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MINISTRIES

“The following is a direct script of a teaching that is intended to be presented via video, incorporating relevant text, slides, media, and graphics to assist in illustration, thus facilitating the presentation of the material. In some places, this may cause the written material to not flow or sound rather awkward in some places. In addition, there may be grammatical errors that are often not acceptable in literary work. We encourage the viewing of the video teachings to complement the written teaching you see below.”

The Pauline Paradox Part 5: Romans

Welcome to Part 5 of the Pauline Paradox series. In this teaching, we will be covering the book of Romans. We expect that there may be two types of people interested in watching this teaching.

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

The second type of person watching this teaching might be one who already understands that we are to be observing the Torah, but still wants to be able to better understand and explain the difficult words of Paul. To those in this group, we still recommend beginning at the start of the Pauline Paradox Series. However, we do not consider it to be absolutely necessary.

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

Lastly, before we get started, also be aware that there may be parts of Romans that you may have wished that we would cover in more detail, but instead, we simply move forward. For example, Romans is often cited in the Calvinism vs. Arminianism debate. For Calvinistic doctrine, however, we will not be discussing our perspective for or against such doctrine that topic, as that is not the point of the Pauline Paradox Series.

The goal of the Pauline Paradox series is to call the whole Body of the Messiah back to the whole Word of God. This is what we believe the ministry of Yeshua (Jesus) was all about, apart from his death and resurrection. He called God’s people to repentance and obedience.

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

It is not by accident that we chose Paul's letter to the Romans as the first complete letter to address in the Pauline Paradox Series. This letter is foundational, as Paul reveals his understanding of the Torah and how it relates to us in the faith.

According to scholars, Paul wrote his letter to believers in Rome sometime between 55-58 CE. Paul wrote to a group made up of both Jewish and Gentile followers of Yeshua. The main emphasis throughout Paul's letter is that Jews and Gentiles are both saved by the same Gospel. There's no double standard. Jews aren't automatically saved based on their Jewishness, and Gentiles do not need to convert to Judaism to be saved. Both are equally lost and in need of deliverance from their sins, and they can both be saved by grace through faith in Christ. Moreover, God's Law for the believer is valid and applicable to both Jews and Gentiles when it is properly applied on the basis of faith.

Paul begins his letter to the believers in Rome by stating that grace and apostleship are designed to bring about the obedience of faith (Romans 1:5). He focuses on how God's plan to provide the means of grace, as taught in the Scriptures, was always through the Messiah. In addition, the Scriptures teach that the Messiah was to instruct us in the Word of God and inspire us toward obedience. Why are we obedient to the faith? To bring glory to God's name among all of the nations.

Romans 1:5-6

“...through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about **the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations...**”

In the first few verses of Romans, Paul stresses the mission of calling all nations into obedience to the Word of God through faith in the Messiah. In other words, he starts off his letter emphasizing the very command that Yeshua gave his disciples just before his ascension—that is, we are to teach all nations to obey everything Yeshua commanded:

Matthew 28:19-20

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

As we've demonstrated in previous parts of this series, Yeshua practiced and taught the Law of God...the Torah. He said his followers would also practice and teach the Law of God (Matthew 5:19). This means the Great Commission includes teaching all nations the Torah. This is our calling as followers of Yeshua.

In Romans 1:8-17, Paul defines what “obedience to the faith” (1:5) looks like. He uses the word righteousness related to faith (1:17) and then quotes the prophet Habakkuk: “**The righteous shall live by faith**” (Habakkuk 2:4). That is to say, our faith reveals the righteousness of God, which brings others to the faith. So, according to Paul and the prophet Habakkuk, faith is a way of life for the believer in Yeshua. It is not merely a philosophy or intellectual belief, but a way of being and doing. It is a way to live. It is a way of life.

It is absolute truth that becomes our way of life. It is truth that rules over us, in our mind, and in our actions. We do what we believe to be true. In other words, if the Word of God is truth, then it is the Word of God that we do. That is the righteousness that is the faith we live by.

“Righteousness” simply means “walking in the right ways of God.”

These “right ways” are not subjective, nor invented by you or me, or any other man for that matter. The right ways are the ways articulated in the Word of God, or more Hebraically, specifically, the Torah, the instructions of God.

For more on the word righteousness, we would encourage you to watch 119 Ministries teaching, [“Hunger”](#)

After discussing righteousness, Paul describes the opposite—that is, unrighteousness. He says that the unrighteousness of men “suppresses the truth” (1:18). So according to Paul, unrighteousness is the opposite of truth. And what does the Word of God define as truth?

Psalm 119:142 (NASB)

“Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law is truth.”

So, in the first chapter of Romans, Paul shows a contrast between those in the faith who are called to obedience to God’s Law and those not in the faith who practice unrighteousness, or lawlessness.

From verse 19 onward in Chapter 1, Paul goes on to offer a plethora of examples defining unrighteousness. To summarize, Paul’s definition of unrighteousness is breaking the Torah...which is the same as living contrary to the Word of God. In Chapter 2, he goes on to talk about God’s coming wrath upon the unrighteous (2:1-11), and then he says something especially interesting:

Romans 2:12-13

For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.

Did you catch that? Paul is saying here that, although we are saved by grace, the doers of God’s Law are considered righteous before God and will be justified. They aren’t justified because of their works, or because they keep the Law of God perfectly, but because they believe the Word of God to be true and thus desire to do the Law of God. How is it fair, then, that the Law of God judges Gentiles—those who do not have the Law? As Paul explains, basic principles of God’s Law have been written on the Gentiles’ hearts:

Romans 2:14-16

For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus [Messiah Yeshua].

Paul then turns his attention toward those who have the Law but do not obey it. He says that God’s will is for his people to follow his Law and that, through obedience to God’s Law, we can be a guide to the blind and a light to those in darkness. That is because, according to Paul, the Law is the “embodiment of knowledge and truth” (2:17-20).

Paul goes on to say that breaking God's Law dishonors God (2:23). He says that the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles because the Jewish people were breaking God's Law. This means that the Law of God was intended as a standard of righteousness for Gentiles. They were to learn obedience through the example of the Jewish people.

Things start to get a little confusing at Romans 2:25 when Paul talks about circumcision. Many have taken this section of Romans to mean that Paul believes that God no longer expects his people to be physically circumcised and that he cares only about circumcision of the heart. However, circumcision was never just about a physical removal of the foreskin. It has always been about the heart and not just the flesh. Paul isn't teaching anything new.

Deuteronomy 10:16

“Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.”

Deuteronomy 30:6

“And the LORD [YHWH] your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD [YHWH] your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.”

Circumcision of the heart has always meant a heart that desires to be obedient to the faith. Physical circumcision is an outward sign of that inward circumcision.

Romans 2:25-29

For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

Paul clearly says physical circumcision does have value, but only if you are keeping the Torah. Circumcision is an outward sign of your desire to keep the Torah.

One of the big debates in the first century was whether or not a Gentile had to be circumcised in the flesh to be considered a full member of God's people. As we've already discussed earlier in this series and in our teaching on Acts 15, the apostles taught that Gentiles do not have to get circumcised as a prerequisite to being accepted into the believing community—they are saved by grace through faith (Acts 15:11) and to be received on that basis. Then, they would be instructed in Moses' teaching every Sabbath in the synagogues (Acts 15:21). As the Gentiles listen to the Torah, and as the teachers instruct them, they will eventually want to get circumcised in obedience to the Law of God.

Like Abraham, Gentile believers can have faith while uncircumcised in the flesh. Also like Abraham, because of their faith, they will receive the sign of circumcision.

After all, YHWH said he chose Abraham ‘because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.’” (Genesis 26:5).

James 2:22-24

“You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.”

Just as it is for the Jew, if a Gentile is circumcised but does not keep the Torah, then that outward circumcision is meaningless. Circumcision is profitable only if we keep the Law of God.

The point here is that our faith transforms us from the inside out, not the outside in. First, we need the Spirit, which gives us the desire to follow the Law of God. Only after that, through continued learning of the Word of God, do we practice the rest of the Torah. Therefore, it makes no sense to pressure the new believers to get circumcised. Those whose hearts are circumcised will eventually understand that circumcision of the flesh is part of our obedience to the faith. It will happen when a person’s faith is ready for it to happen.

As we continue to Chapter 3, Paul reiterates the value of circumcision for those who might have been confused about his comments in Chapter 2:

Romans 3:1-2

Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

To quell any confusion, Paul again says that circumcision has value. The Jews during that time, like others today, may have perceived Paul’s earlier statements about focusing on circumcision of the heart first to mean that circumcision of the flesh has no value. To correct for this possible misunderstanding, Paul immediately clarifies that not only does circumcision of the flesh still have value, as it is part of the Torah, but the whole Torah—the “oracles of God”—is also still of value. Furthermore, the Jews have an advantage since they were able to grow up with the Torah, both learning and practicing it.

Again, knowing and practicing the whole Torah is an ADVANTAGE, not a disadvantage, or something that is bad.

Since the Jews followed the Torah, they were circumcised on the eighth day after their birth. This is unlike the Gentiles who, like Abraham, were circumcised during adulthood. This emphasizes Paul’s earlier point that the Jews cannot expect the Gentiles to catch up to the full understanding of and obedience to the Word of God right away. It takes time to study and learn the Law of God. The Jews have been raised with the Torah their entire life; the Gentile believers have not. That difference needs to be respected and appreciated.

In Chapter 3, Paul makes a case that humankind is inherently sinful and inclined toward evil. However, our Creator is perfect and faithful. Our sin does not take away from the faithfulness of our Creator. In fact, when we sin, it proves that God is good. Our unrighteousness makes God’s righteous character even more evident (Romans 3:3-8).

In verses 9-20, Paul says that “**none is righteous.**” However, we know that the Bible does call some righteous.

For example:

Luke 1:5-6

“There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.” (See also Matthew 13:17; Habakkuk 1:4; Hosea 14:9; Ezekiel 33:18)

So what does Paul mean when he says none are righteous? In context, he’s referring to those who are “under sin” (3:9). They are “under the Law” (3:19). In other words, they will be accountable to God, and they will have no defense when they are judged. Those who are “under the Law,” according to Paul, are those who have sinned by breaking the Law of God and thus deserve death. They are under the Law of Sin and Death

That might sound confusing at the moment, especially if you have not watched The Pauline Paradox Part 4 before watching Part 5. If you recall, Paul discusses several laws in his teachings.

In fact, he makes mention of at least seven of them.

- 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)

So within those seven different laws that Paul mentions, this is the point where Paul introduces the concept of the “Law of Sin.” The “Law of Sin” is defined as the ability for the “Law of God” to reveal the sin that is in us, since the breaking of the “Law of God” is what defines sin.

Romans 3:20

For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

Keep in mind, we realize that he did not use the phrase, “the law of sin” ...but he will later, so please be patient.

Being “under the law,” according to Paul, does not equate to whether or not we should follow the law of God. Being “under the law” equates to those who have sinned, or followed the law of sin, deserving death, and are thus under the “law of sin and death.”

If you are under the Law of Sin and Death, you cannot be justified before God. We are all guilty. Any “good” thing that we’ve done counts as nothing until we have faith. The reason for this is that the main purpose of following the Law of God is to bring glory to our Creator. If we follow the Law of God before we have faith in our Creator, it was not for him but us. How can doing good be for God if we don’t have faith in God?

Imagine yourself as an unbeliever. You know nothing about God, but you know in your heart that right and wrong exist. God created every human with a general knowledge of right and wrong. Even atheists understand and know that things like murder and theft are wrong. However, nobody is perfect in

following even what they know to be true and good. We all sin and are all held accountable to God's Law. That's what Paul meant when he said that "none is righteous" and both Jews and Greeks are "under sin." Once we realize that we are in sin and guilty before God (under the law), the next step is to enter the faith and receive God's grace.

Once someone is in the faith, they are considered righteous by God.

Genesis 6:9

"These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God."

Genesis 15:6

"And he [Abraham] believed the LORD [YHWH], and he counted it to him as righteousness."

Genesis 18:23

Then Abraham drew near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?"

Luke 1:6

"And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord."

Matthew 25:46

"And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Paul continues this train of thought by teaching that we are justified before God through Yeshua's works (3:21-30). Our good works do not save us. Paul makes it clear that our obedience to God's Law is merely the result of our salvation in Yeshua (3:31). Our works are not for the purpose of salvation. They serve another purpose, and Paul will discuss that later.

Romans 3:27-31

"Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law."

So, Paul established several things here:

- 1) Our obedience is not for salvation, but the result of our faith. We believe the Word of God to be true, and obedience to God's Word is how we walk out our faith. We do what we believe to be true. It's really that simple.
- 2) Paul also states that God is the God of Gentiles and Jews. This means that God does not give a different standard of obedience to Jews than the one he gives to Gentiles. That would be silly. He treats us all as equals, and we are all afforded the same blessings and freedom of following the same perfect law. We covered this earlier in the Pauline Paradox Series.
- 3) Most importantly, Paul wants to make it extremely clear that our obedience having nothing to do with salvation does not mean that we throw out the law of God. The Law of God is **STILL VERY MUCH**

INTACT. We are to uphold and obey the Law of God. This brings us back full circle to what Paul said at the beginning of his letter: God's grace brings us into the obedience of faith (Romans 1:5).

After having said all of that...let's read it again.

Romans 3:27-31

“Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! **On the contrary, we uphold the law.**”

Continuing in Chapter 4, Paul points to Abraham to illustrate his point since Scripture says that Abraham was declared righteous by his faith in God (Genesis 15:6). Paul argues that Abraham's faith made him righteous before he had even obeyed the Law of God (Romans 4:1-5). Then Paul points to David as another example to show how God's forgiveness is available for everyone who would put their faith in God (Romans 4:6-8). This forgiveness is for not only the Jews but also the Gentiles. Since Abraham was made righteous by his faith before he was circumcised, Gentiles, likewise, are made righteous before getting physically circumcised (Romans 4:9-12). The doctrine that some Jews were pushing in the first century—that Gentiles needed to get circumcised as a prerequisite to becoming part of God's people—is false.

To be clear, just a few verses earlier, Paul said that we still uphold the Law of God by faith, which includes circumcision. Obedience is not what affords us the right to salvation. Rather, our faith affords us the promise of salvation. That's Paul's point. But we must not confuse this with the idea that we are not to keep the Law of God at all.

Paul is merely saying that keeping the Law of God does not give us salvation. This is clear when we get to verse 15: “**For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.**” Thus, we know that the Law of God still stands because humans are still capable of sin, and the Law of God defines sin. Without the Law, we would not have a clear definition of sin.

As we move forward to Chapter 5, Paul makes another interesting statement:

Romans 5:12-13

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law.

We all recall the event in Genesis, the sin of Adam. We remember his failure to guard and protect the garden as he was instructed. He allowed sin to enter the world through his and Eve's act of disobedience. Adam was given Torah (instruction). He was given a Law from God, but he transgressed that Law and, as a result, brought sin into the world. And sin, as we've been told in the narrative of the fall, leads to death.

Moving forward into Chapter 6, Paul asks and answers a fascinating question:

Romans 6:1

Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

To put Paul's rhetorical question another way, if our sin is necessary for God's grace, and God's grace is good, then isn't it good to sin more often so that there is more grace? (Remember, sin is defined as breaking God's Law.) Paul's answer is an emphatic no! And Paul's saying that we should not continue living in sin is the same as his saying that we should obey God's Law.

To substantiate his answer to this rhetorical question, Paul says that we were "buried" with Christ in baptism so that we would be "raised" with him to walk in "newness of life" (Romans 6:4). The newness of life that we are to walk in is the Law of God. Before, in our old life, we walked in sin. Now, in our new life, we are to walk in the Law of God. Walking in sin is how we lived before we came to know Christ. Now that we have come to know Christ, we walk according to the Law of God.

Paul is not teaching anything new...only what is already true.

Proverbs 6:23

"For the commandment is a lamp, And the law a light; Reproofs of instruction are the way of life..."

Paul's entire argument—that we have died to sin—leads up to his conclusion that we are no longer under the Law of Sin and Death.

In verses 5-11 of Chapter 6, Paul says that our "old self" has died and that we've been raised through Christ to newness of life. Since we have "died" to sin through the Messiah, we should no longer be interested in sinning but instead, in obeying the Law of God.

Now we get to some controversial and misunderstood verses:

Romans 6:12-14

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. **For sin will have no dominion over you**, since you are not under law but under grace.

Traditionally, Paul's statement that believers are not "under the law" has been understood to mean that we are free to disregard God's Law. However, there is a problem with this interpretation—namely, Paul affirms the ongoing authority of the Law throughout Romans.

He says we uphold the Law by faith (Romans 3:31).

The Law is "holy and righteous and good" (Romans 7:12),

The Law is "spiritual" (Romans 7:14)

Paul "delights" in the Law (Romans 7:22)

And Paul “serves” it (Romans 7:25).

He says that believers fulfill the Law’s righteous requirements when we walk according to the Spirit (Romans 8:4), and that it’s the carnal mind of man, not the spiritual mind, that rebels against the Law (Romans 8:7).

Therefore, “not under law” simply can’t mean, “freedom to disregard the Law of God.”

So, what does this verse mean? Notice that Paul says, “Sin will have no dominion over you.” As we’ve already discussed in part four of this series, this statement assumes that, at one time in our lives, sin did have dominion over us. That is to say, at one time, we were “under sin” (3:9). Remember, sin, by definition, is breaking God’s Law (7:7). Sin brings about punishment—death. Since we’ve been given grace through Christ, we are no longer under the “law” of sin and death. This is clarified in Paul’s concluding remarks a couple of chapters later:

Romans 8:1-2

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus [Messiah Yeshua]. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus [Messiah Yeshua] from the law of sin and death.

This should make much more sense now. Grace is receiving forgiveness for breaking the Law of God. Breaking the Law of God is sin. Sin leads to death. Thus, being under grace means that we are free from the bondage of sin and death. Consequently, we are not freed from the Law of God; we are free to keep the Law of God. Theologian Charles E. B. Cranfield provides an excellent summary:

[This phrase] is widely taken to mean that the authority of the law has been abolished for believers and superseded by a different authority. And this, it must be admitted, would be a plausible interpretation, if this sentence stood by itself. But, since it stands in a document which contains such things as 3:31; 7:12, 14a; 8:4; 13:8-10, and in which the law is referred to more than once as God’s law (7:22, 25; 8:7) and is appealed to again and again as authoritative, such a reading of it is extremely unlikely. The fact that “under law” is contrasted with “under grace” suggests the likelihood that **Paul is here thinking not of the law generally but of the law as condemning sinners**; for, since grace denotes God’s undeserved favour, the natural opposite to “under grace” is “under God’s disfavour or condemnation.” And the suggestion that the meaning of this sentence is that believers are not under God’s condemnation pronounced by the law but under His undeserved favour receives strong confirmation from 8:1 (“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus”), which, in Paul’s argument, is closely related (through 7:1-6) to this half-verse. Moreover, this interpretation suits the context well; for an assurance that we have been set free from God’s condemnation and are now the objects of His gracious favour is indeed confirmation (“for”) of the promise that henceforth sin shall no more be lord over us, for those who know themselves freed from condemnation are free to resist sin’s usurped power with new strength and boldness.

-Charles E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* (T&T Clark, 1975), Vol. 1, p. 305

In the next verse in Chapter 6, Paul asks another rhetorical question: “**What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?**” (Romans 6:15) This question is similar to the question he asks at the beginning of Chapter 6. And, of course, his answer is the same: “**By no means!**” Again, Paul clearly states that being under grace is no excuse for not following the Law of God.

In verses 16-23, Paul concludes Chapter 6 with an analogy to slavery. There are two types of slaves, according to Paul. We either serve God by obeying his Law, which makes us a slave to righteousness, or we serve sin by breaking God's Law, which makes us a slave to sin. Those are our only two options. Paul teaches that being a slave to righteousness leads to "eternal life in Messiah Yeshua. Being a slave to sin leads to death: **"For the wages of sin is death"** (Romans 6:23). Again, this is not to say that our obedience earns us eternal life, but if God's grace has truly given us eternal life, then we will walk in righteousness as defined by God's Law.

We would recommend our teaching **"[Bound to Righteousness](#)"** for more on this subject.

Chapter 7 begins with another question:

Romans 7:1

"Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives?"

What's interesting to point out here is the fact that Paul directed his question to a particular audience—namely, **"those who know the law."** Many read this section of Paul's letter not knowing the Torah, and therefore they walk away thinking that Paul said something he didn't. Paul draws an analogy based on the laws in the Torah governing marriage to make his point:

Romans 7:2-3

For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

How does it make sense for Paul to say that believers are now free from obeying God's Law when his entire analogy here is predicated on the validity of the Torah's laws concerning marriage?

Paul's point is not that the Law of God has died or changed or that we're free from obeying it. His point is this: since we have died with the Messiah, the penalty of the Law (death) that we deserve for our sin no longer applies to us. The Law didn't change—our status changed. That is why the next verse says we **"have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that [we] may belong to another."** We have died to sin (our previous spouse) so that we can be free to marry the Messiah.

This is even clearer when we get to verse 6:

Romans 7:6

But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

Some might believe that Paul is referring to God's Law when he talks about being freed from that which **"held us captive."** In other words, we are now free from having to obey God's Law! But Paul reminds us of the context a little later: **"For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members"** (Romans 7:23). God's Law exposes the Law of Sin that is at work inside of us. Through Christ, we have died to that Law of Sin and are no longer held captive by it.

The law of God cannot hold us captive in obedience, the Torah is considered to be freedom and liberty. In Hebrew, it means to walk in a “*wide place*.” It is sin that is restrictive to our life and causes bondage. Sin is our prison, leading to death, not the law of God.

Psalm 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.

What does Paul mean when he says that we now serve in the new way of the Spirit instead of in the old way of the written code? Does walking in the Spirit mean that we are not to walk according to the Law of God? Not at all!

Paul is referring back to a prophecy in the Old Testament related to the Spirit and the Law of God. This was all foretold to happen. We are to walk in the Spirit so that we will keep the Law of God. The idea that walking in the Spirit excludes following God’s Law is the exact opposite of what the Bible says:

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.**

As you can see, walking in the Spirit does not exclude living according to God’s Law; the Spirit empowers us to walk in God’s Law. We will discuss this more once we get to Romans 8. We don’t serve in the weakness of our flesh; we serve in the Spirit, which writes God’s Torah on our hearts and enables us to keep it. In case you thought that Paul was saying that we’re released from God’s Law, he gives a series of clarifications in the following verses:

Romans 7:7-12

What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

What is Paul teaching us here? He said that the Law of God defines sin: “**For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’**” So any action that transgresses what the Law of God says, is sin. Paul thought he was alive while living a sinful life, but once he read God’s Law, he realized that he was doomed to death. The sin in Paul’s life, revealed by God’s Law, “killed” him. This is because the Law is “**holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good**” (7:12). The Law reflects the character and will of our Father, who is holy and righteous and good. We see our sin by God’s Law, and it “kills” us. Paul explains further:

Romans 7:13

Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. **For we know that the law is spiritual.**

Those that desire to be “spiritual” follow the Law of God...that is the new way of the Spirit in the faith. The old way is to be of the flesh and carnal. We will discuss this more in chapter 8 where Paul offers more detail.

Here we also see again that the sin in our lives, revealed by God’s Law, is what produces death. God’s Law—a “good” thing—doesn’t produce death, a bad thing. It shows us our sin so that we can see our need for a Savior. It reveals to us our weakness and inability to live according to God’s perfect standard on our own. We need help. Paul continues:

Romans 7:14-17

But I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

Again, the Law of God did not directly kill Paul. It defined sin and therefore revealed the death within him. This can be compared to a person who has a terminal illness and doesn’t know it. One day this person goes to the doctor, and the doctor informs them of this illness. Sin is like that terminal illness, which will lead to death if left untreated. God’s Law is like the doctor who reveals to us that we have this illness. So what’s the treatment? How do we overcome this illness (sin)? Before Paul tells us how to overcome this illness, he asks that same question in conclusion to Chapter 7:

Romans 7:21-25

So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 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.

Paul is speaking of his struggle between his desire to live in obedience to God and his desire to sin. He describes this struggle as a “war” between his mind, which serves the Law of God, and his flesh, which serves the Law of Sin. He asks who will deliver him from his “body of death”—that is, his flesh. Who will deliver him from his desire to sin? The answer is that God has delivered him through Yeshua the Messiah.

Paul is offering two options here, here is the first. We can go after the Spirit and follow the law of God (Ezekiel 36:26-27):

Paul teaching the spiritual:

“For we know that the law is spiritual”

“For I delight in the law of God”

“I myself serve the law of God”

Or, secondly, we can go after the flesh and reject the law of God...to follow sin:

Paul teaching the carnal or flesh:

“but I am of the flesh, sold under sin.”

“captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members”

“with my flesh I serve the law of sin.”

Which one do you want to be?

Do you want to follow and teach the law of God and thus be spiritual? Or do you want to be of the flesh...to be carnal and teach that we no longer have to follow God’s law.

Those are our only two choices.

In the next chapter of Romans, Paul unpacks how we walk out that deliverance, but a few points from chapter 7 are worth reviewing before we continue. First, Paul has several positive affirmations of God’s Law. He says that the Law is “spiritual” and that he “delights in the law of God.” He says, “I myself serve the law of God.”

Secondly, he contrasts these positive affirmations of God’s Law with the Law of Sin, which is portrayed as holding him in slavery through his flesh. He says he is “of the flesh, sold under sin,” and “captive to the law of sin that dwells in [his] members.” “With my flesh I serve the law of sin,” he says. Paul creates a dichotomy between the Spirit and the flesh. This dichotomy will be important to understand as we dive into Chapter 8 of Romans.

The Spirit vs. The Flesh

Romans 8:1-2

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus [Messiah Yeshua] from the law of sin and death.

Hopefully, you can now appreciate why it is important that we do not make doctrines out of single verses from Paul. We just had to examine the context of two whole chapters with some very confusing statements if left in isolation. Everything was leading up to Paul’s conclusion in Chapter 8, which is that we are no longer under the law of sin and death. As believers, we have been delivered from sin and death through the work of the Messiah. Now Paul is going to give more details on what it means to walk in that deliverance. How do we walk in obedience to God’s Law and overcome the desire to sin?

Romans 8:3-4

For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

According to Paul, our flesh is naturally against the Law of God. Thus, the Law of God cannot save us, nor are we able to keep the Law of God on our own. The Law only exposes our sin and defines what God’s righteous requirements of us are. This goes back to what Paul talks about in Romans 7. So how

do we overcome the terminal illness of sin? How do we win the war within us? The answer lies in walking “according to the Spirit.”

Paul recalls the prophecy in Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36—that God would write his Torah on our hearts and empower us to keep it through the work of the Holy Spirit. Walking according to the Spirit and not the flesh is how “the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us.”

Paul continues with his dichotomy between the flesh and the spirit. He says that our flesh is concerned only with things of the flesh. That would exclude God’s Law since God’s Law is spiritual (Romans 7:14). He says that walking according to the flesh leads to death, but walking according to the Spirit leads to life and peace (Romans 8:5-6). He then makes a compelling statement:

Romans 8:7-8

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

You cannot find a much clearer affirmation of obedience to God’s Law than this! Paul says that those who walk according to the flesh and do not submit to God’s Law are hostile to God! According to the dichotomy that Paul established, then, those who walk according to the Spirit *do* submit to God’s Law.

To not submit to the Law of God is to be hostile to God. Those who do not submit to God’s Law cannot please him, according to Paul. Thus, submitting to God’s Law *does* please God. Doesn’t this sum up what Paul has been teaching for the last two chapters of Romans? Sin is breaking God’s Law. Paul desires not to sin but to please God. The way to overcome sin in our lives is by walking according to the Spirit, which empowers us to obey God’s Law.

Romans 8:9-11

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus [Yeshua] from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus [Messiah Yeshua] from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

This, of course, speaks to the promised resurrection. Because we desire the Word of God, through the grace of our Creator, we are given new bodies that will live out the whole Word of God for all of eternity. Nobody will be breaking God’s Law in the eternal Kingdom. There will be only obedience to the Torah. Think about that.

Throughout the rest of Chapter 8, Paul continues to unpack this dichotomy between living according to flesh and living according to the Spirit. He says that living according to the flesh will ultimately kill us, but living according to the Spirit will give us life (8:13). He further says that those who live by the Spirit are called “sons of God” (8:14). Then he spends time speaking of the future glory we will receive as followers of Yeshua, and that the sufferings we endure in this life cannot even be compared to the glory that awaits us (8:18-30). He concludes Chapter 8 by reminding us of God’s great love for us (8:31-38).

In Romans 9:1-29, Paul speaks of his sorrow for the Jewish people who have not yet come to know Yeshua as Messiah. He speaks of how God’s promises are still valid in light of many of the Jews’ rejection of Yeshua and how salvation isn’t through genetics but faith. In Romans 9:30-33, Paul makes

the point, again, that obeying the Law of God doesn't save us. Much more could be expounded upon from this chapter, but since it isn't directly related to the validity of God's Law for believers today, we'll move on.

As we progress into Chapter 10, we will find several verses that are used to teach an understanding that the Law of God has been made void, beginning with the first few verses:

Romans 10:1-3

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

Paul begins Chapter 10 by saying that his prayer for the Jewish people is that they will come to know the Messiah and be saved. He says they have a zeal for God, but they're "ignorant of the righteousness of God."

What does that mean?

It means that they are ignorant concerning the message of salvation—that is to say, how God reckons a sinner as righteous. Through their manmade tradition, they've come to believe that God's righteousness is something that can be gained by their ethnic status and observance of the Torah. Paul says that this attempt at gaining their righteousness apart from Messiah is actually a refusal to submit to God's righteousness. Again, it all goes back to Paul's basic argument throughout his epistles. Salvation is a gift of God that is received by grace through faith in the Messiah. We obey God's Law as a result of salvation, not to earn it.

Romans 10:4

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

That does it. The law is ended!

All of the context and pro-law statements by Paul that we reviewed in the last 9 chapters means nothing.

Suddenly, Paul is making a statement saying the law of God is over. It is done. Goodbye.

It should be obvious that was a little dose of sarcasm.

This statement follows Paul's previous statement of the Jewish peoples' ignorance and refusal to submit to God's righteousness—again, meaning how God reckons a sinner righteous in this context. By trying to gain their righteous status before God through the Torah, they have missed the entire focus of the Torah, which is to point us to the Messiah.

The Greek word for "end" in this verse is telos. This word does not mean cessation but rather "goal" or "purpose," such as in the phrase, "The ends don't justify the means." We see this word used in this way in another of Paul's letters:

1 Timothy 1:5

The aim [telos] of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

In Romans 10:4, telos is best understood as “goal” or “purpose.” In other words, the Torah points to the Messiah for righteousness.

Romans 10:5-10

For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. But the righteousness based on faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) “or ‘Who will descend into the abyss’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

What does Paul mean when he seems to contrast “righteousness based on the law” with “righteousness based on faith”? Is the Law contrary to faith?

Again, we need to understand this in light of Paul’s overall argument. The previous verse made it clear that Yeshua is the end—that is, the goal—to which the Torah points. Thus, those who confess and believe in Yeshua will receive a righteous status before God based on their faith, not by earning it through obedience to the Law.

In verse 5, Paul is quoting Leviticus 18:5, which is in the context of God telling Israel not to do as the pagans do when they enter the land he is giving them as an inheritance. Paul is assuming that his readers understand the context of his reference. Israel didn’t earn their righteous status before God through their obedience to his Law. They were saved by their faith in the blood of the Passover Lamb and delivered from Egypt on the basis of God’s grace. Living according to God’s Law is the inevitable result of their saving faith. The Messiah is central. That’s the message clearly outlined in the Torah.

Paul then continues his discussion on the current state of Israel and how the Gentiles are coming into the faith (Romans 10-11). There aren’t any other verses of contention as it relates to God’s Law until Chapter 14 of Romans. Therefore, we’ll skip ahead and go through Chapter 14 verse by verse.

Romans 14: Disputes Over Days and Foods

There are two issues addressed in this chapter. First, verse 5 is commonly understood to mean that the Sabbath is no longer important to God. Second, verse 11 is commonly understood to mean that God’s dietary laws found in Leviticus 11 are no longer relevant to believers. But is that what Paul is really teaching?

Keep in mind that for the last thirteen chapters, Paul has been an advocate for keeping the Law of God. When we’ve looked at the confusing verses where Paul might appear to be against the Law of God, we’ve discovered that he was merely against the misuse of the Law as a means of gaining a righteous status before God. Consistent with everything we’ve learned so far, there must be a better interpretation of these passages.

Romans 14:1

As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions.

Paul begins the chapter by declaring that we are to receive those who are weak in the faith and not dispute over “opinions.” So, the first thing to point out is that the Sabbath and the dietary instructions in God’s Law have always been clear and have never been considered matters of mere opinion. Therefore, the chapter couldn’t be referring to the Sabbath and the dietary instructions.

This chapter is regarding things outside of God’s Law that were matters of contention between believers in the first century. Given that this is a letter to a specific group of people about a specific debate, we must extract clues to assist us in piecing together exactly what Paul is addressing. Paul seems to be focusing on two specific debates, and he headlines these points of contention in the next two verses.

The first matter of discussion and correction concerns eating all things or eating only vegetables:

Romans 14:2

One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables.

The second matter is related to which day, or days, believers should fast:

Romans 14:3

Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.

Paul answers the first matter in verses 14-23. These verses are often used to suggest that all animals are now “clean” and suitable for food. Paul addresses the second matter in verses 5-13. These verses are often used to suggest that God no longer cares whether or not we keep the Sabbath.

Let’s begin with the second matter that’s addressed in this chapter, starting in verse 5:

Romans 14:5

One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

Is Paul teaching that the Sabbath is merely a matter of what we decide in our minds as opposed to what God himself has established in his Law? Or is it possible that Paul is discussing something else entirely?

As we’ll see shortly, according to the context, it seems clear that this passage is referring to traditional days of fasting. In either case, this verse couldn’t be referring to the Sabbath because of some obvious problems.

First, God’s Law defines sin (Romans 7:7; 1 John 3:4). If we could decide for ourselves when the Sabbath should be kept, then that means we could define sin for ourselves. But God is the one who defines right and wrong, not us.

Second, it’s already been demonstrated throughout Romans that Paul kept and taught the Law of God and was not against it.

Third, as we’ve already mentioned, this entire chapter is in the context of disputes over “opinions,” and the Sabbath is not a matter of opinion. Speaking of context, the Sabbath is not mentioned anywhere throughout the entire book of Romans.

So what is the matter of opinion believers in Rome were quarreling about? Paul seems to explain himself in the following verses:

Romans 14:6-7

The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.

The “day” that Paul is referring to is a matter of eating or abstaining. In other words, the opinions outside of God’s Law addressed in this chapter concern fasting. We know that some Pharisees in the first century traditionally fasted twice a week (Luke 18:12). Apparently, early believers disputed over which days during the week one should fast. We see evidence of similar disputes regarding fasting in other early Christian writings, such as the Didache (Chapter 8). Thus, Paul was not saying that the Sabbath is optional, but that believers shouldn’t quarrel over their opinions regarding traditions outside the Law of God.

Now let’s move on to the second misunderstood passage from this chapter:

Romans 14:14-23

I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus [Yeshua] that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

Contrary to God, Yeshua, and even Paul himself, verse 14 is often used as a license to teach that all animals are now clean and suitable for food. However, if we examine the context, we discover that this is not what Paul is talking about at all. Again, this entire chapter is concerning “opinions” (verse 1) dividing the church in Rome. These believers were not quarreling over whether unclean animals as defined by God’s Law should be considered clean. Paul defines the debate for us in verse 2: this was a quarrel between strict vegetarians and those who ate meat.

Why was there a dispute over whether it was okay to eat meat?

Some Jewish believers in Rome believed that meat purchased from certain Greek sources was considered “unclean,” even if the meat came from a clean animal permitted by God’s Law. For instance, as Paul’s first letter to Corinth reveals, some believers were concerned about the possibility that meat purchased from the marketplace had derived from pagan sacrificial offerings (1 Corinthians 8). But, again, as Paul makes clear in his letters to Corinth and Rome, this belief that such a possibility rendered clean meat unclean was based on nothing more than man’s opinions. According to Paul, man has no authority to declare clean meat unclean:

Romans 14:16

So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil.

But if a believer is personally convicted about eating meat purchased at the marketplace, then to that person it is unclean, but only to them.

Paul's point is to not let personal opinions that aren't outlined in God's Law become matters of division within the body of believers. To add to that point, the word translated as "unclean" is *koinos*, but this is not the Greek word used elsewhere in the New Testament when speaking of "unclean" animals (*akathartos*).

Rather, *koinos* is used to denote "common" things. For example, in Acts 10:14, Peter says,

Acts 10:14

I have never eaten anything that is common [*koinos*] or unclean [*akathartos*].

In this verse, Peter uses two independent Greek adjectives when speaking to God, and it's clear that he made a distinction between the two words—one is merely common, and one is unclean. This further substantiates the fact that Paul was referring to meat from biblically clean animals that may have come from a Roman meat source, rendering the meat *koinos* (common), according to the "weak" believers (14:2), and thus not suitable for consumption in their opinion.

Paul, in Romans 14:14, allows these "weak" believers to hold to their personal convictions in this regard: "it is unclean [*koinos*] for anyone who thinks it unclean [*koinos*]." He says not to allow matters not related to God's Law to be points of division within the congregation. But he gives no permission to eat meat that is *akathartos* (biblically unclean). For more on Romans 14, we would recommend our teaching "Matters of Opinion."

As we move on to Chapter 15, we see that Paul again affirms the value of the Scriptures, which included God's Law. He concludes his letter by giving glory to God, who "brings about the obedience of faith" in us (Romans 16:25-27). Our faith should be in the Word of God, which is who Yeshua was and is in the flesh. Thus, we ought to obey what the written Word of God says—not for salvation, but because of our salvation.

This concludes the study of Romans in the Pauline Paradox series. We hope that this review of Paul's letter to the Romans served well to bring you into obedience of faith, as was Paul's intent.

We hope that this teaching has blessed you, and 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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