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MINISTRIES

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Pauline Paradox: Part 3 – Why is Paul So Difficult to Understand?

At this point in the Pauline Paradox series, we are proceeding with the assumption that the audience is familiar with several key foundational teachings.

By now you should have watched and tested the following:

- [Acts 10: Peter’s Vision](#)
- [Acts 15: Legalism or Obedience](#)
- [The Deuteronomy 13 Test](#)
- [Heaven & Earth and the Law of God](#)
- [Pauline Paradox Series: Part 1 – Is the Majority Ever Wrong?](#)
- [Pauline Paradox Series: Part 2 – The Paul You Never Knew](#)

As you continue on in the Pauline Paradox Series, we strongly encourage you to watch and test the following two teachings:

- [What is the Gospel?](#)

And,

- [The Error of Dispensationalism](#)

Being foundationally equipped with those teachings should enable you to follow this teaching series to the degree intended.

As always, 119 Ministries provides all of these teachings, and more, for free at TestEverything.net through online streaming.

Keep in mind, as we progress through the truth of the Word of God, we are doing our best to teach only what Scripture clearly teaches, and refrain from teaching our own opinion on verses that might be argued to be subject to one’s interpretation.

We want to show you what the Word of God says is true, not what we simply believe is true.

What we believe is irrelevant. Actually, what anyone believes is irrelevant.

You are not to simply trust us, or project on us any type of credibility.

What matters is the Word of God and what it says.

Your faith should be in the Word of God only, certainly not us...thus our commentary is basically worthless, and the Word of God it's everything.

We challenge you to focus on what the Word of God says, not what we say, or others say.

That being said, you are also responsible to test everything we say to the Word of God, to determine whether the things we say are true (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Also, as a reminder, we are not teaching on how to be saved, or even the concept of maintaining your salvation.

What we intend to teach is...how do we practice the Word of God AFTER we have already have placed our faith in the Word of God and have entered into His plan of salvation.

Our works cannot save us, only the finished work of Christ can save us.

At the same time, obeying God cannot negate your salvation that is through faith. In fact, obedience is merely practicing the faith...it is living out the Word of God.

Our faith is to be in the Word of God.

Thus, you are to not only test us to the Word of God, you are to test yourselves to the Word of God, exactly what Christ taught and practiced. Nothing more, and nothing less.

2 Corinthians 13:5

Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ [Messiah Yeshua] is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!

John offered us the same test of our faith:

1 John 2:3-4

And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,

The point and purpose of Part 3 of the Pauline Paradox Series, is to understand why Paul is so difficult to understand in matters of the law of God.

If we understand why he is difficult to understand, we can then start dealing with those causes, and then hopefully, understand Paul better.

Hopefully that should make some sense. Many are already pre-dispositioned, because of mainstream doctrine, to believe that Paul taught against the Law of God. However, after watching part 2 of this series, it should be clear that Paul really didn't teach against the Law of God.

Right now, at this point in the series, you may be rather frustrated and conflicted, because you have the Paul that we presented in part 2, The Paul you Never Knew, battling against the version of Paul that you have been taught to believe your whole life...a Paul that taught a different law of God...a law of God that changed.

That is what's called cognitive dissonance. It is what occurs when two opposing paradigms or belief systems conflict with one another.

Most people will avoid the state of cognitive dissonance at all costs. In such a state of mind, there are only three paths one can take...

Path number 1:

Instead of reconciling Paul, we can throw Paul out altogether. Those who have not taken the time or have been unable to reconcile Paul's seemingly conflicting statements, have a tendency to just throw him out altogether. So, that is an option, but not one that we would recommend.

Path number 2:

One can ignore the facts and continue to misplace their confidence in those that are supposedly smarter and more educated than they are, and thus go back to how things once were, as though nothing happened. However, knowing what we know now, this is a rather dishonest approach.

However, after watching part 1 of the Pauline Paradox series, one should already know that we should be very careful where we place our trust...we should only trust in the Word of God. Because clearly, God's people have a history of the majority being very wrong in their theology.

Or there is another path,

Path number 3:

In which one takes that uncomfortable cognitive dissonance and uses it as a motivator to discover the truth, whatever that might be, to reconcile the whole Bible against the difficult words of Paul.

Those interested in the third path, with the desire to test everything and figure these things out, and are really excited about trying to resolve all of these conflicts and tensions on Paul's words, we ask for just a little more patience. We will be covering all of the difficult words of Paul in this series.

We will reconcile the apparent contradictions with the Paul You Never Knew, and the Paul You Thought You Knew.

But...

What we need to understand first, is the root cause of the problem.
We need to understand why Paul is so difficult to understand.

Because some might still say, “Paul is not hard to understand in matters of the law...in fact, he clearly said that we are no longer under the law of God, but under grace. It does not get any clearer than that!”

We expect that the same persons saying such things are those that might benefit the most from this part in the series.

To claim that Paul is easy to understand in matters of the law of God, is to contradict the very words of someone who knew Paul better than most, and certainly better than anyone alive today. That person is Peter.

Hopefully none of us consider that arguing with Peter is a good idea. Here is what he had to say about Paul’s letters and how easy it can be to misunderstand Paul in matters pertaining to the law of God.

2 Peter 3:15-17

And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. **There are some things in them that are hard to understand**, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are **not carried away with the error of lawless people** and lose your own stability.

Peter’s warning is clear. Furthermore, it’s in the context of preparing us for the coming Day of the Lord. We should all want to be ready for that day.

Here, Peter said that some things in Paul’s letters are hard to understand, and some people even “twist” Paul’s words to make them say something different than what he intended.

We have no reason to doubt that Peter’s firsthand testimony about Paul’s letters could apply today as well. After all, Paul’s letters certainly didn’t become easier to understand centuries after they were written and in another culture. Many of Paul’s statements about God’s Law are perhaps the most difficult parts of his letters, as they are seemingly contradictory!

Therefore, we must read Paul’s letters carefully and make sure we are not “**carried away with the error of lawless people.**” But how do we do that? What are some of the reasons Paul is so difficult to understand? What should we look out for?

PROBLEM #1: IGNORING THE FRONT OF THE BOOK

Peter mentioned that this error, the error of the lawless, came from two root causes, being ignorant and being unstable.

Being ignorant simply means to “ignore.”

This does not always mean ignoring intentionally. But ignorance is the direct result of either intentionally or unintentionally ignoring data or evidence. Regardless of whether the ignorance is intentional or not, Peter's point is quite simple. He stated that in order to come to the conclusion that Paul teaches that the law of God is no longer for God's people, then one must "ignore" a lot of Scripture.

Peter communicated this further when he said that "people twist Paul's writings, to their own destruction, as they do with the other Scriptures."

What Scriptures is Peter referring to? What Scriptures are people ignoring? What Scriptures are people twisting?

Given that Peter is writing this in the first century, and since there were no New Testament Scriptures assembled yet, the only Scriptures Peter could have been referencing is what we often call the Old Testament, or also known as the TANAKH...meaning the Torah, Prophets, and Writings.

That is huge! and very important to understand... Peter says one that believes that Paul taught against the Law of God can only be ignoring or twisting the OTHER Scriptures, the Old Testament.

Even more alarmingly, on the flip side, the opposite must also be true. One who understands and knows what the Old Testament says will not and cannot walk away with the understanding that Paul taught against the Law of God.

So, the first reason that we are to understand why Paul is difficult to understand is because many do not realize what the front of the book says. How many actually believe it's a good idea to try to understand the front of the book by what the back of the book says?

Or just perhaps, perhaps it is a better idea to understand the back of the book by reading the front of the book?

For example, many believe Paul taught that the law of God is different now, that the Word of God changed, and His instructions have evolved.

All of mainstream Christianity teaches that God altered His Word that was given in the New Testament...that there are many commandments that simply do not apply.

So, some believe that Paul taught that the Word of God changed into something new, with new rules, or a new law...that the Word was altered. Yet, God Himself said that would never happen.

So, we only have 2 options:

1) God is wrong, and the common understanding of Paul is correct

Or

2) God is right, and the common understanding of Paul is incorrect.

Now, let's read Peter again to help us choose the correct option:

2 Peter 3:15-17

And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. **There are some things in them that are hard to understand**, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are **not carried away with the error of lawless people** and lose your own stability.

Peter did not say that God is hard to understand on matters of the law...in fact, Peter appealed to the simplicity of understanding it as long as one understands the “other Scriptures” or the Old Testament as they are often called today.

Peter said Paul is hard to understand...

Here is another instance of a problem of not understanding the front of the book before we read the back of the book:

Many believe and teach that Paul called the Law of God bondage because of this verse:

Galatians 5:1

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

But that presents another problem, the front of the book calls the Law of God liberty:

Psalms 119:44-45 (NKJV)

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

How can what is “liberty” be “bondage?”

The answer is that Paul is actually not calling the law of God bondage, but we will go into more detail on Galatians later in the series. In many people’s minds, Galatians simply proves that the law of God was abolished, or changed.

The reality is quite different.

Like Paul, the author of Hebrews is also very difficult to understand in matters of the law of God. Because of this verse, many believe and teach that we now have a better Law of God in the new covenant.

Hebrews 8:6

But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.

But again, if we would have read the front of the book, then we should have an issue with such an understanding. Because the Bible already said many hundreds of years earlier that the law of God is completely perfect:

Psalm 19:7

The law of the LORD [YHWH] is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the testimony of the LORD [YHWH] is sure,
making wise the simple;

Not to sound silly, but if the Law of God is perfect, how can it be suggested that it has been made better? Can perfect be made better?

Of course not...

We must be misunderstanding what was written in Hebrews.

Some read this next verse and suggest that the law of God has vanished away.

Hebrews 8:13

In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

But again, if we would have read the front of the book, we would realize that the law of God is forever.

Deuteronomy 29:29

“The secret things belong to the LORD [YHWH] our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

So once again, the common understanding of Hebrews must be in error. The common understanding is that “covenant” is the central context of Hebrews 8... However, believe it or not, the word covenant is not even there in the Greek. It was intentionally added by translators, which completely changes the context of this verse. Check it out for yourself with an interlinear... for a further review of Hebrews chapter 8, see the 119 Ministries teaching titled “[What is New About the New Covenant?](#)”

In First Timothy 4, Paul appears to be speaking against the dietary instructions found in Leviticus 11.

1 Timothy 4:1-5

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

If we believe the front of the book, specifically Leviticus 11, then how can we believe the common understanding of Paul in 1 Timothy 4.

Is Leviticus 11 a doctrine of demons, or commandments of God?

Is Leviticus 11 a lie in hypocrisy, or truth like Psalm 119:142 declares it to be?

Is following the Word of God in Leviticus 11 departing from the faith, or is the whole Word of God part of our faith?

Those are some questions worth considering, don't you think?"

Clearly, there is something many do not understand about 1 Timothy 4...if you are interested in the topic of 1 Timothy 4 we would recommend the 119 Ministries teaching "[Can We Eat All Things?](#)"

Those examples were simply a small sample of the problems Peter is informing us about regarding Paul's letters. If one does not understand the front of the book, it is certainly going to be most difficult to understand the back of the book.

Let us be clear...

Peter is most certainly not saying that Paul's letters are wrong, in fact, quite the opposite.

Peter is saying that Paul is misunderstood in matters of the law by people who do not compare their doctrine to the Old Testament to understand the New Testament.

We fully believe that Paul had a knowledgeable grasp on matters of the Word of God and gospel.

Like Peter, we simply believe Paul has been one of the most misunderstood authors in all of history...over some very serious theological matters.

Now, we may not like that idea about Paul, but Peter said it as plain as he could.

It does not matter what we think about Paul, it matters what Peter said. We might want to think that Paul is just as understandable as can be on the subject of the law of God, but Peter suggests that unless you know the Old Testament well, you likely have made some serious doctrinal errors.

In fact, Peter specifically calls it the error of the lawless. If one concludes through Paul that there are less laws, that is indeed lawless, so we do not have to stretch the imagination to see where Peter is coming from.

Peter is basically asking us to not forget what was already written...to please not ignore it...and do not assume that Paul is teaching something contrary to what has been already written. This leads us to Peter's other root cause leading to the error of lawless people...

Being unstable...

Have you ever met someone who is unstable? They say one thing, and then moments later they completely contradict themselves, or constantly flip-flop on the points they are trying to make.

As part two of this teaching series clearly revealed, Paul himself taught and practiced the whole Word of God, which includes the whole law of God, not just some of it like many do today, picking and choosing which parts they want to follow.

So, we cannot make Paul out to be someone unstable...

We cannot have Paul teaching for and against the law of God in his letters at the same time, lest we appear to be unstable in our understanding...we cannot have Paul be a contradicting hypocrite. We cannot have Paul teaching against the law of God, and instructing us to uphold the law of God in the same letter.

We cannot pick and choose which verses out of Paul we want to focus on or believe to still be truth, and ignore other verses that seem to be completely contrary.

PROBLEM #2: IGNORING CONTEXT

For example, many like to cite this verse of Paul:

Romans 6:14

For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Some, with all sincerity and concern will immediately cite this verse at the first instance of one suggesting that we should follow and practice the whole Word of God. It almost never fails...

This is understandable, but only if we examine this verse in isolation. There is also this verse in Romans, which some can use to claim that the law ended.

Romans 10:4

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes

Take those verses that we just reviewed in Romans, and compare them to this verse and watch how Paul will seemingly become unstable:

Romans 3:31

Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

So Paul tells us to uphold the law of God, but says that we are no longer under the law of God? Something is not right here...

Are you beginning to feel the cognitive dissonance? Are you feeling the tension between what many believe Paul taught, versus what he actually wrote?

In Romans 7, Paul says in verse 12 that the law is holy, good, and righteous:

The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

So, if we are no longer under the law of God, then that means we are no longer under something that is holy, righteous, and good. How horrible is that?

Why would God take away from us what is holy, righteous, and good?

How is it good to have what is holy, righteous, and good taken from us?

But get this, then Paul says this in verse 25:

Romans 7:25

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ [Messiah Yeshua] our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

So Paul serves the Law of God? ...but we are not to be under the law of God?

To make matters even worse, what if we look at this verse:

1 Corinthians 11:1

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

So if we are to imitate Paul, and Paul followed and served the law of God, and Christ followed the law of God, and that is who Paul imitated...then, you can see how this is starting to be quite complicated. Because that would mean that Paul, like our Messiah Yeshua, followed exactly the same law...and he taught us to as well....yet, many teach that Paul did not teach us to keep the law of God.

Is Peter's warning more understandable now, and the gravity of it? See how easy it is to become ignorant and unstable?

Is it now obvious how this can all lead to the error of lawless people?

Consider this...

Romans 6:14

For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

So, clearly one reason Paul is hard to understand it because of Paul's writings themselves.

He simply seemed like he was talking out of both sides of his mouth. And rather than try to reconcile it all, self-professed educated Christian theologians simply latch on to the aspect of Paul that seems like he is abolishing the Law of God.

They pluck out the verses that seem to be against the law of God, while ignoring Paul's pro law verses.

If one takes away Paul, a few verses in Hebrews, Acts 10 and Acts 15, theologians would admit that they have no means to teach that the law of God is abolished, changed, or whatever they want to call it. Guess who that still leaves in the equation? Yeshua our Messiah...it is not even remotely possible to suggest in any of Yeshua's statements that the law was going to be abolished.

In fact, instances such as Matthew 5:17-19 clearly illustrate the opposite.

Yet, really all one has to attempt to support a law abolishing paradigm is Paul. And embarrassingly enough, Paul is the only author in the whole Bible that we are given a Biblical warning to exercise extreme discernment and knowledge of the Old Testament in the study of his letters. So, Paul himself ends up being his own worst enemy when teaching the law of God.

Keep in mind, all of Paul's supposed anti-law statements can be addressed when inserted back into the context of his full letters...most though, are simply not willing to invest the time to do so, because they are already convinced in their own mind that Paul taught against the law of God.

PROBLEM #3: MISPLACED TRUST IN MAN

Another reason Paul is so difficult to understand, is because Christian scholars perpetuate their misunderstanding of Paul, and take what is already easy to misunderstand, and solidify the error under timeless layers of their own doctrine.

Here is a quote from Bible.org:

“One of the profound emphases of the New Testament, especially the epistles of Paul, is that Christians are no longer under the rule of the Mosaic law. This truth is stated in no uncertain terms and in various ways....”

They then of course cite verses such as these. (see Romans 6:14; 7:1-14; Galatians 3:10-13, 24-25; 4:21; 5:1, 2 Corinthians 3:7-18)

Notice how Romans 6:14 is the very first verse they often quote...

John MacArther says this about the Sabbath:

“We believe the Old Testament regulations governing Sabbath observances are ceremonial, not moral, aspects of the law. As such, they are no longer in force, but have passed away along with the sacrificial system, the Levitical priesthood, and all other aspects of Moses' law that prefigured Christ.”
Gty.org

Notice how John begins to categorize God's law based on his own interpretive paradigm.

He invents unbiblical terms like “moral law” to allow him to remove certain parts of the law of God that he believes no longer applies.

To MacArthur's dismay, there is no such thing as "moral law" in the Bible. Should it not be a red flag that we would have to invent terms and our own definitions to explain our own theology?

The funny thing is this, is it not all of God's law that defines morality? It's certainly not our own standard that defines morality. Since when can we define what is or is not moral?

This is all enough to make one's head spin.

But we are not done yet. One of the most heavily used Bibles is the Life Application Study Bible by Zondervan.

Under the section of Matthew 5, it reads:

"Jesus did not speak against the law itself, but against the abuses and excesses to which it had been subjected"

We would agree with that. Yeshua our Messiah taught against much of the Jewish tradition found in the first century. These traditions were not considered the Word of God...and according to Mark 7, a lot of these traditions were against the Word of God. The law of God is fully intact, was not canceled or abolished by any stretch. Yet the commentary of the very same study Bible says this contrary statement under Colossians 2: *"The written code that was CANCELED was the legal demands of the Old Testament law. The law opposed us by its demands for payment of sin."*

Do you see how the commentary is contradicting itself?

In one breath, saying Yeshua (or Jesus) did not speak against the law, but then in another breath say that Yeshua canceled it!

That is a contradiction at best, and doctrinal hypocrisy at its very worst.

Typical Christian commentary presents an idea that Christ followed, practiced, and taught one religion, which here is Judaism, and after Christ's death, we then have something new called Christian liberty.

Is the Bible really two religions separated by a blank page between the Old and New Testament?

Equip.org, the very popular Christian organization that retains the self-proclaimed "Bible Answer Man" has this quote on their website:

This is under the heading - APOSTASY OR CHRISTIAN LIBERTY?

"The New Testament records various struggles the new Christian church had in order to break the shackles of an old system of law keeping that bound many in their former religion — Judaism."

Look at the language of the law being like a prison...calling God's law the *"shackles of an old system of law keeping that bound many in their former religion"*

Now, never mind that Christ was our example and that we should believe and do what he did...equip.org is clearly calling the law of God bondage...bondage...God's instructions are bondage, a prison, shackles....

Yet, the Bible calls what Moses wrote to be liberty (Psalm 119:44-45)

Instead of following Equip.org, let's test their comments by reading exactly what the Bible says about the Law of God before Christ:

Psalms 119:44-45 (NKJV)

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

So Equip.org calls God's law shackles that we needed to be freed from, and the Bible calls God's law freedom and liberty when we seek it.

Who is right? Equip.org, or the Bible?

This is not to bash Equip.org...they are not unique in their doctrine. This is to reveal a system of teaching that many have placed their faith and trust; and in this case, many are clearly placing more trust in following what men say, than what the Bible says.

Acts 5:29

But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.

Do we really have "Christian Liberty" when we walk away from the very thing the Bible calls liberty...the law of God?

Do we obtain liberty by discarding liberty? That is a very serious question!

Equip.org is calling what the Bible calls liberty to be shackles and a prison.

How would you suppose God feels about that?

This isn't to bash John MacArthur or Equip.org. Their teachings merely reflect the traditional view of God's Law. But as we've already explained in previous teachings in this series, we need to place our trust in the Word of God, not men's tradition.

When we verse pluck words out of Paul's letter's, something we should never do with any letter by the way, then we can certainly find support for not being under the law of God, apparently to Peter's own frustration.

We can even make the law of God look like bondage. We can even make the law of God appear to be contrary to grace. We can even make the law of God something bad, obsolete, and to be thrown into the trash can. We can make the law of God to be contrary to truth, we can even make the law of God to be foolish and the result of bewitching.

But again, to Peter's point, we would have to "ignore" so much of what is in Paul's other letters, and so much of what was already written as truth, to accomplish this; we would have to twist the Scriptures and make Paul out to be unstable...

And when we do this, we then partake in the "error of lawless people."

Peter's words, not ours.

The question comes down to this, are we ok with contradictions in order to preserve hundreds of years of theological tradition, or do we want truth?

Do we crave truth? Is there nothing more that we want other than the WHOLE Word of God? If the answer is yes, then you might be quite frustrated at the moment. How do we reconcile all of these verses of Paul? How do we bring consistency and stability back into Paul's writings?

How do we heed Peter's warning and not make the error of lawless people, leading to our own destruction? All great questions, and such things will be the focus of all material going forward in the Pauline Paradox series.

However, there are still a couple reasons Paul is difficult to understand.

PROBLEM #4: NOT UNDERSTANDING HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Paul continues being just as confusing in Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 7:19

For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God.

Some immediately point to this verse and state that circumcision is abolished. Yet, Paul then states in the same context that it is the keeping of commandments of God that matters. What makes that complicated is that circumcision is a commandment of God.

Paul is difficult to understand, because he appears to be speaking out of both sides of his mouth. On one side, he is for the law of God, observes the law of God, and teaches the law of God.

On the other side, Paul appears to be speaking out against the observing of the law of God, calls it bondage, and says it has been abolished. Here is another example of why it is important to understand the first century debates.

Many suggest that following the Law of God is foolish and means you have been bewitched because one is not obeying the truth.

Galatians 3:1-3

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

So, the Galatians are apparently in trouble by Paul because they are not obeying the truth, yet, the front of the book actually defines the law of God as the truth:

Psalm 119:142

Your righteousness is righteous forever,
and your law is true.

Psalm 119:160

The sum of your word is truth,
and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.

Besides noting that forever happens to be a long time, it is clear that the law of God is truth...how can Paul actually be calling someone foolish for obeying the law of God instead of obeying truth, when the law of God is the truth? When we read the front of the Book before reading Paul, it most certainly produces a different result than if we read Paul, or common interpretations of Paul, first.

PROBLEM #5: DOCTRINAL PROGRAMMING

Religious indoctrination existed in the first century and it still exists today.

There are really three main doctrinal barriers to someone understanding Paul as well as Peter understood Paul. Many of us have not only heard these before, but perhaps even said versions of them ourselves at one time or another.

These three common, often knee jerk, expressions or phrases are:

- 1) "Those under the Law of Moses were 'under bondage,' which ended with Jesus, who has set us free"
- 2) "No one could ever do everything the law requires" -- that's why we needed Jesus
- 3) The law was "a curse" that Jesus came to do away with.

All of these common simple rebuttals completely miss the point and expose our misunderstandings of Paul.

The first statement, this is clearly derived from Paul's statement in Galatians:

Galatians 5:1

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

We covered this earlier, pointing out that the Law of God is actually freedom and that we should not have a desire to be freed from freedom...

The second statement is what is called a “red herring”

A red herring is a figurative expression referring to a logical fallacy in which a clue or piece of information is or is intended to be misleading, or distracting, from the actual topic at hand.

No one is suggesting that one needs to do the whole Law of God to attempt to replace what Yeshua did on the cross. That would simply be absurd. We need to be forgiven of our past and future sin, but there are other very valid and very Biblical reasons to keep the law of God.

We are to keep the law of God because it is Freedom (Psalm 119:44-45)

The Way to Love God (1 John 5:2-3)

Keeps us out of sin (1 John 3:4)
It is truth (Psalm 119:142)

And it is what our Messiah did as our example (1 Corinthians 11:1)

So, basically, we are **NOT** to keep the law of God **FOR** our salvation, **BUT BECAUSE** of our salvation.

When we have been saturated in mainstream Christian doctrine but are then told that that we are to observe the whole Word of God, we often think of Judaism or that we are to become a Jew.

It is what we have been programmed to think.

And according to mainstream Christianity, Judaism is the belief that one should keep the law of God for salvation.

So when one says they follow the whole Word of God, many will automatically make accusations of being like a Jew and trying to earn salvation.

Christianity distinguishes itself from Judaism (the "religion of Law") with the idea that the former is a religion of faith and love, whereas Judaism, is one of works.

To quote William Barclay;

"The Christian lives under the law of liberty, and it is by the law of liberty he will be judged. What he means is this. Unlike the Pharisee and the orthodox Jew, the Christian is not a man whose life is governed by the external pressure of a whole series of rules and regulations imposed on him from without. He is governed by the inner compulsion of love. He follows the right way, the way of love to God and love to men, not because any external law compels him to do so nor because any threat of punishment frightens him into doing so, but because the love of Christ within his heart makes him desire to do so." (The Daily Study Bible Series - the Letters of James and Peter, William Barclay, 1976, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, p. 70.)

Clearly there is a belief that anti-law is liberty, yet the Bible disagrees and says that the Law of God is liberty.

Also, see how the Law of God is viewed as anti-love, yet Yeshua said that the whole Law of God relates to two principles, loving God and loving others, every commandment relates to these two principles in some way.

Matthew 22:35-40

And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Yeshua did not say, hang the law, as in put it to death, or kill the law...he said the whole Law of God is related to the two principles of loving God and loving others.

The whole law is based on love.

And in case there is any question to which law Yeshua was referring to, he was clearly referencing to the Old Testament, also known as the "Law and Prophets" even by Jews today.

This means that observing the true Biblical Sabbath has something to do with loving God or loving others. Or eating only clean things has something to do with loving God or loving others.

Every commandment has something to do with loving God or loving others. This is why John wrote what he did in 1 John chapter 5:

1 John 5:2-3

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

So if loving God and loving others has something to do with every commandment in the Bible, what happens if we start breaking those commandments? What if we start eating unclean things? If eating clean has something to do with loving God, then what are we doing to God if we refuse to eat clean?

God already told us how to love him and love others, and it is embedded into every one of his commandments. Because God is so smart, and typically we are not, God knew that he had to detail these things out for us, otherwise, we would invent our own way to love God and love others...and it simply does not work that way.

So Judaism is not distinguished from Christianity in such a way that Judaism is works and Christianity is love. According to God, you cannot separate works from love, because obedience to God's commandments is love! Love is an action...love is doing...love is a behavior...love is what we do when we obey...Love is not a philosophical abstract idea that means whatever we want it to mean. Love is following each and every one of God's commandments, not from our own heart, but his heart, the heart he replaced ours with.

Ezekiel 36:26-27

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

In the third statement, we are told that the law is a curse.

This idea came from Galatians 3.

Galatians 3:13

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”

Now, the astute believer should immediately ask, how is doing the law of God a curse, when it is also called truth and freedom?

Is truth and freedom a curse?

In reality, the Bible says that breaking the law of God leads to the curse.

Deuteronomy 11:26-28

“See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD [YHWH] your God, which I command you today, **and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD [YHWH] your God**, but turn aside from the way that I am commanding you today, to go after other gods that you have not known.

We will tackle all of these common misunderstandings of Paul later in the series.

But for now, realize this, we all have predispositions and doctrine that we have to deal with in order to understand Paul as he intended us to understand him.

There is at least one more primary example as to why Paul is often hard to understand.

PROBLEM #6: NOT UNDERSTANDING PAUL'S USAGE OF THE WORD “LAW”

First, it would help to Biblically define the word law.

In the Greek, the word is “nomos” which literally does mean “law”

Many years before the arrival of Yeshua, the Jews translated the Old Testament, also called the TANAKH, into Greek.

The result of the Greek Old Testament is called the LXX or the Septuagint.

In the Septuagint, it was the Hebrew word “torah” that became the Greek word “nomos” ... This of course was carried over in the New Testament, and in our English Bibles, also became the word “law.”

So to recap...the word law in our English bibles is “nomos” in Greek, and “Torah” in Hebrew.

The Hebrew word offers a little more definition and insight to understanding what “law” really means according to God...not what it means to us, but to God.

The word “Torah” simply means “instructions”

But here is where it becomes complicated, Paul actually discusses multiple laws.

Likely shocking to many, Paul mentions other instructions rather than the just the Law of God or Torah of God. For example, Paul mentions the following laws:

- 1) The Law of God (Romans 3:31; 7:22-25; 8:7)
- 2) The Law of Sin (Romans 7:23-25)
- 3) The Law of Sin and Death (Romans 8:2)
- 4) The Law of the Spirit of Life (Romans 8:2)
- 5) The Law of Faith (Romans 3:27)
- 6) The Law of Righteousness (Romans 9:31)
- 7) The Law of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21)

Notice that is a lot of different laws, certainly more than just the Law of God. Also notice how they are all located in Romans, so we're going to be spending a lot of time in that letter in the next part of the Pauline Paradox Series.

Clearly, right off the bat, one should notice that some of these instructions, or laws, are good, some are not. For instance, the instruction of sin, which comes from our flesh and the adversary, or Satan, is clearly not good.

And that instruction of sin leads us to death, which becomes the law of sin and death. Now, what many do not realize is that Paul does not always expressly say which laws he is referring to in his letters.

He does make specific mention of all of these laws, or instructions, but not every single time.

Many times he requires the reader to use context.

When the reader is not paying attention, they might mistakenly believe that Paul's letters are saying we are not under the Law of God, when in fact, Paul might be saying that the believer is no longer under the Law of Sin and Death.

How do we know which law is being talked about? That is sort of an important question isn't it?

Unfortunately, few ever ask that question.

Paul always lets the careful reader know. But someone reading Paul's letters with preconceived understandings, is already preconditioned to make the error of the lawless that Peter warned us about.

How many have realized that Paul speaks of so many laws?

What are the relationships between these laws?

What do they mean?

Remember, the word law simply means "instructions" ...so how do these instructions relate or no longer relate to us.

We should want to define and understand each one of these law's, in the same way that Paul understands and presents them.

In Part 4 of the Pauline Paradox Series, we will examine all 7 of these laws in depth, and we will answer all of these questions.

In part 5 of the Pauline Paradox Series, we will examine each letter of Paul in depth, finally answering all of the difficult words of Paul.

Everything will be reconciled, and God's law will remain intact.

In summary, we need to carefully interpret Paul's statements regarding the Law so that we don't misunderstand him. It is very easy to make Paul appear as though he is contradicting himself. Anytime we read Paul's letters, we need to take Peter's warning into consideration. Understanding these six common problems that cause people to misinterpret Paul will help us. Those are:

1) We need to examine the back of the Bible in light of the front of the Book. The Bible constantly reuses Biblical terms that are already defined for us if we are willing to seek them out. We need to examine the Bible holistically, and not ignore what was already written in the Word.

2) We need to make sure that we are not taking Paul's statements out of context. We need to remember that a letter is a letter and is intended to be read from front to back. It's also important to realize Paul's letters were not were not written directly to us, but to a specific group of people with specific problems.

3) We also need to not place so much trust in man. Just because our favorite teacher, pastor, etc., gives their own opinion on how to understand Paul, it does not mean that you should accept their opinion without question. Challenge their perspective by comparing them with the Scriptures and test everything. Even in the first century, Peter mentioned that self-proclaimed teachers and experts were twisting Paul's writings and leading people astray "with the error of lawless people." We do not want to fall into the same trap, especially since Peter specifically warned us beforehand.

4) We also need to realize, that just like there are popular debates today, there were popular debates that were occurring in the first century. There were Jewish sects and denominations, each with their own corrupted views of the Scriptures. Many times, Paul is teaching against a particular Jewish sect, and their doctrine, not the Law of God. This is revealed using historical evidence, and even Paul's own letters.

5) All of us have a past and preconceived ideas and glasses that we use to read the Scriptures. We need to be aware of those glasses and be willing to take them off to see the Scriptures with our own eyes to understand what the Bible really says. Sometimes this involves going slow and taking a deep breath. Sometimes the best approach is to assume nothing, and Test Everything.

6) Lastly, we need to understand that Paul uses the word law in many different contexts and ways, at least 7 different ways. We need to use context to define these laws, and understand how they relate, or don't relate to us in the faith. That, of course, will be the subject of the next part in the Pauline Paradox Series, where we begin to tackle the difficult words of Paul.

In Part 2, we showed how Paul taught all the whole Law of God. Now, through Part 3, we should be equipped to move forward, and see how Paul didn't teach against the Law of God.

We hope that this teaching has blessed you, and remember, continue to test everything. Shalom

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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