be pardoned by the President in his grace.

(in this example, the President would be a metaphor for YHWH)

The President says that his ways are good and the constitution is good and he asks you to place faith in his power to save you through his grace.

He states that, if he does that, he would like you to continue in his word or constitution (law) in love and faith in him. He says that he will give you a legal counselor (Holy Spirit) to teach you all of His ways in the Torah.

You then place your faith in the President and you exercise, or evidence your faith/trust, by sincerely trying to be obedient to his constitution (law) of his nation (Israel) that you said was

good and perfect. This does not mean that you do the law perfectly, but you have a desire to keep the law of God out of respect and love for the one who pardoned you.

You study his constitution with help from the legal counselor, who teaches you all things.

You are no longer under the law (of sin and death), but under grace.

It took the realization of the penalty of the law for to you to reach (be escorted) out in faith to accept the grace of the President. The penalty of the law did its job in pointing you to the one who could pardon you and point you to the right path. You now take delight in knowing that you are under grace and you show your respect and love for the President by learning about and practicing his laws.

To those that want to make the "schoolmaster" as the "law of God" so it can be said that after faith is established in us that the "law of God" is no longer needed and now made void, have more than several contradictions to reconcile in Scripture.

Romans 3:31

Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish/continue (histemi) the law.

Romans 7:22

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

Matthew 5:17 (this is our Messiah speaking)

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I do not come to destroy, but to fill up.

Matthew 5:18

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all (law and prophets) be fulfilled.

And we know that all the prophets are not yet fulfilled. There is still prophecy that needs to be fulfilled.

Matthew 5:19

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Psalms 1:2

But his delight is in the law of the LORD (YHWH); and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Psalms 119:35

Make me to go in the path of your commandments; for therein do I delight.

Proverbs 29:18

Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keeps the law, happy is he.

Moving on...

Galatians 3:26-29

...for in Christ Jesus (Messiah Yeshua) you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Messiah Yeshua). And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Paul is repeating himself here, stating that the salvation model has always been the same, and there has never been any difference between Jew or Greek on this matter. First we come into the faith, then obedience follows, not for salvation, but because of our salvation.

Galatians 4:1-7

I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Here we see Paul stating that before our faith, we were slaves to the world...the elementary principles of the world. These are ideas, philosophies, and values of the world, that also enslave us into bondage. Yeshua came to redeem us from that bondage. Yeshua was born of a woman who was also in the same circumstances as all men, being born under the law of sin and death. Through Yeshua, we are adopted out of the world as children of our Creator...and thus also heirs to the promise.

Here we arrive the the next verse that is often cited to prove that Paul teaches against observing the Law of God.

Galatians 4:9 - Is the "Law of God" Actually "Weak and Beggarly Elements?"

Galatians 4:8-11 is often used as evidence that believers are to no longer to keep all of God's commandments, particularly His Sabbaths and Feast days. Context forces some absurd questions.

Take note of the text that we have highlighted here...

Galatians 4:8-11

Formerly, **when you did not know God**, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, **how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world**, whose slaves you want to be once more? **You observe days and months and seasons and years!** I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.

Are the Sabbaths and Feast days "weak and beggarly elements?"

Are the Lord's Sabbaths and Feast days "elements of the world" that place us under "bondage?"

More importantly, does Scripture teach us the "law of God" is bondage?

These are the questions we need to ask ourselves and test to Scripture. These questions force us to examine and apply the surrounding context, instead of injecting our own bias into the text.

First we should establish some context.

Galatians 4:3

Even so we, when we were children, **were in bondage under the elements of the world:**

Galatians 4:3 clearly states that the context is "*elements of the world.*"

So here is an important question to consider...

Can verses 4:9-10 be referencing the "law of God" (Sabbaths and Feast days)?

If the "law of God" is worldly instead of Spiritual, then that might make some sense.

However:

Romans 7:14

For we know that the law is spiritual

From that alone we know that the context of Galatians 4 cannot be the "law of God" in verses 4:9-10.

However, we do not need to stop there. There is much more context to pull in to really understand what Paul is teaching.

Is God's Law Bondage?

1) Verses 1-6 clearly state that before Christ we were in bondage under the elements of the world (not bondage under the "law of God" like some teach).

God's law is not of the world, and God's law cannot be called both freedom and bondage without creating a Scriptural contradiction.

Psalm 119:44-45

I will always **obey your law**, for ever and ever. I will walk about in **liberty**, for I have sought out your precepts.

James 1:25

But the one who looks into the perfect law, **the law of liberty**, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

What is the "perfect" law that we are supposed to do that James would be referring to from Scripture?

Psalm 19:7

The law of the Lord (YHWH) is perfect...

Paul is declaring the ways of the world as bondage, not the ways of God.

God's ways (His law) are freedom from man's ways (or the world's ways) in the sense that God's ways are set apart (holy) from the world's ways (bondage).

The only people in all of Scripture that ever referred to God's ways as bondage and refused to do them were the ones He was angry with. Keep that in mind...

The ones that were obedient to His ways, His path (Psalm 119) were stated to be after His own heart (Acts 13:22).

God's ways are freedom from the world's ways. We are "called out" to not be of the world. It is actually quite simple. To live according to the world's ways is to go back to Egypt, back to bondage.

2) (Verses 8-19) A massive error often occurs here. It is easily cleared up and the truth then becomes undeniable. Often, verses 8-19 are used as evidence that we are no longer to be obedient to God's Feast days and Sabbaths (9-10). Read it again, and note what is highlighted.

Galatians 4:8-20

But then, indeed, **when you did not know God, you served** those which by nature are not gods. But **now after you have known God**, or rather are known by God, how is it that you **turn again** to the **weak and beggarly elements**, to which you **desire again** to be in **bondage**? **You observe days and months and seasons and years**. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.

Brethren, I urge you to **become like me**, for I became like you. You have not injured me at all. You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first. And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as (Messiah Yeshua) Christ Jesus. What then was the blessing you enjoyed? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me. Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?

They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them. But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you, I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you.

Let's create a list of some key points from these verses (Galatians 4:8-20):

1. These are Gentile converts that Paul is talking to.
2. They used to serve other gods.
3. Now they know the true God.

4. Even so, they GO BACK to WEAK AND BEGGERLY ELEMENTS related to the gods they used to serve.

5. And thus they DESIRE AGAIN to go back into BONDAGE related to the gods they used to serve.

6. What they are TURNING BACK to is observing the certain days, months, and years related to the gods they used to serve.

Perhaps that may have cleared up the confusion already, but let's discuss it in more detail.

Remember, it is all about the context and using Scripture to interpret Scripture, not bringing in our own bias.

The assumption, which is the root of the error, often made in these verses is that the observation of the days, months, and years are God's Feast days, Sabbaths, etc. found in Leviticus 23.

Therein lies the typical modern doctrinal bias that usually is injected into this text.

It rarely crosses anyone's mind that the Gentiles worshiped days, months, and years of their sun gods before they came to faith in the True God.

If we were asked which holidays were bondage, God's holy (set apart) days or sun god worship days, what should we suppose would be the correct answer?

Which holy days are bondage, sun god ways of the world, or our Creator's holy celebrations?

What does the text say?

Let's ask this: How do Greeks, who used to worship false gods (who had their own sun god holidays and observations), who now worship the true God (verse 9), somehow go back to worshipping God's Feast days?

That's a little difficult to answer, isn't it?

How can they go back to something they never used to do? See how the paradigm that ignores context, brings in false assumptions fails when tested?

Let's ask this, how do Greeks, go back, to "*weak and beggarly elements*," even if we are making the mistake of calling the weak and beggarly elements from God?

That is also a little difficult to answer, is it not?

These are Greeks. If they are going back to something, they are going back to what Scripture says they came from, which is a false god worship system (verse 8). Do we not think that false god's do not have their own holidays? They most certainly do.

In fact, we retained those same pagan sun god days and cultic traditions in the form of Christmas and Easter. For more on that, consider watching our teaching titled "[Sunburned](#)." Again, the typical bias and assumptions fail once the context is examined.

The Galatians were being influenced left and right. We have the “Circumcision Party” attempting to have them follow God’s law and the oral law (the Talmud) as a means to salvation, instead of simply for obedience.

That is one problem. We also have the Galatians reverting back to their old holidays and traditions, likely from pressure from unconverted friends and family.

If the Galatians suddenly gave up all of their false god (sun god) holidays and traditions and focused on God’s holidays, imagine how difficult that must have been. They would have left traditions and special days that they were culturally raised in, and other family members and friends likely still even practiced. The Galatians were trying to do both; God’s days and sun god worship days. They were simply trying to please men at the expense of God’s Word.

Galatians 1:10

For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

This is not the first time this has happened in Scripture, and God has never found it acceptable. Some simple encyclopedia research today will bring to light which days are the sun god worship days and the cultic traditions related to them if one is really interested.

Acts 15:20 is evidence that those in Galatia were falling back into the cultic temple worship that Gentiles were familiar with in their culture.

Acts 14:26

And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. (Galatia)

Acts 15:20

But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. (all sun god cultic worship traditions)

Let’s ask this, since when are God’s Feast days and Sabbaths called “*weak and beggarly elements*” in Scripture?

Where did that strange concept come from, men or Scripture?

Didn’t Paul define bondage as the teachings and doctrines of men, as well as the principles of the world as the weak and beggarly elements?

Are these not the same things that Yeshua (Jesus) railed against (Mark 7; Matthew 23)? Yeshua (Jesus) spent His whole ministry teaching, rebuking, and correcting from the Law of Moses and now we are saying it is bad to practice it?

Consider this, the Galatians were being told that they would be saved if they became circumcised. So, once they were circumcised (your salvation is now guaranteed, right?), they felt it was no problem to give in to the pressure from friends and family to continue to observe their societies’ sun god holidays.

However, Paul stated that they should not TURN BACK to the holidays of the false sun gods.

Galatians 4:21-23 – Do We Place Our Trust in God or in Man?

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We are often told that this allegory definitively shows that God's law is bondage, and is not only to be set aside, but is to be cast out, and those that desire to obey the law of God are the children of Hagar. But is that the background of what Paul is teaching?

The first four and a half chapters of this book have been teaching us that redemption and sonship are not acquired by obedience to God's law, or any law, for that matter. We have already established that many times over. The focus on inheritance, the seed, and relationship precedes the allegory of Hagar and Sarah. Man is saved by grace through faith, and it is this gift from God that establishes the relationship.

Inheritance, i.e. the promise, can only be obtained through relationship. There is one question I wish for you to keep in mind as we study these passages and that is, 'When did that relationship begin?'

Galatians 4:21–23

"Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise;"

One of two key verses is verse 21. Who are those who desire to be under the law? ...and is the desire to obey the law the same thing as being 'under the law'?

This might be one of those occasions where it would behoove to study what is covered in Romans several times, because the 6th chapter of Romans defines for us what it means to be under the law. Suffice it to say for now, however, that to be 'under the law' means to be 'under the dominion of sin', which is called the 'old man' in Romans 6:6.

Those who desire to be under the law, or otherwise, are attempting to establish righteousness without trust and relationship through faith.

They are doing it on the basis of obedience to the law alone.

As we will see, the covenant at Mt. Sinai cannot stand alone, because the covenant of Sinai cannot save man or atone for him. Paul tells those who desire to be under the law that their inability to be heirs of the promise by obedience to the law is actually written in the law.

He shows this by the use of allegory. He begins by using two very familiar women, and one man, from Scripture: Hagar, Sarah, and Abraham.

It is imperative to know the story of these three, for it is their actions that form the basis for the comparison.

The story, found in Genesis Chapters 16 through 21, tells of a promise by God to Abraham and Sarah that even in their old age they would bear a child that would carry the seed of the woman, that the everlasting covenant would go through him, and that his seed would produce a multitude of nations. Abraham and Sarah were already of the seed of the woman through the same eternal covenant of faith (more about this later).

As time went on, Abraham and Sarah began to lose their trust in God's words and soon took it upon themselves to establish this promise by their own works and by their own ways.

Abraham, in a scene similar to Adam in the garden, listens to his wife, does not trust God and produces a child, Ishmael, by means of a maid named Hagar.

This son, because he was produced by works rather than trust, could not be Abraham's heir, because he was not produced by relationship through trust, or by faith.

The seed of faith was through Isaac because his birth was the result of Abraham and Sarah's trust in their 'Father' God, and so children of faith are produced by children of faith. Inheritance is not earned, but acquired by birth and given by promise.

Galatians 4:24–26

"Which things are an allegory; for these are the two covenants; the one from the Mount Sinai, bearing children for bondage. who is Hagar. For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all."

The difference between Hagar and Sarah is the basis for the two covenants. The covenant at Mount Sinai is clearly referring to the Law of Moses. The covenant referred to here is given in Exodus 19:5.

"Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine."

The covenant begins with this Hebrew word (ve'atah).

This word means 'henceforth' or 'from this point on'. It follows the proclamation from God that the children of Israel, through their trust in the relationship established by the Passover, are now born on eagles' wings and brought into God himself.

If you carefully read the covenant given on the mount you will see that there is no salvation or redemption found here, but only a promise that the children of Israel will be treasured above all other people on the earth as a result of obedience. If the covenantal relationship of trust is established first, then obedience to the law given on Mount Sinai will distinguish you from all other peoples.

If the Law of Moses is sought after without the relationship, then the natural result is bondage, because one is seeking righteousness outside of relationship. And it is not because the law itself is bondage, but because we fail to keep the law.

THE LAW DID NOT DELIVER ISRAEL FROM EGYPT! The law was given after they were delivered, and after the trust-based relationship was established.

This same pattern is introduced from the beginning. Adam is created as a 'son of God' and then given rules.

Noah found 'grace' in the sight of God and then was given instructions to build an ark.

Abraham 'believed' in God and then was given the covenant of circumcision.

Very simply, the covenant in Exodus 19:5 is a promise that Israel's obedience to the voice of God will separate them from all other peoples of the world, period!

Works of the law, standing alone, cannot deliver. If the covenant on this Mount is depended upon to redeem you, which it is not designed to do, then you are in bondage, for you cannot satisfy it.

The first mistake concerning this section of Scripture is to wrongly assume that the covenant on Mount Sinai was God's way of 'saving' Israel.

The second mistake is found in assuming the other covenant is the 'New Covenant'.

This is a very tragic blunder, for there is no reference to the 'New Covenant' at all.

There is also no reference to the New Testament, either.

The comparison Paul is teaching is between the bondmaid and the freewoman.

A promise was made to Abraham and Sarah that if they listened to the Word of God they would produce a child whose seed would become a multitude of nations.

This promise was made AFTER Abraham and his wife 'believed' unto righteousness.

Abraham and Sarah had already established a relationship based upon faith with God. One relationship was based upon trust, and the other was not.

Notice in Galatians 4:25 that another comparison is drawn into the allegory. Hagar and Mount Sinai are synonymous to the Jerusalem that NOW IS (meaning the 1st century).

A cursory reading of the gospels will reveal that the Jerusalem of Jesus' time was dominated by the Pharisees and Sadducees: two 'Jewish' sects that represented the very essence of what Mount Sinai without relationship produces.

Recall the issues we discussed earlier with the "Circumcision Party" and then you can see how this is all relevant here in Paul's discussion.

The basis for being a citizen of the 'kingdom of heaven' was no longer rooted in the redeeming blood of the sacrifice, but in strict adherence to the 'rabbinical' view of the law, legalism.

In verse 26, we are given more information. The second of the two covenants is compared to the Jerusalem from above, the mother of us all. What is the Jerusalem from above, the mother of us all? We get some more information in Hebrews 12:22-23.

"But you are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the HEAVENLY JERUSALEM, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, having been written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. . ."

This Jerusalem from above is a place that the writer's audience has now COME UNTO and is part of. This fits perfectly with Ephesians 2:19-22, where we are told that Gentile believers have now become part of something that has already existed.

This Jerusalem from above is the 'mother' of us all. This, in context, would be referring to the 'mother' of all who believe. Paul is telling us that Sarah, the one who was of Israel by faith and trust, represents a covenant that predates Mount Sinai and is from above. We believe that this 'mother' is a reference to the woman of the 'seed of the woman' in Genesis 3:15. The seed, as defined by Yeshua, is the Word of God, and Eve represents all who bear that seed.

This is the seed of faith, a seed planted by faith, that makes one a child of God. The 'seed of the woman' was given from the beginning and we know from Galatians 3:16, of this same book, that there is and always has been only ONE SEED.

It is the seed that establishes the Father/Son relationship, which now makes inheritance possible. The seed cannot be received by works, but by trust/faith, followed by obedience to law as evidence of that trust and faith. Why this is so difficult for most 'Christians' to see is kind of baffling.

We believe the covenant from above was established from the beginning, and has always been God's gift to man. It was always initiated by trust in the giver.

The law is a covenant that is preceded by this trust, and was never designed to replace that simple trust.

If relationship is sought through Mount Sinai, then the Passover was in vain.

First Passover, THEN Mount Sinai.

The allegory that Paul uses here fits perfectly into the theme of this whole book.

Redemption and relationship are found in faith in God alone, and have always been a commencement of a life devoted to Him. Paul is not betraying the context of Galatians with this allegory. The focus is redemption. If you mingle the covenant at Mount Sinai with trust in order to obtain redemption then you are still cursed. With respect to redemption, they must be separated, they cannot co-exist. The nature of an allegory is to keep the allegory in its allegorical context.

Galatians 5:1 - Is the Law of God "Bondage" or "Freedom?"

At face value, this question may appear rather absurd. Would God have given us "bondage" and then stated that if we obey this "bondage" we will be blessed, and if we disobey the "bondage" that we fall under the curse of a second death (Deuteronomy 11:26-29)? Do we find any verse in all of Scripture that says the Law of God is bondage? No we do not. In fact, we find the opposite.

Once again,

Psalm 119:44-45

So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever. And I will **walk at liberty**: for I seek thy precepts.

Psalm 119:47

And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.

James 1:25

But the one who looks into the **perfect law, the law of liberty**, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

So if the Law of God is freedom, how can we also call it bondage?

Good question. We simply can't, or at least for those who wish to avoid clear contradiction in their doctrine and theology.

So what is Paul defining as bondage in Galatians? Paul states that false teachers brought bondage...

Galatians 2:4

And that because of **false brethren** unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into **bondage**:

...by teaching "elements of the world"...

Galatians 4:3

Even so we, when we were children, were **in bondage under the elements of the world**:

...and justification through the Law of God...

Galatians 2:16

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh **be justified**.

...instead of simply obedience to the Law of God...

Galatians 6:13

For **neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law**; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

...and thus these false teachers bring us away from true liberty or freedom...

Galatians 5:1

Stand fast therefore **in the liberty** wherewith **Christ** hath made us free, and be not entangled **again** with the **yoke of bondage**

The false teachers were those who did not keep the Law of God (for obedience) and taught against it. **Thus, the Galatians were being taught a false doctrine and were told to keep God's Law for salvation.**

As we already covered, false teachers ("Circumcision Party" - Galatians 2:7-12; 5:12 and "Works of Law" - Galatians 2:16; 3:2 3:5, 3:10) began promoting their doctrine ("oral law") that required Gentiles to be circumcised in a certain way to be justified for salvation (saved).

The bondage the Galatians were being entangled with, were false teachings and beliefs of men. It should be noted that Paul uses the word "again."

If the "bondage" was the Law of God, then how could converted Gentiles be brought *back* into the "bondage" of something they had never had before (the Law of God)? They can't. If we read the context, we should understand that these are false teachers who teach against the Law of God with their own traditions and teachings.

We know that they were not using the Law of God lawfully, but were using it incorrectly. We are to keep the Law of God in order to show our love back to God, not to try to earn salvation.

John 14:15

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

John 14:21

"Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."

John 14:23-24

Yeshua answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me."

John 15:10

"If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love."

1 John 2:4-5

Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him.

1 John 5:3

"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not burdensome."

2 John 1:6

"And this is love, that we walk after his commandments."

We are to be obedient to the Law of God *because of* our salvation not *for* our salvation.

1 John 4:19

“We love him (obedience to the law as we just reviewed), because he first loved us (grace).”

Obedience is simply the evidence of our faith (James 2:26).

Paul was merely trying to bring the Galatians back into God’s grace through faith and teach against the error of using the Law of God for salvation. Nowhere in all of Galatians does Paul teach that we should not keep the Law of God out of obedience. If he did, he would be contradicting himself, Yeshua (Jesus), and countless other verses in Scripture.

Is following the Law of God opposed to grace? What did Paul mean when he accused the Galatians of falling from grace? What did they do? How does our Savior become of no effect?

Moving on in Galatians...

Remember, the Circumcision Party taught circumcision as a means to salvation.

Galatians 5:2-3

Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision **that he is obligated to keep the whole law.**

Thus, if one is being circumcised unto salvation, Paul is reminding them that they need to keep the whole law perfectly in order to be saved by the law of God.

Those who teach and practice that circumcision leads to salvation, are trying to justify themselves unto salvation and attempting to bypass grace.

Galatians 5:4

Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are **justified by the law; you have fallen from grace.**

Paul did not say circumcision was bad.

Paul did not say that if you are circumcised, in general, that one is obligated to keep the whole law...the context in verse 4 shows that it is about falsely using circumcision to justify your salvation.

We have covered the doctrine of the Circumcision Party several times already. Paul is teaching against the Circumcision Party.

He is contextually saying this:

If you justify yourself unto salvation through circumcision, you need to justify yourself in perfectly observing the whole Law of God.

This of course, is not possible, as all have sinned.

Trying to be justified by the law is the same as falling from grace. We are justified into salvation by grace through faith, not by obedience to the Law of God.

Does that mean that we are to not be obedient to the "law of God" in our faith?

1 Timothy 1:8

But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully;

We know that they were incorrectly using the "law of God."

We are to keep the Law of God to express our love back to Him, not to try to earn salvation.

Galatians 5:5-6

For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in (Messiah Yeshua) Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

All this means is that circumcision is not a requirement of salvation, as we covered in the past few verses. Circumcision counts as nothing as it relates to being justified unto salvation. We have to keep things in context. This does not mean that circumcision has no value. Paul does teach circumcision does have value outside of salvation (Romans 3:1-2).

Galatians 5:7-18

You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion is not from him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. **But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.**

Galatians 5:18 - Does the "Spirit of God" Actually Lead Us Away from the "Law of God?"

What is the Spirit's relationship to the "law of God?" Is the Spirit of God against the "law of God" or "another law?" When Paul uses the term "under the law" which law is he referring to? Does it matter? Can't we just assume he is referring to the "law of God?" What about context? What does the "works of the flesh" (context in verse 19) have to do with the "law" Paul is referring to in verse 18? Is the "works of the flesh" related to the Spirit of God or the law Paul is referring to? What does Paul mean that the Spirit is contrary or against the flesh (context - verse 17)? What does the "flesh" have to do with this "law?" If we can not answer these questions, then we have

done what many have already done, and that is to take verse 18 out of the context and conclude it states something that it clearly does not.

Many conclude that the Spirit of God is against the "law of God." Let's test that interpretation to Scripture.

Before we expound on the immediate context of Galatians 5:18, it makes sense for us to establish the point and purpose of the entire letter to the Galatians.

Galatians 5:17 (immediate context)

For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

Galatians 5:18 (problem verse)

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Galatians 5:19 (immediate context)

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

Verse 18 depends on its surrounding context for meaning, hence the word "but".

There are several important questions that, when answered, will define the meaning of this verse.

- 1) What is the purpose of the Spirit as it relates to the "law of God?"
- 2) Which law are we no longer under, the "law of God" or the "law of sin?"
- 3) What does Paul mean in verse 17 (immediate context) that the Spirit is contrary to the flesh?
- 4) What does the "works of the flesh" in verse 19 (the immediate context) have to do with which law we are no longer under?

By answering these questions about this verse we will be doing what most fail to do which is to let Scripture define Scripture instead of presupposing what an isolated verse means.

1) What is the purpose of the Spirit as it relates to the "law of God?"

The Spirit is to dwell in us...

John 14:16

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.

...as believers...

John 14:17

even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

...and teach all (not some) things that Yeshua (Jesus) taught...

John 14:26

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, **he shall teach you all things**, and bring all things to your remembrance, **whatsoever I have said unto you**.

...by bearing record of Truth...

John 15:26

“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of **truth**, who proceeds **from the Father**, he will bear witness about me.

...and guiding us into all (not some) Truth...

John 16:13

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into **all the truth**, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

Thus the Spirit is to dwell in us to guide us into Truth which begs the question, *what is Truth?*

The “law of God” (Word) is the Truth.

Psalm 119:142

Your righteousness is righteous forever, and your law is true.

John 17:17

Sanctify them in the truth; your **word is truth**.

Yeshua is also the Truth (and the Way, Life, and Light).

John 14:6

Yeshua said to him, “I am the way, and the **truth**, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 8:12

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Why is Yeshua the Way, Truth, Life, and Light?

He is the Word made flesh.

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Is the “law of God” the Way, Truth, Life, and Light?

The Law is the way.

(Exodus 18:20)(Deut 10:12)(Joshua 22:5)(1 King 2:3)(Psalm 119:1)(Proverbs 6:23)(Isaiah 2:3)(Malachi 2:8)(Mark 12:14)(Acts 24:14)

The Law is the truth.

(Psalm 119:142)(Malachi 2:6)(Romans 2:20)(Galatians 5:7)(Psalm 43:2-4)(John 8:31-32)

The Law is life.

(Job 33:30)(Psalm 36:9)(Proverbs 6:23)(Revelations 22:14)

The Law is light.

(Job 24:13)(Job 29:3)(Psalm 36:9)(Psalm 43:2-4)(Psalm 119:105)(Proverbs 6:23)(Isaiah 2:5)(Isaiah 8:20)(Isaiah 51:4)(2 Corinthians 6:14)(1 John 1:7)

Thus Yeshua (Jesus) is the Law.

The Law is also liberty.

(Psalm 119:45)(James 1:25, 2:12)

Which is why we have liberty in Yeshua (Jesus). (see “[Why is Christ Freedom?](#)”)

Galatians 5:1

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Galatians 2:4

Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus (Messiah Yeshua), so that they might bring us into slavery—

In God’s law we have liberty. In the ways of men and the ways of the world we are in bondage.

Where the Spirit is, there is also liberty.

2 Corinthians 3:17

Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, **there is liberty**.

Why is the Spirit liberty? The Spirit leads us to the Truth.

John 16:13

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

What does the Truth do?

John 8:32

...and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

So in summary:

- 1) God's Word is the Law, which is the Way, Truth, Life, Liberty, and Light.
- 2) Yeshua (Jesus) walked that Law perfectly (He's the Word made flesh) so He is the example of the Way, Truth, Life, Liberty, and Light.
- 3) The Spirit guides us into the "law of God."

Prophecy states that the whole purpose of the Spirit is to help us do the "law of God."

Ezekiel 36:26

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

Ezekiel 36:27

And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Ezekiel 11:19-20

And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

This "heart transplant" is to assist us with observing the "law of God" which was facilitated through the New Covenant.

Jeremiah 31:33

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares (Yahweh) the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Hebrews 10:16

This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

Thus the whole point and purpose of the Spirit is for us to do the "law of God."

So when reading Galatians 5:18 it is very difficult to conclude that the law Paul is referring is the "law of God."

Galatians 5:18

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

If Paul was referencing the "law of God" then the verse would read like this given what we know as the clear purpose of the Spirit:

Galatians 5:18

But if you are led by the Spirit (led to do the “law of God”), you are not under the law (of God).

Does that make any sense? No, it doesn't.

So Paul must be referring to "another law." As mentioned earlier Paul refers to "another law" called “the law of sin” (Romans 7:22-23) and the “law of sin” leads to “death” (Romans 5:12) thus the understanding of the “law of sin and death” that we are no longer under (Romans 8:2).

So perhaps Paul is referring to the “law of sin” (Romans 7:22-23) in Galatians 5:18. Since we know that sin is defined as breaking the “law of God” (1 John 3:4) we should then be able to test this to Galatians 5:18.

Galatians 5:18

But if you are led by the Spirit (to do the “law of God” – to not sin), you are not under the law (of sin).

That makes complete sense. If we are led by the Spirit to do the “law of God” we will not sin. If we do not sin then we are not under the “law of sin.” This is the same exact struggle Paul describes in Romans 7.

Question number one has been answered in detail.

Romans 7:14

For we know that the law is spiritual,

1) *What is the purpose of the Spirit as it relates to the “law of God?”*

Answer: To help us keep the “law of God.”

The answer to question number one also helps us answer question number two:

2) *Which law are we no longer under, the “law of God” or the “law of sin?”*

Answer:

Galatians 5:18

But if you are led by the Spirit (“law of God”), you are not under the law (“law of sin”).

We can now address questions number three and four to apply the immediate context:

3) *What does Paul mean in verse 17 (immediate context) that the Spirit is contrary to the flesh?*

Galatians 5:17-18

For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. **But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.**

Verse 17 is continued confirmation that the Spirit is to help us desire the “law of God.” Therefore Galatians 5:18 is still teaching that we would not be under the “law of sin” (flesh) if we are led by the Spirit.

In verse 17 Paul details that the flesh is against the Spirit (the “law of God”). The "flesh" is defined as the “law of sin.”

Romans 7:22

For **I delight** in the **law of God** after the inward man:

Romans 7:23

But I see **another law** in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the **law of sin** which is in my members.

Romans 7:24

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Romans 7:25

I thank God through Jesus Christ (Messiah Yeshua) our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the **law of God**; but with the flesh the **law of sin**.

Verse 17 validates that the law we are no longer under is the “law of sin” if we are indeed being led by the Spirit. Verse 17 as the immediate context, forces the context of verse 18 to be the “law of God” (the Spirit) versus the “law of sin” (the flesh). Obviously verse 18 cannot be the “law of God” versus the “law of God” nor can the “flesh” be after the “law of God.”

Thus question number three confirms our analysis of verse 18 and now we can address the fourth and final question.

4) What does the “works of the flesh” in verse 19 (immediate context) have to do with which law we are no longer under?

Galatians 5:18-19

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the **works of the flesh** are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,

What does “works of the flesh” have to do with being “under the law” or being “led by the Spirit?”

Obviously the “works of the flesh” are not of the Spirit, so the “works of the flesh” must relate to being “under the law.” It is clear that this is the exact same teaching as in Romans yet again.

Romans 7:25

I thank God through Jesus Christ (Messiah Yeshua) our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the **law of sin**.

Again, our study is confirmed that “under the law” in verse 18 is the same as the “works of the flesh” which is actually the “law of sin.” When we are led by the Spirit we are not “under the law of sin.” However, if we were to give in to the flesh, we would then be under the “law of sin.”

When one gives into the “law of sin” as an unbeliever, that means death (the law of sin and death). When one gives into the “law of sin” as a believer, that translates to grace, as we are not under the "law of sin AND death" but under grace (Romans 6:9,14; 8:2). Also, when we give into the “law of sin” we are not being led by the spirit (God’s law).

In summary. Galatians 5:18 is not teaching against the “law of God” but teaching against the “law of sin.”

Verses 20-21 lists all of the things that being “under the law of sin” produces (fruit):

Galatians 5:20-21

Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Verses 22-23 lists all of the things that the “law of God” produces (fruit):

Galatians 5:22

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

The law of God is not against such fruit, however the “law of God” is indeed against the fruit listed in verses 20 and 21.

Those that truly have the Spirit causing us to desire to walk in the “law of God” just as Yeshua (Jesus) walked will produce the good fruit. Those who do not have or ignore the Spirit (insult the Spirit of Grace - Hebrews 10) produce corrupt fruit and Yeshua (Jesus) does not know them.

Matthew 7:17-23

So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the **will of my Father** who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, **you workers of lawlessness.**’

The teaching of Galatians 5:18 is simple when read in context as intended (meaning read it as a letter instead of a single verse):

Galatians 5:18

But if you are led by the Spirit (“fleshy heart”, “law of God”, “good fruit”), you are not under the law (“stony heart”, “law of sin”, “bad fruit”).

Thus, being led by the Spirit is being led into obedience to the law of God, which is why Paul also said:

Romans 7:14

For we know that the law is spiritual

Therefore, the more Biblically “spiritual” a person is, the more that person is being obedient to the Law of God. It is the unspiritual that teach against the Law of God, even if they are in the faith.

This is why Yeshua (Jesus) declared that such people would be least in the kingdom of heaven:

Matthew 5:18-19

For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Galatians 5:22-25

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; **against such things there is no law.** And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Moving on to Galatians 6...

Galatians 6:1-2

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Sometimes there is confusion here in understanding exactly how the “law of Christ” is to be understood.

The Law of Christ is simply the Law of God. It is the commandments that the Father gave the son, and the son obeyed. For more on this, please see our teachings “[The Deuteronomy 13 Test](#)” and “[Heaven and Earth & the Law of God.](#)”

Galatians 6:3-10

For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load.

Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have

opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Paul, here again, mentions that there are those who FORCE circumcision of the flesh. What really matters is an inward transformation. Outward obedience will always follow from our inward transformation as evidence of our faith.

Galatians 6:11-18

See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord (Messiah Yeshua) Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus (Yeshua).

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

Now that we have reviewed all of Galatians, perhaps you can now see that really the subject matter of the letter to the Galatians was not about teaching against obeying the law of God in the faith; it was about teaching against justifying one's salvation through the keeping the law of God. Those are two different things. The Galatians also had a problem with going back to old sun god ways and holidays, which is not compatible with the Word of God. Obeying the law of God is what our Father wants, and it is what our Messiah did as our example to follow. BUT, obeying the Law of God is not a means to salvation, only the evidence of it. Grace is the means to salvation, and nothing can ever replace that.

We hope that this teaching blessed you, and remember, continue to test everything...

Shalom