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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 Series - Part 5: Galatians

Welcome to Part 5 of the Pauline Paradox series, where we will be covering the book of Galatians.

The Book of Galatians is perhaps the most misunderstood book in the Bible concerning the Law of God. For those who object to keeping the Law of God, a distorted interpretation of Galatians is their “crown jewel.” Unfortunately, such an interpretation is quite popular within the Church. For instance, if you suggest to a mainstream Christian the “crazy” idea that we ought to obey God regarding the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11) and what to eat (Leviticus 11), as the Messiah and apostles did, you can reasonably expect them to respond by saying, “Read Galatians! It’s clear God’s Law is done away with!” However, reading Galatians as saying the Law is done away with would put it in disharmony with the rest of the Bible, including Paul’s other letters and the testimony of how Paul himself lived.

Before we dive deep into the book of Galatians, there are a few things we should briefly cover.

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

The first type might be one who does not understand or agree that those in the faith should be observing the Torah, or the whole Law of God, but are open to hearing about such a perspective. 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’ll be using in this teaching.

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

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

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

The goal of the Pauline Paradox Series is to call the whole Body of the Messiah back to the whole Word of God. This, in essence, is what we believe the ministry of Yeshua [Jesus] was all about, apart from his death and resurrection. Thus, we will be mostly focusing on the verses in Galatians that are often used to produce modern doctrine about the Law of God.

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

Here is how this teaching will proceed.

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

Galatians 2:3-5 – Is Paul Against Circumcision?

Galatians 2:14 – Living Like A Gentile

Galatians 3:10 – Is God's Law a Curse?

Galatians 3:19-29 – Why Then the Law?

Galatians 3:23 – Was God's Law a Schoolmaster that was Abolished at the Cross?

Galatians 4:8-11 – Is God's Law "Weak" and "Worthless"?

Galatians 4:21-31 – Do We Trust God or Man?

Galatians 5:1-5 – God's Law: Bondage or Freedom?

Galatians 5:18 – Is the Law Against the Spirit?

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

Let's begin.

Galatians chapter 1...

Establishing the Introduction to the Context of Galatians

Galatians 1:1

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

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

Continuing on...

Galatians 1:2-9

To the churches of Galatia:

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

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

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

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

Galatians 1:10

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

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

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

And...

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Galatians 1:11-17

For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ [Messiah Yeshua]. For you have

heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

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

Paul continues...

Galatians 1:18-24

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

In Galatians 2, Paul continues his story. This second chapter introduces some of the difficult passages in which Paul appears to be telling the Galatians that they are not to observe God’s Law regarding circumcision.

Galatians 2:1-5 – Is Paul Against Circumcision?

The issue of circumcision may be the most complicated subject to study in the New Testament because many are not aware of the differing views and debates surrounding this topic in the first century. For instance, some Jewish sects made circumcision a prerequisite for salvation (Acts 15:1) as a mark that was required to join their sectarian community. One such sect mentioned in Scripture is referred to as the “Circumcision Party” (Acts 11:2; Galatians 2:12; Titus 1:10). This sect believed that you were “saved” only if you were a member of their group. The apostles obviously did not share this view.

Galatians 2:1-5 is often cited to try to prove that converted Gentiles are no longer to be circumcised according to the Law of God:

Galatians 2:1-5

Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in

vain. **But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.** Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus [Messiah Yeshua], so that they might bring us into slavery—to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

Often it's taught that the "false brothers" mentioned in verse 4 were observing the Law of God and that they were attempting to compel the Galatians also to observe God's Law, bringing the Galatians into "bondage." It's taught that this doctrine of keeping God's Law is contrary to the freedom that we have in Christ. Paul and Titus did not yield to those compelling them to keep God's Law. Thus, many Christians conclude that observing God's Law is bondage and against the Gospel.

However, this is a flawed interpretation. Remember, Paul said that the Galatians were abandoning the heart of the Gospel message (Galatians 1:6-9). He warned against seeking the approval of man, and that the Gospel he preaches is not from man but from God (Galatians 1:10-12). Thus, the "different gospel" being preached to the Galatians by these false teachers was not from God but from men. This is a crucial point! Obviously, the Law of God did not come from men; it came from God. And if the false gospel being pushed on the Galatians was a manmade doctrine, then the false doctrine in Galatians was not the doctrine that believers ought to obey God's Law!

Paul was not preaching against the Law of God—something he calls holy, righteous, and good (Romans 7:12)—but against a misuse of the Law of God. The Circumcision Party had distorted some aspects of God's Law—namely circumcision—and incorporated it into their different gospel. Like the situation in Acts 15, some were teaching the Gentiles at the Church of Galatia that they needed to formally convert to their sect of Judaism, get circumcised, and take on the entire Torah of Moses before being considered part of God's covenant people. Also like in Acts 15, Paul fiercely opposed that false doctrine. Why? Among many reasons, it took the emphasis off of the work of Messiah for salvation and placed it on the work of man. This will become clearer as we continue through Galatians.

Some of you may have already watched our Acts 15 teaching as a recommended teaching to complement the Pauline Paradox Series. Because the events leading up to Acts 15 begin in Galatia, and further sets the context of the letter to the Galatians, we feel it is necessary to emphasize that our teaching on Acts 15 should have been already reviewed. Also, the focus of Acts 15 is centered around the circumcision doctrine circulating in Galatia, making it relevant to the verses in Galatians 2. (For more on Acts 15, we recommend our related teaching "[Acts 15: Legalism or Obedience.](#)")

The issue in Galatians 2:1-5 is not that the "false brothers" were teaching obedience to God's Law regarding circumcision. They actually weren't (for example see Galatians 6:13).

Galatians 6:13

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

The false teachers were attempting to “compel” Gentile believers to get circumcised as a prerequisite to salvation and inclusion into the people of God. This was not obedience to God’s Law; this was an attempt to coerce the Gentiles into submitting to manmade doctrine and systems of ritual conversion, making the work of Messiah irrelevant. That’s why Titus wasn’t “compelled” to be circumcised (Galatians 2:3)—he wasn’t compelled to submit to the manmade formulas of these false brothers. Again, the apostles taught that salvation and inclusion into God’s people came through faith in Messiah, which circumcises our hearts and gives us the inward desire to obey God (Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6). And obedience to God’s Law—including physical circumcision—follows from that basis.

This is the difference between a true and false application of circumcision. The false brothers misused circumcision in their manmade formula for salvation and conversion. When we believe that our obedience to men’s doctrines can save us, we have misplaced our faith. The apostles, on the other hand, taught circumcision correctly as a law of God that we observe out of faith. We keep God’s Law to please God, not men.

In a nutshell, that’s Paul’s entire message in his letter to the Galatians. We’ll continue to see this as we explore these difficult passages.

This leads us into the next topic in Galatians.

Galatians 2:14 – Living Like A Gentile

As we move forward through Galatians, we see a conflict involving the Circumcision Party (Galatians 2:12). Again, the members of this group were the ones teaching the false doctrine that Gentiles needed to be circumcised to be saved:

Galatians 2:11-14

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

What is going on here? Paul is writing about confronting Peter about his hypocrisy. Peter willingly ate with the Gentiles at first, but when the Circumcision Party came to Antioch, he withdrew from table fellowship with them. Why? Because the Circumcision Party

would have frowned upon it, and Peter feared their unrighteous judgment. The Circumcision Party held the opinion that table fellowship between Jews and Gentiles was forbidden. We see this sentiment expressed in the book of Acts: “[So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, ‘You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them’](#)” (Acts 11:2-3).

Paul rightly rebukes Peter as a hypocrite for fearing man more than God. Peter’s actions were in direct conflict with not only the Gospel message but also the Torah (e.g., Leviticus 19:34). If God is willing to receive the Gentiles on the basis of their faith, then Peter should have too.

Nothing in this passage suggests Peter was breaking God’s dietary laws—which is a common interpretation of this event. That would be reading something into the text that isn’t there. Furthermore, it doesn’t make sense for Paul to rebuke Peter if all he was doing was attempting to get the Gentiles to take on obedience to God’s Law since, again, Paul himself taught observance of God’s Law to his Gentile readers. When Paul accuses Peter of forcing the Gentiles to live like Jews, he wasn’t accusing Peter of forcing them to keep God’s Law; he was rebuking Peter for appearing to side with the Circumcision Party in his refusal of table fellowship with the Gentiles. Peter’s actions gave the impression that he agreed with the Circumcision Party that the Gentiles could not be included as part of God’s people unless they ritually converted.

As we continue through Galatians 2, it becomes increasingly clear that Paul was not teaching against God’s Law but against the false doctrine of the Circumcision Party—that is, their works-based salvation paradigm. Paul clarifies this when he said,

Galatians 2:16

[A person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ \[Messiah Yeshua\]](#)”

The word justified in this verse is related to “salvation.” Many scholars acknowledge that the phrase “works of the law” actually refers specifically to the membership demands of sectarian communities. This phrase is found in other early Jewish literature, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls. In his book, *Justification: God’s Plan and Paul’s Vision*, New Testament scholar N.T. Wright explains how the Dead Sea Scroll community understood this phrase:

The particular and very specific codes in MMT include various aspects of ritual performance—the calendar, regulations about water, marriage laws and so on—some of which were markers against Gentiles, but most of which were markers designed to demonstrate membership of the particular sect.

-N.T. Wright, *Justification: God’s Plan & Paul’s Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), p. 146

According to scholars, it appears that we're dealing with a similar situation in Galatians. When Paul says that no one is justified by "works of the law," he's referring to the membership demands of the Circumcision Party. Paul's point is that no one is justified by works of the law but only by faith in Messiah. Gentiles cannot be justified by undergoing circumcision via the Circumcision Party's method of ritual conversion. So again, "works of the law" is not referring to faithful obedience to God's commandments but instead to the manmade formulas of conversion required by the Circumcision Party. The "works of the law" involved God's commandments like circumcision, but it was an abuse of those commandments.

As we continue through Galatians 2, we encounter another difficult verse:

Galatians 2:19

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

What does Paul mean here? Quite simply, the Law helps us realize we are sinners—the law declares us guilty and requires death. But in Messiah, we die to the Law's penalty so we can live a new life to the Lord, empowered by the Holy Spirit to keep God's Law (Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 36:25-27).

Paul teaches that God's Law is designed to convict us by defining and exposing our sin. Thus, it cannot be a means of salvation. God's Law points us to the means of salvation, which is Messiah. When we receive the Messiah by faith, we put on the mind of Christ (Romans 7:25; 1 Corinthians 2:16) and keep the Law of God because of our salvation, not for our salvation.

Paul concludes that attempting to keep any part of God's Law for salvation nullifies the grace afforded to us through faith in Messiah. Righteousness is through Yeshua alone:

Galatians 2:21

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

However, having faith in Messiah that affords us righteousness does not give us an excuse to neglect obedience to God's righteous Law. It is because of the righteousness afforded to us by grace that we can obey God's righteous Law:

1 John 3:7

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

A good summary of Paul's teaching in Galatians is that obedience is the fruit of salvation, not the root of salvation.

As we move forward to Chapter 3, Paul rebukes the Galatians for their foolishness (Galatians 3:1-4). He's baffled that anyone who had come to understand the death and

resurrection of Messiah could then turn from that truth and attempt to gain a righteous standing before God another way.

Paul asks them how they received the Spirit—was it through some membership ritual, Torah observance, or by faith? The answer is obvious—they received God’s Spirit through faith in Messiah. The evidence of their salvation and their reception as children of God is the Spirit’s work in their lives. Therefore, for them to even consider submitting to a manmade formula for conversion is foolish.

Paul gives the analogy of Abraham (Galatians 3:5-9). His point here, like in Romans 4, is that Abraham was in the faith before he was circumcised. Circumcision is not what causes your faith; faith is what causes you to want to be circumcised in accordance with God’s Word. Abraham’s faith led to his obedience to God’s laws (Genesis 26:5).

Galatians 3:10-14 – Is God’s Law a Curse?

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

In this passage of Galatians, we encounter some difficult verses, which, if misinterpreted, could lead one to believe that God’s Law is a curse and that Christ delivered us from the Law. Here is what Paul says:

Galatians 3:10-14

For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” 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”—so that in Christ Jesus [Messiah Yeshua] the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

To properly understand what Paul is saying in this passage, we need to go back to the beginning of the Bible to see what God says his Law is intended to do. Two of the main purposes of God’s Law is outlined in Deuteronomy:

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.

Here we see that God's Law both blesses and curses. This is where the concept of the "curse of the law" originates. Paul was not inventing something new, nor was he calling the Law of God a curse. After all, the Bible says we are blessed when we follow God's Law—that's the exact opposite of a curse! The Law curses us only when we break it. God's Law is not the curse; the curse is the result of our transgression of God's Law.

Have we all broken God's Law? Yes, absolutely! We all have to deal with being under the "*curse of the Law*."

This is the point that Paul keeps emphasizing throughout his letters—we have all transgressed God's Law and have therefore been placed under a curse. So what is the solution to the curse? Christ became "a curse for us" so that we could be redeemed. Yeshua, the spotless lamb, took the punishment that we deserve for our sin. His death paid the price for our sin and therefore took away the curse that was upon us. We could never gain this redemption by our efforts—that's why Paul says, "**No one is justified before God by the law**" (Galatians 3:11). Yeshua didn't remove God's Law. Think about it—that would undermine the entire message of salvation! The Law defines sin (e.g., 1 John 3:4). If there's no Law, there's no sin. If there's no sin, there's no need for a redeemer! God's Law is a necessary component of the Gospel because it tells us that we've fallen short and need a redeemer.

So we've learned that God's Law does three things: blesses us when we obey it, curses us when we disobey it, and defines sin. Once we see we have sinned according to the Law, and that we are under a curse, we realize our need for a Savior to remove the curse from us. Our faith in Messiah removes the curse. Once the curse is taken away, where does that leave us concerning the Law of God? Well, the Law of God still defines sin and still blesses us for obedience and curses us for disobedience. The only difference is that the curses for our disobedience do not eternally condemn us since we are in the Messiah (Romans 8:1). But the negative consequences of sin still affect us in our daily lives, which is why we ought to walk in obedience for God's glory and our good.

As we move forward in Galatians, Paul makes an interesting remark about covenants. He says, "**Even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified**" (Galatians 3:15). A lot of people might gloss over this, but this is a significant point as it concerns God's Law. If no one can add to or take away from manmade covenants, how much more is that the case with God-made covenants? Think about it. If man's covenants cannot be annulled or changed, then neither can God's covenants. Thus, this is an emphatic statement from Paul that God's Law, as part of the Mosaic covenant, cannot be annulled or changed.

Let's continue:

Galatians 3:16-18

Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, 'And to offsprings,' referring to many, but to one, 'And to your offspring,' who is Christ This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not

annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

Paul is setting up the premise for his next statement regarding the purpose of the Law. He says that since the Law is not a means to salvation—since Abraham was not required to be circumcised to come into the faith—and the Law is the same as it was for Abraham, those at Sinai, and those today, a question arises: why, then, was the Law given? He answers that question in verses 19-29.

Galatians 3:19-29 – Why Then the Law?

Galatians 3:19

Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.

According to Paul, the law was “added.” Added to what? It was added to the promise given to Abraham. Why? “Because of transgressions.” Typically this is understood to mean, “to reveal transgressions.” This is usually understood in a negative sense—the law was given to reveal sin and declare people guilty. Others have gone so far as to suggest the law was added as a punishment—that is, because we’ve sinned, we now have rules to follow. Some scholars, however, have suggested a more positive function of the law being expressed in this verse. Here is how New Testament scholar, James Dunn, understands this verse:

In the case of 3.19a the issue centres on the meaning of *χάριν* [charin]. Here we need to recall that the word is the accusative form of *χάρις* [charis], ‘grace, favour’, and that its usual meaning as attested elsewhere in usage of the time is ‘for the sake of, on behalf of, on account of.’ This suggests a much more immediately gracious objective for the law than simply ‘to make conscious of transgressions,’ and certainly than ‘to provoke transgressions.’ It suggests, in fact, the purpose of the law as it was generally recognized within the (OT) scriptures and the Judaism of Paul's time: that is, as a means of dealing with transgressions. In other words, what was probably in mind here was the whole sacrificial cult at whose centre was the provision of means for covering sin and removing guilt, means of atonement.

-James Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), p. 270

According to Dunn, “because of transgressions” is better understood as “for the sake of transgressions.” In other words, the law is given to reveal the “means of dealing with transgressions.” Tim Hegg echoes this same thought:

The Greek particle *χαρίν* (charin) indicates “the goal” to which something points or proceeds. The Torah was given with the goal of revealing God’s method of dealing with transgressions.

-Tim Hegg, *Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians* (Tacoma WA: TorahResource, 2010), p. 148

How does the law show the way God would deal with transgressions? As we read earlier from James Dunn, the sacrificial system outlined in the law is likely what Paul is hinting at. The sacrificial system reveals God’s method of dealing with transgressions through Yeshua. This part of the law taught that sin is dealt with through repentance and atoning sacrifice. The curse for breaking God’s law—death—was symbolically transferred to the innocent animal. The animal died in the worshipper’s place so that the worshipper could receive forgiveness. This refers back to a few verses earlier in Galatians where Paul speaks of Christ redeeming us from the curse of the law “by becoming a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13).

This understanding makes a lot of sense in light of the second part of the verse: “[until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made.](#)” The law was given to show how God deals with transgressions—that is, through substitutionary atonement—the innocent paying the price for the guilty. This was “[until the offspring should come.](#)” As Hegg writes:

The point is that the revelation of the Torah regarding how God provides redemption in the face of transgressions has its focal point in Yeshua. Once Yeshua had come and offered Himself as God’s eternal sacrifice, the ultimate revelation to which the sacrifices pointed had been given. This is Paul’s consistent perspective: the Torah leads to Yeshua [...] The use of “until” in the phrase “until the seed would come” does not mean that once Yeshua has come, the Torah is no longer of any value. What it does mean is that the revelation of God’s redemptive plan, the means of forgiveness given as it was in the Torah, is eclipsed in the brightness of the revelation in His Messiah. Even this does not mean that the revelatory value of the sacrifices has been nullified. But it means that the revelation of God’s salvation finds its greatest expression in Yeshua who is the fulfillment of the Torah’s revelation.

-Tim Hegg, *Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians* (Tacoma WA: TorahResource, 2010), p. 148

So, “[why then the law?](#)” It was given to reveal God’s means of dealing with transgressions, until the offspring—Messiah—who would come. The law was added to the Abrahamic promise as additional revelation ultimately pointing toward the Messiah. In other words, the promise and the law work together in revealing God’s plan of redemption. They are not incompatible or contradictory (Galatians 3:21). Again, Paul’s issue is not with the law itself. His issue is with a misuse of the law—the idea that one can earn a righteous standing before God on the basis of his own efforts. As Paul goes on

to say, "...the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe" (Galatians 3:22). In other words, the Scriptures show that everyone has sinned and the only way to receive forgiveness is according to the promise by faith in the Messiah—a gift of God that cannot be earned by human effort.

Now we get to the second set of difficult verses that are often interpreted as saying the law is irrelevant in light of Christ. But since we've unpacked the context of this passage, we can hopefully understand more clearly what Paul is saying:

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

Galatians 3:23-25

Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

In God's plan of redemption, the law serves to point sinners toward the Messiah. Paul now uses the metaphor of a guardian, or *pedagogue*, to illustrate this point. The power of this metaphor is missed without an understanding of the historical context. As Hegg explains:

In the Roman culture, the pedagogue (literally "boy leader") was a hired servant whose duty it was to see that the student was taken to the teacher and brought back home each day, and to superintend the student's conduct. The Pedagogue was not the teacher! He was a servant to make sure the student was taken to the teacher.

-Tim Hegg, *Why We Keep Torah: Ten Persistent Questions* (Tacoma, WA: TorahResource, 2009), p. 132

Paul's use of this metaphor is intended to teach us that the law leads us to the teacher—that is, the Messiah. That's one of the functions of the law—to be a *pedagogue*, to bring us to the Messiah. This metaphor makes perfect sense in light of what we've learned from Galatians 3:19. The law was added to reveal God's means of dealing with transgressions. The law points to the Messiah and justification by faith.

But what do we make of verse 25:

Galatians 3:25

But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

Does this mean that the law is useless once a person receives the Messiah by faith? Not at all. Keep in mind the context. Paul is saying that one of the functions of God's law is to

keep charge over us until it leads us to the Messiah in whom we find salvation by faith. Once one has put their faith in the Messiah—once one has been brought to the teacher—the law’s role *as a pedagogue* has ended. One who has already come to faith in Christ no longer needs the law to lead them to faith in Christ. But this does not mean that the law ceases to function in other roles, such as defining sin and bringing blessing to those who obey it. Paul is clear elsewhere that the law of God still applies to our lives as believers when it comes to living in accordance with God’s will.

Here is how Paul concludes this chapter:

Galatians 3:26-29

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

We are justified and included among God’s people by grace through faith in the Messiah. It’s through faith, not ritual conversion, that we become included among Abraham’s offspring. It is through faith in Messiah’s work, not our own work, that we become sons of God.

Paul’s issue was not with the law, but with a misuse of the law. The false teachers in Galatians were putting the proverbial cart before the horse. They said that one could earn their place in the world to come through human effort in accordance with their application of the law. Paul taught that true obedience to the law is on the basis of faith.

As we continue through Galatians, Paul states that, before we came to faith, we were slaves to the elementary principles of the world (Galatians 4:1-7). These false ideas, philosophies, and values of the world enslaved us and put us into bondage. Yeshua came to redeem us from that bondage. Yeshua was born of a woman who was in the same circumstances as all of us, being born under the law of sin and death. Through Yeshua, we are adopted into the family of God and brought out of the world. This sets up the context for the next difficult passage in Galatians concerning God’s Law.

Galatians 4:8-11 — Is God’s Law “Weak” and “Worthless”?

This passage is often used as evidence that believers are to no longer to keep certain of God’s commandments, particularly the Sabbath and feast days. However, when we examine the context, that interpretation is impossible:

Galatians 4:8-11

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? You observe

days and months and seasons and years! I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.

Let's create a list of some key points from these verses (Galatians 4:8-11):

1. These are Gentile converts that Paul is talking to.
2. They used to serve other gods.
3. Now they know the true God.
4. Even so, they GO BACK to WEAK AND ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF THE WORLD related to the gods they used to serve.
5. And thus they DESIRE AGAIN to go back into BONDAGE related to the gods they used to serve.
6. What they are TURNING BACK to is observing the certain days, months, and years related to the gods they used to serve.

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

Let's think through this. Are God's Sabbath and feast days, which he gave to us in his own Word, "*weak and worthless*"? Are they "*elementary principles of the world*" that we were "*slaves*" to? Of course not. Paul says elsewhere that God's Law, which includes the Sabbath and feast days, is "spiritual" (Romans 7:14), so it cannot be a product of this world. Moreover, he calls the Law "holy" and "righteous" and "good" (Romans 7:12), so it cannot be "weak and worthless." That alone should tell us that Paul is not referring to God's Sabbath and feast days in this passage.

What, then, is he referring to?

A lot of Christians might be surprised to discover that the Jewish people were not the only ones who celebrated "*days and months and seasons.*" Pagans and idol worshipers had their own sabbaths and feast days. Paul's readers were former pagans: "*Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods.*" That's why Paul tells them not to "turn back again" to the things they celebrated when they "did not know God."

Galatians 4:21-31 — Do We Trust God or Man?

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Galatians 4:21-31

Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written,

“Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear;
break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor!
For the children of the desolate one will be more
than those of the one who has a husband.”

Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.” So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

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

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

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

Galatians 4:21–23

Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Galatians 4:24–26

Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.

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

Exodus 19:5

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hebrews 12:22-23

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly[a] of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,

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

This Jerusalem from above is the 'mother' of us all. This, in context, would be referring to the 'mother' of all who believe. Paul is telling us that Sarah, the one who was of Israel by faith and trust, represents a covenant that predates Mount Sinai and is from above. We believe that this 'mother' is a reference to the woman of the 'seed of the woman' in

Genesis 3:15. The seed, as defined by Yeshua, is the Word of God, and Eve represents all who bear that seed.

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

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

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

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

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

First Passover, THEN Mount Sinai.

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

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

Galatians 5:1-5 — God's Law: Bondage or Freedom?

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

Once again,

Psalm 119:44-45

I will keep your law continually,
forever and ever,
and I shall walk in a wide place,

for I have sought your precepts.

Psalm 119:47

for I find my delight in your commandments,
which I love.

James 1:25

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

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

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

Some people attempt to use this passage to suggest that Paul compared following God's Law to being in slavery. Some have even suggested that a person has fallen away from grace if they continue to follow God's Law after coming to know Messiah. But that interpretation is impossible in light of everything we've learned about what Paul thought about the Law. If God's Law was indeed slavery, why did Paul continue to follow it and teach it? If circumcision itself caused someone to fall away from Messiah, why did Paul circumcise Timothy in Acts 16:3? The traditional interpretation just doesn't fit when considering all the evidence.

The issue here, once again, is regarding ritual conversion to Judaism and circumcision as a prerequisite to salvation. That's what Paul taught against. That works-based salvation paradigm is what puts people into bondage and causes people to fall away from grace. The fact that Paul is speaking of works-based salvation is clear in verse 4:

Galatians 5:4

You are severed from Christ, **you who would be justified by the law**; you have fallen away from grace.

The problem was that false teachers were saying that one could be "**justified by the law**." They were teaching that God's grace could be earned through ritual conversion. Again, the problem was a misuse of God's Law, not God's Law itself.

Galatians 5:18 — Is the Law Against the Spirit?

When Paul says,

Galatians 5:18

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

some take this to mean that the Spirit and God's Law conflict with one another. However, as we discovered in our study of Romans in the Pauline Paradox Series, the opposite is the case. The Holy Spirit leads us into obedience to God's Law (Romans 8). So what does Paul mean here? Since walking according to the Spirit is contrasted with walking according to the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21), we can understand walking according to the Spirit to mean doing that which pleases God—producing good fruit (Galatians 5:22-23).

Walking according to the flesh is characteristic of those who are “under the law”—that is, under the Law's penalty. Those who haven't received the Messiah, and therefore don't walk according to the Spirit, walk according to their carnal desires without regard to God's commandments. That's why Paul says in Romans 8:7, “[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.](#)” The law, after all, is “spiritual” (Romans 7:14). Our flesh is in conflict with spiritual things, which includes God's Law. Thus, Galatians 5:18 is not speaking against God's Law but against the carnal mindset that is against God's Law.

Moving on to Galatians 6...

Galatians 6:1-2

[Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.](#)

Sometimes there is confusion here in understanding exactly how the “law of Christ” is to be understood.

The Law of Christ is simply the Law of God. It is the commandments that the Father gave the son, and the son obeyed. We are to walk as Yeshua walked, he showed us how to love God and love others. A big part of his ministry focused on showing us how to love our neighbor. Note that even here in Galatians 6:1, Paul refers to bearing one another's burdens, which shows love to our neighbor, as a way to fulfill the law of Christ.

For more on how Yeshua taught and practiced the Torah, please see our teachings “[The Deuteronomy 13 Test](#)” and “[Heaven and Earth & the Law of God.](#)”

Galatians 6:3-10

[For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load.](#)

[Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.](#)

Paul then mentions, in verses 11-18, that there are those who force circumcision of the flesh. What really matters is an inward transformation. It is the inward transformation, or as Paul calls it, becoming a new creation, that leads to salvation. Circumcision does not count for anything regarding salvation. However, outward obedience, such as circumcision, will always follow from our inward transformation as evidence of our faith.

Galatians 6:11-18

See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ [Messiah Yeshua], by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus [Yeshua]. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [Messiah Yeshua] be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

Now that we've reviewed all the difficult passages in Galatians, it is clear to see that Paul was not speaking against obeying the Law of God. The false doctrine that Paul was speaking against was the idea that we can be justified unto salvation by our own efforts—specifically through ritual conversion. Obeying the Law of God is what our Father wants, and it is what our Messiah did as our example. But obeying the Law of God is not a means to salvation, only the evidence of it. God's grace that we receive through faith is the means to salvation, and nothing can ever replace that.

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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