

A STUDY WITH GALATIANS

by Bruce S. Bertram

THE INTRODUCTION

Modern Christian teaching is very confusing to me. I am told that God's Word is good, but on the other hand part of it (the Law) is bad. Some of His Word applies to Christians, other parts only to Jews. Some of it is New, some of it is Old. We appear to be taught that we don't live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Apparently God gave some "tongue in cheek" instructions to the Jews at Sinai, instructions that He knew they couldn't do, but I guess He just wanted to mess with them.

In Christian circles today, there are many teachings being imparted that in my opinion are not Scriptural. We must think that, hey, after 2,000 years of study and practice, we're getting closer to the truth all the time! But in reality, we seem to have drifted gradually further away from God's standards, reinterpreted His Word to grant ourselves permission to do what we please, and in the process have become, in the words of Jesus (Rev 3:17):

"Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked....

How many of us think we have the "riches of Christ" and therefore have need of nothing? Are we actually rich, actually in possession of Christ, or do we just think we have Him? If we really possessed Him, would we look like we do now?

Like the Jews at the beginning of the first century, we (the visible Church) have drifted away from what God intended for us. There are many similarities between us and them.

By grace (through their trusting obedience to His instructions), He rescued them through the Passover lamb (saved them apart from the Law), and gave them The Law, the Temple, and the sacrifices, in order to maintain fellowship with Him and lead others into that fellowship also.

By grace (through our trusting obedience to His instructions) He rescued us through the Passover Lamb (saved us apart from the Law), and gave us His Laws, the Holy Spirit and the righteousness of the Christ, (which were prefigured by the things He gave the Jews), and are meant to keep us in fellowship with Him and lead others into that fellowship also.

Their practice of God's Instructions (Mosaic Law) was hypocritical. (They didn't have trusting obedience in God which motivated what they did - they didn't have faith).

Our practice of Jesus is hypocritical. (We don't do what we believe - trusting obedience is not what motivates us - we don't have faith).

They thought they were children of Abraham, and so were righteous before God and had need of nothing.

We think that we are children of God, and so we think we are righteous before God and have need of nothing.

They wanted their ears tickled, and would not listen to sound teaching from Jesus.

We want our ears tickled, and will not listen to sound teaching from Jesus.

They thought that actions were enough and that the condition of the heart was unimportant.

We think that the condition of the heart (feelings) is enough and actions are unimportant.

Neither group was or is obedient to God.

The Jews changed the Grace in the Law to a system of actions, which earned them Merit.

We have changed the Law in Grace to a system of beliefs, which earn us Merit.

We think that somehow we are in better shape than they were, and have better things, but in reality we are no different. And to be blunt, I would venture a guess that if Jesus were to come and walk through our land and teach in our church buildings, in the same way He did before with the Jews, it isn't hard to imagine that some of us would, like they did, find a way to crucify Him if we could.

This study is an attempt to address some of these teachings, and the results, and get back to what I believe is a better interpretation of the Word, so that we can begin to repent and turn back to our God.

I think modern Christian teaching contains many doctrines that stem from a root belief that certain parts of God's Word only applied to people in a different age or under different circumstances, and so do not apply to us today. Modern teachers pick through Scripture and choose to emphasize certain sections, those that have a special meaning for them, and ignore other sections. Some of the other doctrines that have grown, perhaps from this root belief, are listed below:

1. The Mosaic Law is "a burden," "slavery," and "death."

2. "The Law" is for Jews only.
3. The Law is only for the age of time before the incarnation of the Christ.
4. We "cannot do" the Law or
5. We do not "have" to do it.
6. The commands in the New Testament are optional and based on feelings.
7. Jesus fulfilled the Law, which means removed it from our consideration.
8. The New Testament, or new covenant, was made between Jesus and Gentiles.

These teachers have supposed that Jesus came to upset the established order, and as part of His accomplishments eliminated many Jewish beliefs and practices.

Unfortunately, there are some "collateral" teachings that, in my view, have to be assumed in order to teach or believe the doctrines listed above. These teachings are far more difficult to defend, in my view, than those above. In the list below, I offer, again as my opinion, some of these collateral doctrines:

1. God is not the same yesterday, today, and forever.
2. The Word of God (the Scriptures), is not complete and inspired, cannot be taken literally, and contradicts itself.
3. There are two gospels.
4. God gave a system of "Works" to the Jews at Sinai, that they couldn't "do."
5. We do not have to obey anything.
6. "Grace" is actually divine permission for any behavior we choose.
7. Love is a feeling.
8. "Salvation" can be lost.
9. Man does not live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

Of course many of us will say we do not believe these doctrines, and we may deny that the second list is part of the first. I will deal with all of these in the succeeding paragraphs as we get into our study of Galatians, but first let's get into a brief background of how these teachings have developed. A more detailed study should be made, but that would be too much material to cover here.

A SHORT HISTORY

I'll try to keep this short so we keep to the subject and don't get overloaded with information.

Since the Garden, there has always been a split between the people of God and the people who didn't want God. But we will pick up the story at the time just after the resurrection

of Jesus (about 33 AD), when there began to be a (general) split between those Jews who accepted Yeshua as the Messiah (Messianics) and those Jews who didn't.

In and around this time, there was general unrest and unhappiness with the Roman Empire, and various rulers sent by Caesar didn't help because they were corrupt and high handed with their rulings. Many leaders among the Jews were agitating to throw off the yoke of Roman rule. As a matter of fact, many who followed Jesus at this time expected Him to become a military leader and follow through with their idea of revolt. After Jesus returned to the Father, His followers realized all His teachings had aimed at a much different goal, and there was to be no revolt until He came back in a different way.

Those Jews who didn't accept the Jesus as the Messiah continued trying to rebel. The first series of rebellions resulted in the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. The second series resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem in 135 AD. (I reiterate here that this is extremely general.) Messianic Jews refused to fight in these rebellions, but the non-Messianic Jews supported a man named bar Kochba as the Messiah in the second series, which two problems only made things worse between the groups.

The Messianics originally tried to maintain fellowship in the synagogues with the non-Messianic Jews (Jews). At this time the pressure to separate came from the Jews. Over the next hundred years, however, the Messianic Jews began to move apart from their brethren because of disagreement about trying to rebel against the Romans, in addition to the disagreement about Yeshua. Somewhere in here large amounts of Gentile converts were also added to the mix, making the situation even more difficult and the split became wider. Later, pressure to separate came from the Gentiles.

The initial split between Messianics and non-Messianics, over the Messiah, was also made deeper by the effort of the Messianic Jews and Gentiles to keep from being included in Roman punishment of the Jewish people for the Jewish rebellions.

As the Gentile converts began to outnumber Messianic Jews, and even all Jews, the Gentiles began to take the lead in such areas as evangelizing, biblical interpretation and application. Starting at about the middle of the second century (160 AD), it appears that the Church changed it's viewpoint from being an extension of Israel to appropriating the name of Israel for itself (the Church started to become the "true Israel.")

There were at least two other reasons why the split continued to deepen that I can see. One, the now Gentile dominated church did not want to be included in the backlash from Rome against the Jews for their rebellious tendencies. Two, the non-Messianic Jews resisted evangelizing from the Gentiles, and this upset the Gentile leaders.

In the beginning the whole Jesus movement was seen as a part of the Jewish religion. And the Romans, in their desire to eliminate the rebels, didn't care if the people they killed were really part of the actual rebellious faction or not. They pretty much included anybody who even looked like they were associated with the rebels. Rather effective if you want to stomp out a rebellion - just kill whoever even **looks** rebellious.

So the Church leaders eventually tried to get away from any and all association with Jews. It appears that it was thought that, if we did not look or act like Jews, or teach what they taught, then we would not be mistaken for Jews and be hammered along with the rebellious Jews. A good book for further study on this subject is "Our Father Abraham" by Marvin Wilson.

In the zeal of certain church fathers of the first and second century to avoid being included in the backlash to Jewish rebellions, and because of anger at the non-messianic refusal to accept Yeshua, it is my opinion that they (church fathers), not only tried to look and act different, but even began to explain away parts of the Bible they viewed as being specifically Jewish. There was a concerted effort to do away with many practices that were considered Jewish, such as changing the day of meeting from Saturday (the Sabbath) to Sunday. The Feasts, even though they are God's "appointed times" (Leviticus 23:1), were changed or eliminated also.

Probably the most extreme example of a teacher of some of this ideology was a man named Marcion the Heretic who lived around 138 AD. Even though he was later condemned and excommunicated, this man introduced or focused attention on teachings such as:

1. The Old Testament god was a "Demiurge" who was judgmental and harsh.
2. This Demiurge, (a name borrowed from gnosticism and Platonism) a cruel god of battles and sacrifices, created the world with all it's appalling evils.
3. Since Marcion believed that an evil world cannot be created by a good and loving god, then the Old Testament god was different than, and inferior to, the New Testament god (Jesus), and, the OT was an inferior book to the New Testament.
4. The New Testament god, Jesus, was loving and kind, and so different from the Old Testament god that He must actually be a different god.
5. The Old Testament is outdated, applicable only to the Jews, and should be eliminated from Christian bibles.
6. Paul's teachings should be followed above all others.
7. Christians were "free from the Law."

Even though discredited and booted out of the Church in 144 AD, many of his beliefs have circulated in Christian teachings ever since. Maybe because he wasn't the originator of the teachings but rather was a vessel for his father the Adversary.

Along with changing the physical appearance of the Church, interpretations and doctrines began to change. Paul's teachings continued to be emphasized and preferred over the Jewish "Old Testament" teachings (even though Marcion was gone). The "Old Covenant" was viewed as outdated because of the "New Covenant" established by Jesus (overlooked was the fact that the New Covenant was between God, Israel, and Judah that Gentiles were "grafted into. "). Allegorical interpretations (looking for hidden meanings) became fashionable, in order to justify the changes that were taking place.

Among other teachings, it began to be taught that "The Law" was fulfilled (which was equated to eliminated) by Jesus. I think an objective review of these facts will lead one to see that what we were really doing was giving ourselves permission to do whatever we wanted, a goal which has been part of mankind since the rebellious beginning.

SOME CONCLUSIONS BASED ON HISTORY

Unfortunately for us, in my opinion, the early Church fathers ended up throwing out the baby with the bath water. The net result of their teaching has been a Church body which is anemic, has no standards, and can not tell the difference between right and wrong, having thrown away part of the foundation on which we were built. And removing part of the foundation has made the entire building shaky.

Wrong has become Right and Right has become Wrong, just as God in the Scriptures said it would. We do not look or act like the First Century Church as described in the book of Acts. Some scripture is ignored, relegated to a "fulfilled" rubbish heap. Other scripture is interpreted out of context in an effort to rid ourselves of verses that did not fit into our neat package. Worse yet, the techniques used to do so have affected our ability to discern truth from the Scriptures.

As a result, part of our inheritance is a patchwork view of the Scriptures, which in my opinion causes us to have a patchwork view of God. And a patchwork view of God, instead of causing us to get closer to Him, has driven us farther away. In fact, one might make the association that the further away we got from the Jews, the further away we got from God. Especially since Jesus went to so much trouble to make of us "one new man."

I believe that nowadays there is a large amount of confusion about what the Bible teaches, perhaps because of misunderstandings concerning the original meanings of Words and phrases, which is due to the process of cutting ourselves off from the Jewish people, their language, and their ways of understanding. But in the process of cutting ourselves off, we somehow forgot, God dealt with the Jewish people first. He picked them out of all the nations, "saved" them, cleaned them up, instructed them in His ways,

gave them leaders and prophets to guide and correct them, and brought them into close fellowship with Him so they could share Him with the rest of the world.

God gave them many good things, such as language corrections (proper definitions for words so they could communicate with God more clearly), Laws, statutes, and feasts. They were told how to live holy lives so they could please God and teach others to please God also. Our New Testament frequently says “to the Jew first and then to the Gentile” to reinforce these concepts. We need to get back to the Hebrew understanding in order to have a more complete view of Scripture, and consequently a more complete view of God.

The incarnation and walk of our own Jesus Christ was the culmination of much teaching and prophecy. Jesus walked the talk as we say in the 21st century, but he was also the answer to the expectation of the ancient Jewish sages. He was Himself a Torah observant Jew, an itinerant rabbi who spoke Hebrew and taught from the Hebrew Scriptures, and gave all men the keys to getting on the right path to God by properly interpreting God’s Word for us.

Paul was also a Torah observant Jew, also an itinerant rabbi, and told us to imitate him as he imitated the Christ. We owe everything to our Jewish brethren, because from them we received the Scriptures, and we receive nourishment from the Jewish root of the olive tree, which is the Messiah Yeshua. And it’s a shame that we cut ourselves off for nearly 2,000 years, persecuting and destroying the Jews in physical and theological ways.

Perhaps it is time we take another look at the Scriptures through the Hebrew perspective, and maybe it will help us to understand our God better, make our relationships with each other deeper, and move us closer to the ideal that God wants for us. This is my perspective and how I approach an understanding of scripture.

DEFINING OUR TERMS

Before we are able to communicate about Scripture, and deal with the teachings we have inherited that I listed back in the beginning of this study, it is important that we have a common vocabulary. And, it is very important that our words be defined as the Scriptures themselves define them. Much confusion has resulted by turning away from the Hebraic perspective and then making up new definitions for words based on our own incomplete understandings.

For this study we need to make sure our definitions are biblical for:

Law	circumcision
The Word of God	old man

Torah	faith
legalism	salvation
Love	righteousness
Grace	sin
liberty and freedom	

I realize this is going to take a little time, but please be patient and work through the following definitions, and I promise it will drastically help your understanding of my arguments and Scripture.

Law, the Word of God, and Torah

The first, and maybe the most misunderstood, word we need to define is Law. How does the Bible define this word? Can we arrive at an understanding of what is meant by just reading other Scriptures? If we're going to talk about it, and study what Sha'ul (Paul) in the book of Galatians says about it, we should probably understand what we mean by the word.

It is unfortunate that we have such a limited definition of the word Law in the present day. Our idea is that it's some sort of rule or regulation that, if not followed, results in punishment. And so we think of The Law given at Mount Sinai as a bunch of difficult rules that we couldn't do, for whatever reason, and that this system is what Jesus came to put away or fulfill. We use synonyms such as "burden," "slavery," and "death" to describe our view of it.

However, this is not the biblical definition in my opinion. I think Law has a broader meaning in the Scriptures. If you check carefully, I believe you will find that Law is synonymous with other terms, and they are all synonymous with the Word of God.

In Hebrew thought the Word(s) of God cannot be separated from God Himself because God is His Word, and His Word is Himself. His Word proceeds from Himself, and every Word He speaks reflects and is in harmony with all of His character and attributes. God cannot speak a Word that is contrary to His nature. There is no shadow in God, and all that He speaks is in accordance with everything that He is. This would follow logically since we also know that Jesus is the Word of God and therefore God Himself. The Word of God is also equivalent to Torah, which comes from a word that means "straight shooting."

This has interesting ramifications when contemplating, for instance, John chapter one. The Jews knew exactly what John was saying because of the associations made in what we call the Old Testament. If you don't believe me, check out the following passages to see that The Word of God is synonymous with these other words:

Instruction

Isaiah 1:10 Ex 16:4 24:12 Jer 35:13 Job 22:22 Job 36:10
 Psalm 78:1 Zeph 3:1-7 Mal 2:1-9 Prov 1:2,3,7,8 4:1,2
 Rom 15:4 Eph 6:4 1Tim 1:5 1Thes 4:1 5:12 2Tim 4:2

Teachings, Ways

Isaiah 2:3 Prov 5:12 7:2 8:10 1:8 4:2 3:1 6:20-23 Jer 32:33
 Deut 4:1 2Chron 15:1-7
 Mat 4:23 7:28,29 9:35 13:54 15:9 28:20 Acts 2:42 4:2 18:11 Rom 12:7
 1Cor 14:26

Law

Jeremiah 6:18-19 Zech 7:12 Deut 32:46,47 Deut 27:1-3, 26
 Deut 30:10,14 5:5 17:11
 John 15:25 Acts 6:2-4,7 13:44,48,49 28:23 Rom 9:28,31,32
 1Cor 15:2 Gal 5:14

Light, Lamp

Prov 6:23 Psalm 119:105 Isaiah 8:20 Rev 21:23, 22:5
 Mat 25:1-13, 4:16, 5:14-16
 Jn 12:46 Luke 11:33-36 Acts 26:23 Rom 13:12 2Cor 4:4-6
 2Cor 11:14 Eph 5:8,9,13 1Jn 1:5-7 Rev 18:23, 21:24, 22:5

Truth

Psalm 119:43,44,142 138:2 Prov 23:23 Malachi 2:6 1Kings 2:3-4
 Jn 17:17, 18:37-38, 8:31-32 James 1:18, 21-23,25

Life

Deut 4:1 32:46-47 Prov 8:33-36 1:17 Mat 19:16,17 Gal 5:1

If you take the time to look up each of these verses, you'll find that each of these terms, according to the Scriptures, is interchangeable. The Law, then, is Torah, Light, Life, Teaching, Instruction, Truth, and Everlasting, in addition to other terms such as Wisdom, Understanding (Prov. 23:23), Knowledge (Prov 8:10), Insight (Dan 9:22), Liberty and Precepts (Ps 119:45), Commands, and Perfect.

Legalism

Our next word, legalism, is not the same as The Law. For the sake of brevity, here I define legalism as actually a perversion of the Law where an attempt is made to secure our own righteousness by doing something, and that apart from faith. Since they do something, the legalist feels that they have "earned" righteousness as if it were wages.

Legalism is bad, but as we have seen by the scriptures above, the Law itself is good because it comes from God. Our English word legalism has no direct corresponding word in Greek or Hebrew. As a matter of fact, the single Greek word *nomos*, translated law, can mean any law, natural law (Rom. 2), Roman Law, the Law of Christ (Gal. 6:2),

or it can mean the Mosaic Law, or even the Mosaic Law perverted into a system of earning merit before God (legalism). It is important to note also that “The Law” also included the Oral Law, which the Jews teach was brought down from Mt. Sinai by Moshe at the same time as the written commandments.

The Mosaic Law (Torah) contains the commands taught by Yeshua. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and strength” is found in Deut. 6:5, and “Love your neighbor as yourself” is found in Lev. 19:18. Also, “The just shall live by faith” is in Habbakuk 2:4 and is quoted by Paul in Rom 1:17 and Gal 3:11.

The problem with throwing out the whole Law, or regarding it as “fulfilled” or eliminated, is that we have to then throw out these commands, and others like them, as well. And I just don’t see a scriptural basis for throwing out some parts of the Law and not others. Sha’ul tells us in Romans 3 that:

31 Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.

As Walter Kaiser has said, “That (The Law) is not where the problem ever existed, for Israel or the Church: The problem always was with people, not the Law.” (Quoted by Marvin Wilson in “Our Father Abraham” (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989), page 28.)

We may not have a covenantal relationship with the Mosaic Law because our covenant is through the Messiah. But most people don’t realize that the New Covenant was made between Israel and Judah, and Gentiles have been grafted in as part of their covenant by faith. And just as the Gentiles didn’t have to become Jews in order to become grafted in, the Jews do not have to become Gentiles. The Law remains as God’s loving instructions to His people for help in living a holy, God pleasing life.

Love

Jesus defines love for us. He stated, “if we love Him we obey His commands” (John 14:15). Therefore, Love is simply Obedience. Not a feeling, not a belief, but actions resulting from a right heart. Also in John 15:9,10:

“Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.

“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.

Many who quote the “two commands” above, as proof that the Law has been superseded by “Love,” fail to realize that Jesus actually boiled down those two, and all the others, into One New Command - “Love one another as I have loved You” (John 15:12). This

command, however, does not eliminate all the others, but summarizes and gives motivation for following them (Romans 13:8-10).

Grace

The next word to define is Grace. There are two Hebrew and two Greek words that we translate with our English word Grace, and the related word Mercy:

Grace - Hebrew *chen* (Tanakh 70 times), Greek *charis* (B'rit Chadashah 233 times) - charm, beauty, loveliness, favor, preciousness

Mercy - Hebrew *chesed* (Tanakh 251) and Greek *eleos* (B'rit Chadashah 50) - undeserved or unmerited favor, grace, kindness, pity, mercy, compassion.

(Tanakh is the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and B'rit Chadashah is Hebrew for New Covenant (New Testament))

Grace is more properly defined as charm, beauty, loveliness etc.. Mercy is defined as unmerited favor. At first glance (the first pair of Hebrew and Greek words), there seems to be more "Grace" in the New Testament than in the Old. But a second look (the second pair of Hebrew and Greek words) shows us there appears to be more unmerited favor in the Old than the New. At least one meaning you can get from these words is from John 1:16,17:

16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.

17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

In other words, undeserved favor (the Law is mercy) came by Moses, and the beauty, preciousness and favor of God came through the Christ. Pretty neat, huh?

Liberty or Freedom

In view of the previous definitions, Liberty or freedom should be pretty easy to define. The word does not mean "no boundaries," or "no Law," but freedom within the boundaries that God gives us in His Word (Torah), which includes what we think of as the Law.

Many will quote from Romans 14 here. And it is an excellent chapter, one we should all study more. But some of these people say that Paul in Romans 14 is teaching that we have no restrictions, such as the Law, and that everything is relative. They say that obedience to the Law is not necessary because of the teachings in this and related chapters.

Be careful here. We might be able to say that some weak brothers should not be burdened with requirements that they cannot handle. But I don't think that we can say that the Law itself has been eliminated as a standard of behavior, or that no one should strive for a better way of behaving. Too often these verses are used to justify standing still, not moving on in our walk.

Is this chapter saying that the Law shouldn't be followed, or is it saying that obedience should be by faith? If each should be convinced in his own mind (conscience), by what does the convincing come? Isn't it the Spirit? And isn't the Spirit's main resource the Word of God, including the Torah? I don't see the scriptures saying the Law is bad, or that we should have restrictions or boundaries, but exercising our Freedom means to have a right relation to God by faith, and that exercised in Love.

Circumcision

Circumcision is a specific ceremony whereby a male is physically altered to signify acceptance into the community, and covenants, of Israel. Male Jewish babies are automatically circumcised eight days after birth. If an adult Gentile wants to convert to Judaism he must undergo the ceremony also, which means a voluntary acceptance of the Mosaic Covenant (called *b'rit mi'ilah* in Hebrew).

Two things to note about circumcision: It was instituted with Abraham (before the Law was given), and Scripture talks about a circumcised heart (such as in Colossians). We must be careful to understand all the spiritual implications connected with circumcision. It is supposed to be a physical representation of an inward condition, just as baptism is. Paul is referring to a specific ceremony indicating conversion to Judaism in Galatians. Some Jews were equating circumcision with salvation, just as many today equate baptism with salvation. Circumcision doesn't save us any more than baptism does.

Circumcision is a sign of Faith (Romans 4:11), but was perverted into a work for earning righteousness. In other words Abraham was circumcised as a sign of his faith and his faith was credited as righteousness, but later others thought they could get the righteousness by going through the ceremony. Romans 2:26 seems to say we can be regarded as circumcised if we keep the requirements of the Law, and 2:28,29 seem to say that we who actually do what God requires are circumcised.

Many men today are circumcised as a result of a hospital procedure that was instituted for health reasons. Circumcision has several health related benefits, and does not necessarily mean conversion to the Jewish faith.

Old Man

The old man that Paul speaks of was part of a well-known teaching in Judaism. Many rabbis taught about a "good inclination" (*yetzer ha tov*) and an "evil inclination" (*yetzer*

ha ra). The old man of course is the evil inclination. Paul also refers to “the flesh” which is not our physical bodies but the “sin nature” or *yetzer ha ra*. Frequently Paul refers to the flesh being crucified, and what he is referring to is the sin nature.

Faith

Faith is another of the most misunderstood words in Scripture. Many times people speak of faith as if it was a mysterious quantity of magical potion which if used correctly can get you just about anything you want: life, health, wealth, etc.. What it really is, simply, is trust. Implied in the word is an alteration of your understanding and practice that changes your living. In other words, if you trust God (have faith), then you will change your life to accommodate what He says.

Belief is a related word, but means virtually the same thing when applied to a relationship with God. Belief, however, can be just an intellectual acknowledgment (even the demons believe in God, and tremble), while true faith results in a changed life. Thus faith is related to Love because both involve obedience. “To obey is better than sacrifice.”

Salvation

Salvation (as with many of these concepts) could have many pages written (and has) to define it. It is, of course, what the name *Yeshua* means (the Hebrew name Jesus was given). God became our Salvation. The basic idea is that God has saved us from slavery to our own disobedience (sin). We could not become righteous enough to fellowship with God again on our own.

We were incapable of pleasing God enough, without drastic action taken, and the only one who could take the action was God Himself. The process for restoration to fellowship with Him is simple: trusting obedience. The Good News is that a righteousness is available to us through Faith in Yeshua, God’s Messiah (actually by the Faith of the Messiah), and all we have to do is obey (God commands men everywhere to repent).

Sin

Taught in Christian circles as “missing the mark” (from the Greek term *hamartia* and Hebrew *het*, both used in archery), the word sin was understood by the Jews to mean, “missing the mark of the Torah.” The word Torah comes from a term that means, “straight shooting,” so missing the mark would mean missing the Torah. Therefore, hitting the mark was to obey God’s teachings (Torah), while missing the mark was disobedience to Torah. This is very important to keep in mind when reading scriptures concerning sin. As a matter of fact, Sha’ul (Paul) makes a point of this in Romans chapter 2 where he describes “sinners” as “disobedient.”

2:8 but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.

2:13 for *it is* not the hearers of the Law *who* are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.

It is The Law, properly understood, to which Paul is referring.

Righteousness

This leads us to the last definition I think we need for a complete study of Galatians. Righteousness is defined in the Scriptures as what is needed for fellowship with God. God established the concept with such pictures as the need for “unblemished” sacrificial offerings, and the giving of the Law to help define Sin so we would know how far off from Him we were.

Righteousness, or Right Standing, means to be as perfect and unblemished as God Himself. We can have some “right standing” by doing actions that are pleasing to Him, but we cannot have enough on our own to be Holy and Perfect as He is, and this lack limits our fellowship with Him and each other. Thanks be to God our Salvation, who has provided the Righteousness we could not gain by our own effort!

There are at least two kinds of righteousness spoken of in the writings of Paul: 1) behavioral righteousness or actually doing what is right, and; 2) Forensic righteousness, which means being regarded as righteous by God (guilt being removed) and given a new nature. We have received forensic righteous from God by faith in Yeshua, but behavioral righteousness is continually worked out in our lives as a process, proceeding from the point at which we gain forensic righteousness. The context determines which righteousness Paul is referring to.

If the word righteousness means “right-ness” or “right standing,” then the word sin means “wrong-ness” or “wrong standing.”

Now that you know what I think the definitions of these words are, even if you don’t agree, at least we will be able to understand each other a little better.

AN OUTLINE OF GALATIANS

I wrote this study to show that arguments from Galatians that support modern teachings of elimination of the Law have been misunderstood, and improperly applied. In attempting to throw out earning salvation by works, the Church has thrown out *obedience* with the bath water.

So what Law is Paul talking about in Galatians? Is he in fact extolling the virtues of dumping the Law in some “fulfilled” rubbish heap? I don’t think so. If we read carefully, with our new understanding of what The Law is, then we see that what Paul is attacking is the idea that we can follow any rule or regulation and “earn” anything, especially Right Standing Before God. He is also telling us that man has always, and only, been in Right Standing before God by Faithful Obedience.

I believe Paul is teaching us about “Justification by Faith” and speaking against the principle of earning our salvation by Merit.

Some of the comments included here are taken from the one page summary of Galatians given to me by the pastor of Valley Bible Church - David Johnston.

Galatians

1:10

For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

Being a servant of the Messiah wins God’s approval, but not man’s. We do not try to win man’s approval at all. One cannot aim for both. If we cater to people, we could not be servants of the Messiah.

1:11-24 Paul received the Good News directly from Yeshua, he was not taught by someone else. The Good News was that Gentiles (anyone) could join God’s people and share in God’s promises without having to become a Jew first. An interesting comment I’ve read mentions Matthew 13:52 in connection with Paul:

And Jesus said to them, “Therefore every Torah teacher (scribe) who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out of his treasure things new and old.”

2:1-12

It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but *I did so* in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain.....12 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.

In chapter 2 Paul mentions the “Jerusalem Council” of Acts 15. It is important to make the connection that the Council was considering an issue from the problem Paul is talking about in this section. Namely, how were Jews and Gentiles supposed to fellowship

together in view of some of the Oral Law interpretations of the rabbis? (An interesting side note is that we can also choose to eat kosher for the sake of fellowship with Jews also.)

I believe Acts 15 deals with fellowship issues, not abrogation of the Law. If the Law is abrogated, why are the four rules mentioned in Acts 15 concerned with eating? Further, I think Paul was confronting Peter on the point of allowing the “smaller matter” of eating to interfere with the “weightier matter” of the spread of the Gospel. In fact, there’s a possibility that what is really under consideration here is “ritual purity” rather than the Law.

2:13-14

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

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?”

Keep in mind that there are several factions mentioned in this book. “Jew” and “Judean” are the people that are culturally and physically Jewish. Implied is the two factions of “Messianic Jews” and “non-Messianic Jews,” which means those Jews who accepted Yeshua as Messiah, and those Jews who did not. “The Circumcision” is probably those non-Messianic Jews, along with some converted Gentiles, who wanted to insist on the Gentiles undergoing the ritual of Circumcision to convert to Judaism.

“Judaizer” has at least three different meanings:

The Circumcision faction, those who thought that the Gentiles had to perform the outward symbol of conversion to Judaism (Paul did not think of them as believers in 1:6-9). The Circumcision did not care if the Gentiles actually lived up to the Torah (6:12-13).

Another meaning is Assimilationist, meaning those who wanted Gentiles to assimilate into Jewish culture. (The church has had it’s own version of assimilationists in people who required the Jews to stop being Jewish in order to become “Christian.”) Assimilationists wanted to stop Gentiles from acting like Gentiles and instead act like Jews. However, we are “free in Christ” to follow their practices provided our motives are sound.

A third meaning for Judaizer is Legalist, those who perverted Torah into a legalistic system unrelated to trusting God.

I am indebted to David Stern in his book The Jewish New Testament Commentary (Galatians) for these definitions.

It is very important to understand which group Paul is talking about when reading the rest of the book.

2:15-16

15 “We *are* Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles;

16 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.

These verses are key to understanding Paul’s view of the Law of Moses. Here Paul must be talking about “the Law” being the perverted system of Merit (works of the Law), or in other words using the rules as a means of gaining forensic righteous from God. The question is, can you “Become Righteous (enough) by following some rules,” or do you “Become Righteous (for salvation) by Faith.” Of course the answer is salvation comes by faith, and after faith is exercised then we work. The works don’t justify us, the works come because we are justified. It’s a question of sequence, not importance.

He could not mean the Torah is bad, or that following Torah is bad, because elsewhere he says that the Law is “holy, just, and good” (Rom. 7:12, 1 Tim 1:8, Gal 3:21), “I delight in God’s Law” (Rom. 7:22), and “we uphold the Law” (Rom. 3:31). To Paul, works done in obedience to the Torah were grounded in Trust, never in legalism (Rom 9:30-10:10). As I said earlier, the Law also contains the teachings of Yeshua which makes it extremely difficult to say that it is bad.

This is one of the reasons why modern teachers are so confusing. They teach that the Law is bad, but the Word is Good. How can both be true?

So, then, “a person is not declared righteous by God on the ground of his legalistic observance of Torah commands, but through the Messiah Yeshua’s trusting faithfulness...for on the ground of our legalistic observance of Torah commands no one will be declared righteous.” (Again, thanks to David Stern and the JNTC for this translation).

2:19

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

Some have held here that Paul “no longer needed the Law.” No longer needed it for what? As a guide? As part of the Word of God by which we are supposed to live, in addition to bread? (Deut. 8:3, quoted by Jesus in Mat. 4:4.) While it’s true that Paul’s forensic righteousness didn’t come from the Law, how can that fact be stretched to mean

the Law is no longer needed? In my view you might as well say The Word is no longer needed.

Using the definitions above, the verse can be translated as “through letting the Torah speak for itself I died to its traditional legalistic misinterpretation, so that I might live in direct relationship with God.”

2:20,21

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.

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

In view of the biblical definition of Law, then what Paul says here is more consistent with the rest of the Word than most modern teachers would have us believe. First, Paul says he doesn't live. Does this mean he is physically dead? Of course not. What does he mean, then? What doesn't live? His old nature, or “old man.” See Romans 6:1 through 8:13.

Second, he says he does not reject God's gracious gift. What gift? The death of Messiah. Does the death of Messiah mean we are suddenly righteous in all of our behavior, or righteous in our standing? Obviously not our behavior, or John would not tell us that “if we say we have no sin, we lie and the truth is not in us.” So, Paul must be saying that righteousness comes by faith, not by legalistically following some rules. The Messiah's death is pointless, if righteousness does not come by faith, which it always has.

Why were we booted out of Gan Eden? In my opinion, for placing our faith in ourselves rather than God. Faith of course meaning trusting obedience.

3:2 Some say here the Spirit of Christ does not come by following the Law, but by faith. This is true, and always has been since the beginning. As a matter of fact, Adam and Eve lost their relationship with God through lack of faith (trusting obedience). Is the only basis for following the Law because we want to get something? Or do we follow it because our Loving Father gave it to us for our own good? It is absolutely true that if we “do the Law” expecting to get something then we have perverted the Law. But this does not make the Law bad.

3:3-5

3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

4 Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?

5 So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

David Johnston points out here that following the Law doesn't make us perfect. I agree. We follow God's instructions because we have been made perfect and there is no reason why we can't "do" His Teachings. Especially since our relationship to Him is one of Love and Trusting Obedience (faith).

Should we avoid obedience to God's Instructions because we are NOT going to get righteousness for salvation from the obedience? Is a payoff the only way that God can get our

Another way of saying verse 5 is: has God ever given us anything because we deserved it? God does not give us the Spirit and work miracles among us because we earned it. But He does these things because He loves us and we are faithful to Him. When we say God is faithful, what do we mean? We mean that God actually does what He says He will do. Not that He had strong feelings for us, not that He believed in us, but that He does what He says. And He became our example. God help us if His Actions had remained as beliefs or feelings.

3:6 Notice the first part of the verse - "Avraham trusted in God and was faithful to Him." Righteousness was credited to Avraham's account, but on what ground? Faith, which is Trusting Obedience.

3:10,11 Dave Johnston mentions that "Implicit here is that no one can keep the Law." Unfortunately this flies in the face of such scriptures as Philip. 4:13 "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" and Deut. 30:11-14:

11 "For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach.

12 "It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?'

13 "Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?'

14 "But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it.

What I think Paul is saying, is that no one can earn enough righteousness before God to merit Salvation as if it were wages.

If the Law is perverted into a set of rules by which we attempt to earn something from God, then it becomes a curse because we cannot earn anything. But part of the Law is

Trusting Obedience (the just shall live by faith). Shall we throw this out also? So therefore, “It is evident that no one shall be justified by legalistic observance of rules.”

3:12 David Stern has what I believe to be an excellent rendering of this verse in his book The Complete Jewish Bible. He has it thus:

Furthermore, legalism is not based on trusting and being faithful, but on a misuse of the text that says, “Anyone who does these things will attain life through them.”

3:13 The Messiah delivered us from the curse resulting from not obeying the Law, but not the Law itself. The problem is, if you render the Law itself as a curse, then we are saying the Jews were under a curse, which is patently not true. The only curse they had was the same as we all have. Further, Paul says in other places that we are all under the law until we come to faith in the Messiah Yeshua.

3:17-18 David Johnston has it that righteousness by faith was God’s standard. True, and as I have mentioned before, it always has been this way. He says this principle precedes the Law and the Law does not invalidate the promise. Absolutely. The Law itself was His Grace in Action.

3:21, 22, 23 Verse 21 says that the Law does not stand in opposition to God’s promises. The purpose was not to earn Merit before God, but to uncover Sin. If we are supposed to continue in trusting obedience or faithfulness, how are we doing it now if we could not do it then? On the ground of Messiah’s trusting faithfulness, not our own. The Jews could do it before if they had faith in the promises of God.

Otherwise Faith itself could be used in a legalistic fashion in the same manner as the Law, because if we say “I had faith, therefore I earn Salvation” this is the same thing as saying “I obeyed the (letter) of the Law, therefore I earn Salvation.” In no way, shape, or form do we have enough on our own to “earn” anything from God.

3:24,25 Dave Johnston says here that “the Law led us to Christ by showing us our need for a Savior. Now that we have the Savior, we no longer have a need for the Law.” With all due respect, however, this is reading into the text. I take these verses to mean that we were imprisoned in legalism (by our own efforts) until the Messiah’s trusting faithfulness was revealed, so the Law led us to the Messiah. By the way, the Law still functions to lead people to Messiah.

These verses (3:21-25) have parallel subject matter in Romans, Chapters 3 and 6. One way of trying to relate what Paul is saying about our relationship to post-Messiah Torah is by the illustration of sick and healthy people. A healthy person can be in an environment that would be bad for a sick person. In the same way, a Christian (healthy

person) can be associated with The Law (in right relation), but a sick person (sinner) would die. The Law is not Death itself, but it causes death because of the individual's condition. If we try to relate to God's Instructions (Torah) in any way other than trusting obedience (faith), then we are under a curse (die) because our condition is imperfect.

It is a parallel to how we approach God Himself. If we try to get with Him in a way that does not involve faith, then we would die because we do not have the required perfection.

4:3-10 "elemental things" is defined for us in verse 8 and 9 - "beings that are not gods." The text in Verse 3 mentions elemental things, switches to "beings that are not gods" in verse 8, then back to "elemental things" in verse 9. I think the translators should have stayed consistent with the context and properly identified the "elemental things" as "things that are not gods" or spirits. And the concept of earning righteousness before God, whether through the Law or Faith, or even Grace (which likewise can be perverted in a legalistic fashion), is definitely from spirits that are not God.

Again, observing special days, months, seasons, and years in a legalistic fashion is not right. However, many peoples then and now observe special days, months, seasons, and years that do not follow the Law. There is nothing in the text to specifically apply these things to the Law.

4:19 Someone told me once, when I said that the Law helps us in our sanctification process, that we receive Christ fully formed (and therefore do not need the Law). Here Paul says that Messiah is formed or takes shape in us. We start out as babes, and as we walk in trusting faithfulness Christ becomes formed in us. It's a process of learning and growing, not instant sanctification. This, in my opinion, is where the Law still helps us by teaching elementary things until we can grasp the adulthood of Christ.

5:1-4 The point here could best be summarized by reversing the terms. Paul is talking about Jews trying to make Gentiles into Jews, but now the Gentiles try to make the Jew become a Gentile. What are we to do with a Jew who places his trust in Messiah Yeshua? Reverse his circumcision and take away his talit? Should we make the Jew into a *Goy*? For centuries the church has tried to do just that.

In other words, Paul is saying that a Gentile does not have to become a Jew in order to join God's people (and neither does a Jew have to become a Gentile). All that is required is faith, or trusting obedience. If a Gentile does convert to Judaism, he has *lost faith* (fallen away from God's Grace) because now he is seeking to earn his righteousness by following a set of rules. As Brent likes to say, in reality, he is trying to gain something that he already has. By placing his faith in something or someone other than God, in a fashion similar to Adam and Eve in Gan Eden, he has fallen from grace.

The whole Law Paul is referring to here also includes the Oral Law. The concept of Oral Law being equal to the Written Law is a lengthy discussion; I don't think I can get into it here. Suffice it to say that the Oral Law was thought to have been delivered to Israel at the same time as the Written Law, and the Oral Law came to include many interpretations and rabbinical explanations of the Written Law. It is these that Yeshua was probably referring to when He inveighed against the Jewish "tradition" (Mat. 15:3,6; Mark 7:3,5-13).

For 5:1, Dave Johnston has "trying to tell someone that they must be circumcised, or must follow any part of the Law, is putting them under a yolk of slavery." Unfortunately, this verse must be stretched out of proportion to get this rendering. What "yoke of slavery" is Paul referring to? Jesus' yoke that is easy, the burden light? The holy, just and good instructions from God? Or the man-made system of perverting the Law into legalism?

Rather, the yoke of slavery is that of trying to gain righteousness that satisfies God's demands for perfection by doing something to earn it.

For 5:2, Pastor Johnston has "If you try to follow the Law, Christ is of no benefit to you." Actually, again the reference is to legalism (circumcision), not the Law. Which is the same statement Paul has been making all through the book. If you try to gain something from God by "earning" it, then Christ has no value or advantage to you because His gift is appropriated by trusting obedience, not by "earning."

5:5-6 Circumcision (following a rule or law - legalism) doesn't matter as regards forensic righteousness, only trusting obedience (which means deeds or actions) done in love. I disagree with Mr. Johnston that "trying to follow the Law has no meaning." You have to watch the capitalization of "Law" here and elsewhere because the Greek word is not capitalized.

Following the Law has much meaning, if it is done in trusting obedience. It is the trusting obedience, or faith, that puts the meaning into following the Law.

5:13 We are not to allow our freedom to become license to indulge the old nature. We are to serve (an action) one another in love (also an action). The next statement is very important: "For the whole Torah is summed up in this one sentence - Love your neighbor as yourself." If the Torah (Law) has no meaning, if it is a "yoke of slavery," if it is a "curse," why would Paul equate the Law to Love?

It is not the Law itself that is wrong, but trying to use the Law unlawfully, or legalistically, that is wrong.

5:18 If we are led by the Spirit, we are not in subjection to legalism.

5:23 Here Paul says that nothing in the Law, or Torah, stands against the things of the Spirit. How can this be if what current Christian teachers instruct us concerning the Law is correct? It's because the Law itself is not wrong, but the way it is used is wrong.

5:25 We should order our lives by the Spirit, and spiritual things. Which is interesting given the fact that Paul says the Law is spiritual in Romans 7:14, and only the spiritual can discern spiritual things in 1Cor 2:14,15:

14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

15 But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one.

Or how 'bout this in 1Cor 14:37,38

37 If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment.

38 But if anyone does not recognize *this*, he is not recognized.

How can Paul equate "spiritual" with "the Lord's commandment" if the Law and the Spirit are mutually exclusive?

SUMMARY

I think I have shown that many of the teachings we take for granted in the Church must be re-examined in light of the Hebrew understanding. Otherwise, we keep making assumptions about word and phrase meanings that are not connected with each other. Then we start to drift from God's intent, and next thing you know we are playing some kind of cosmic Wheel of Fortune game, and the sad thing is we don't know enough to buy a vowel. And Vanna White doesn't even have a consolation prize for us.

I should be "free in Christ" to do the things I think are required for my family and me. I do not throw off God's requirements, or use Systematic Theology to eliminate the Law, in order to be free, but rather my freedom comes from a right relationship with God - that of trusting obedience by His Grace. Because I have a trusting relationship through the Messiah, I have the Messiah in me, who gives me the power to do right behavior.

If I look into the Scriptures and see a requirement to follow the Sabbath, for instance, my Messiah gives me the ability to please God by correctly observing the Sabbath. Whether or not other people see this as a requirement or not is irrelevant. If I wear a talit (prayer shawl) because of my faith, is that any different than needing to wear clothes in the first place? Does God have a right to tell us what to wear? Should I ignore what He tells me because I can't do it, or should I strive to get to a point that I can do it? Do I "work out" and build my "faith muscles" so that I can do what He wants me to?

I also cannot eliminate the requirement by simply interpreting it away, because then I remove part of the Guide for other people. I could, perhaps, tell someone who has a weak faith (trust) that it is not necessary for him or her to do it until their trust becomes strong. As a Watchman, I cannot pick and choose what I want to reveal to others from the Scriptures.

It is this attitude that is the dividing issue. We can certainly come to God by trusting obedience alone, and that not of ourselves it is a gift from God. But then what? Does our God have some standards for us to follow? Does He have some work(s) for us to do? Do we have some progress to make, to bring our physical bodies in line with our soul and spirit and the Spirit? Or do we presume on His grace and go off to do what we want?

Apply this to any of the behavior illustrations in the Scriptures. If we attend to the needs of widows and orphans, for instance, we have the same legalism issue. From what attitude (or motivation) do we perform the good work? Is it an attitude of using the work to earn something from God, such as salvation, or is it that we are motivated by Love through trusting obedience to do what God requires (Love others as I have Loved you)? If our motivation for helping widows and orphans is not by Faith, *then it is legalism.*

You can also do the same thing with Faith, Grace or Love. Almost any behavior can be done with right or wrong attitudes, which attitudes usually relate back to Legalism.

Since when do the Commandments have to be **Commandments**? Why would we even think about relating to God in such a manner? Why wouldn't anything God says, any breath He breathes, any movement of His eye, be to us as Life Itself? And if He speaks to us, why wouldn't we hang on His every Word? Why wouldn't we do anything He even hinted we should do? How come, if He were to say "I want you to dress differently," "I want you to eat differently," or "I want you to rest on a particular day" we don't immediately jump to do it? Could it be that Sin has entered in, and we don't want to obey in the first place? Could it be that our "faith" really isn't Faith?

It is this point where I say The Law becomes a "litmus test" for those who claim to follow God. The test is this: How do you see the Law, or for that matter any other part of God's Word? Do you see a Person who reaps where He doesn't sow, or that He is a harsh taskmaster? That His yoke is hard and His burden is heavy? (Was it ever?) Or do we sit around in our high and lofty judgment seats, and in our ivory tower seminaries, and say that God didn't really mean what He said? "Well, He must have been talking to somebody else, a long time ago, but not to me."

Or do you see all of God's Word as His Breath, that His merest whim is our immediate desire? Do you see that His yoke is easy and His burden is Light, and has been since the beginning?

On the other hand, if I lay any requirement down for a brother, and tell him that he must do this thing in order to get into or stay in God's Kingdom, then I have changed God's Word (the Law) into something it is not meant to be. My brother, who has a weak trust (faith), has been given a task by me that is too great for him to bear. And instead of helping him I make it worse for him. His conscience "now accuses, now excuses" him, instead of walking with God by trusting obedience. He becomes a "slave" to that requirement because he tries to do it in his own strength but cannot, and by the letter of the Law I have killed him.

But again on the first hand, I cannot say that God's Word doesn't apply to him, either. If he discovers for himself or through my teaching that there is more to Christian living than what he knows, and he becomes convinced in his own mind that God has something new for him to do, then woe unto me if I sidetrack him from that! Both the Millstone Effect (Mat. 18:5,6) as well as Mat. 5:19 are in view here:

"Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

If we were to limit ourselves to a diet of milk only, it might sustain us and we might even be able to live for a while on it. But chances are, we would be out of balance or unhealthy in that we wouldn't be taking in other nutrients that are necessary for healthy living. In the same way, if we only take in parts of God's Word, it will sustain us, and we might even be able to live on it, but healthy spiritual living would require that we take in all of God's Word. As a matter of fact Paul tells us that we should be moving on to the meat of the Word and not be stuck on the milk.

I have taught that I think all of God's Word applies to His people all of the time, and that if we love Him we will obey those commands. *How* it applies is a different question, and one which should occupy us on a regular basis. We shouldn't get rid of God's Instructions by removing them but by making them transparent, written on our hearts.

When I was young, I was taught the "Law of the Electrical Socket." I was told not to stick anything into the small openings. Never mind that I didn't understand, I still had to refrain or face the consequences. Later on, I came to understand why I wasn't supposed to do that. The Law did not go away; it would still be dopey for me to stick an object into the opening. I have the freedom to do it if I so choose - God does not prevent me. But now the Law has become "written on my heart" and does not even intrude itself into my awareness.

Severe objections are made to these teachings, but they don't appear to be scripture based. There are too many inconsistencies in the objections. The Word is twisted out of context, both the immediate context and the extended context of the whole Bible, as well as the context of God's character and attributes.

We are told that the Law cannot be obeyed. This in spite of the scripture references in this study and others such as Deuteronomy 30:11-14:

- 11 "For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach.
- 12 "It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?'
- 13 "Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?'
- 14 "But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it.

Any difficulty with obedience was taken care of by sacrifice, the same principle as in the present age.

The problem was never with the Law, but with ourselves. It is not that we cannot obey God's Word, but that we reduce it to a series of superficial behaviors and take pride in our perceived obedience. Then we think that we deserve special treatment from God because of our own effort. And we do this whether or not it is a written command, a dietary guideline, or one of the "New Testament" commands.

Some have said that they don't hear "Jesus" in my teachings. That may be. Hearing and seeing has always been a problem for mankind. Just because I don't say the word, doesn't mean He is not there, for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. These people say that God is the same as Jesus, and the Holy Spirit is the same as both. So if I say God, isn't that the same as Jesus? Or is all the talk of the Three in One just a lot of hot air? And if I say "The Word," isn't that the same as Jesus? How about words like "grace" and "love?" God's Law is Grace in Action, in my opinion.

And as an aside, who did Jesus tell us to worship? God, or Himself? He said to "believe in God, believe also in Me" and "ask in My name" but does that mean Jesus is the focus or God? An interesting question for another study.

A Question: Were the Jews supposed to evangelize after they entered into the covenant at Mt. Sinai?

An Answer: Yes, of course.

Another Question: Were they given a different gospel than the one outlined in the New Testament?

Another Answer: No, of course not. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

And another question: If no man has seen the Father, but the Son and He has revealed Him (John 1:18, 6:46), then who gave the Law on Mt. Sinai? (Hint: it is said to have been delivered by the agency of a mediator, Gal. 3:19,20 1Tim 2:5.) Who walked in the Garden in the cool of the evening with Adam? Who was the pillar of cloud and the pillar of flame? Who was the burning bush? Who was in the whirlwind speaking to Job? Who was the still small voice speaking to Elias?

Yet Another Answer: God Our Salvation, Lord Yeshua haMashiach.

Would Jesus have given two different gospels?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A bibliography is either supposed to list the sources referred to by footnote in the text or show how many sources you consulted when writing your article as proof of how extensive your research was. This one, however, I just included because it will be a source of publications or tapes that are not normally found on the usual Christian bookshelf. I have these on my shelf, and I have read or listened to most all of them completely, some of them more than once or twice. I hope that this article and list of books inspire you to dig in and see for yourself the amazing depth of the Hebraic perspective.

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