

# MESSIAH THEOLOGY

## VOLUME V:

### THE APOSTLE PAUL



**MESSIAH THEOLOGY**  
**MINISTRIES**

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## Chapter 1: The MESSIAH calls a Pharisee

Which Apostle of JESUS our LORD is directly responsible for at least 13 of the 21 epistles in the Apostolic Scriptures, and some might say he was also indirectly responsible for the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts? If you answered “The Apostle Paul”, you are correct!

Now the reason that some might say that Paul was indirectly responsible for Luke’s contributions to Scripture is because: Luke first includes himself within his own Biblical accounts only after Paul’s missionary visit to Troas in Acts chapter 16. So, it seems likely that Luke became a disciple of JESUS through Paul’s prolific preaching of the Gospel. And their close friendship and frequent companionship is recorded in both Paul and Luke’s writings.

In fact, Paul and Luke traveled so frequently together it is actually necessary to consult Luke’s detailed historical accounts contained within the pages of the Bible to help us understand the historical context of Paul’s theological writings. But before we learn how Luke and Paul’s writings are forever connected, we first need to look at the broader historical context recorded within the 27 books of the Apostolic Scriptures to understand the religious environment Paul was immersed in.

In the first century, *the time our MESSIAH chose to fulfill over 300 of the prophecies written about Him hundreds of years before He came to be born of Mary in Bethlehem*, there were several different denominations or “sects” of what we now call “Judaism”. Each “sect” had its own unique theological perspective, but they all believed they were the only group accurately following the writings of Moses.

The Bible records that one of these groups were the **Samaritans**. The Samaritans believed very strongly in the traditions and customs of their ancestors, but the Bible records that their ancestors wrongly taught them that GOD should be worshipped at Mount Gerizim in Samaria, not at Mount Zion in Jerusalem. So, when JESUS spoke with a Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well near the ruins of ancient Shechem, at the foot of Mount Gerizim, the following conversation took place.

John recorded: **A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give Me a drink.” For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”**

**The woman said to Him, “Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? “Are You greater than our father Jacob,**

who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?” Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, “but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”

The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.” Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” The woman answered and said, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You have well said, ‘I have no husband,’ “for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly.”

The woman said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. “Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.”

“You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Then: The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When He comes, He will tell us all things.” Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He.”<sup>1</sup>

In this exchange, when the LORD offered a Samaritan woman the Living Water of the HOLY SPIRIT,<sup>2</sup> JESUS demonstrated how He refused to be constrained by cultural prejudices, or social constructs. As a Jew, He willingly spoke to a Samaritan, and as a man, He willingly spoke to a woman.

And about this, John explains: **At this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman...**<sup>3</sup> Truly our LORD only constrained Himself by the commandments of His Father, and He did not allow man to add to or take away from those holy commandments! And we should always follow that holy example.

But, during this exchange that demonstrated that we should not allow prejudice, tradition, culture, or society to dictate how we relate to our neighbors who are created in the image of GOD, JESUS not only directly confirmed that He was the MESSIAH, He also confirmed that the **Jews** knew who they worshipped, and that GOD’s salvation had come from the Jews.

So, the MESSIAH openly testified that the Jews of the first century actually **knew** the

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<sup>1</sup> John 4:7-26

<sup>2</sup> John 7:38-39

<sup>3</sup> John 4:27a

GOD they worshipped, therefore those who truly want to worship GOD in spirit and in truth should understand: to worship GOD as He desires, we will have certain key things in common with the Jews, who truly did **know** who they worshipped.

However, JESUS also made it clear that the Samaritans **did not know** the GOD they worshipped! And Scripture records that a corrupt king named Jeroboam -who, for political reasons, invented his own locations for worship, feast days, and priesthood- ultimately created the traditions that led the Samaritans and their ancestors astray.

The record of Jeroboam and the Samaritans in Scripture makes it clear: **just as we must not allow tradition, culture, or society to dictate how we relate to our neighbors; we also must not allow those things to dictate how we relate to our GOD!** Instead, we must hold fast to His commandments, and worship Him the way the Bible instructs us to worship Him!

But, now that we have seen how **tradition** led the Samaritans away from knowing GOD and worshipping Him in spirit and in truth, we need to learn about another sect of Judaism in the first century. And this sect demonstrated: **we must not pick and choose what parts of the Bible we accept as authoritative!** Instead, we must hold fast to every word that proceeds from the mouth of our GOD!

And the sect of Judaism in the first century that best demonstrates that principle called themselves: the “**Sadducees**”. About this group, Luke explained: **Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.**<sup>4</sup>

Based on this tendency, the Sadducees can be compared to those skeptics who have existed throughout history that basically believed: “**if something cannot be seen by the human eye, it cannot be believed**”. And, even though the Sadducees claimed to accept the five books of Moses, they refused to believe in certain supernatural things directly described in those books; such as the Angel of the LORD that confronted Balaam.

So, the Sadducees tried to trap JESUS with a question about seven brothers successively marrying the same woman to produce an heir after their brother died. And they asked JESUS which brother’s wife she would be in the resurrection, a resurrection they did not believe in. But JESUS answered: “**Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? “For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. “But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’ ? “He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.”**”<sup>5</sup>

Just as the Samaritans who chose to ignore all that Scripture said about Jerusalem and

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<sup>4</sup> Acts 23:8

<sup>5</sup> Mark 12:24-27

how GOD was to be worshipped just so they could hold on to the traditions of their ancestors, the Sadducees chose to ignore all that Scripture said about the resurrection, spirits, and angels! Plus, both the Samaritans and the Sadducees rejected all other Scripture except for the 5 books of Moses, because those other books clearly contradicted their faulty theology!

Meanwhile, JESUS found a way to prove the resurrection from the writings of Moses to show the Sadducees just how mistaken they truly were. And while He proved the *resurrection*, He also mentioned *angels*; something else the Sadducees did not believe in. And now that we have seen how JESUS dismantled the theology of the Sadducees, we should mention: there was another sect of Judaism in the first century that JESUS never directly addressed, and their problem was that they had an unhealthy fascination with angels.

This sect, known as **the Essenes**, believed in and accepted all 39 books of the Holy Bible that existed before the Apostolic Scriptures. In fact, the Essenes are commonly thought to be responsible for the preservation of the Dead Sea Scrolls!

However, the Essenes lived isolated lives in small separated communities, were also known for their asceticism (or self-denial through harsh treatment of the body) and an intense focus on the names of the angels that they passed on within their communities. And these tendencies, and some other things Historians wrote about them, seem to indicate that they were involved in what is called: Jewish Gnosticism.

About groups with tendencies like the Essenes, Paul wrote: **Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen.**<sup>6</sup>

And, regarding the asceticism of the Jewish Gnostics, Paul also asked: **Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” which all concern things which perish with the using— according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.**<sup>7</sup>

So, unlike the Samaritans and the Sadducees that took away from GOD’s holy Word, Jewish Gnostic groups like the Essenes added to GOD’s holy Word. And they treated the names of angels as sacred, while adding rules like **“do not touch, do not taste, and do not handle”** to the commandments of GOD!

Thus, it is this secret **“knowledge”** that they added to Scripture that the name **“Gnostic”** comes from, because **“gnosis”** is the Greek word for **“Knowledge”**. But JESUS, our divine Teacher, who most certainly has more knowledge than anyone can possibly

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<sup>6</sup> Colossians 2:18

<sup>7</sup> Colossians 2:20-23

imagine, only used Scripture as His authority! And He proved what Paul later wrote, which was: that Scripture **“thoroughly equips”** the man or woman of GOD for **“every good work”**! So, this is why we must turn away from those who add to the Holy Bible, and we must never go beyond what is written in its inspired pages!

And, now that we have an idea about three of the most prominent groups in the first century that accepted at least parts of the First 39 Books of the Bible as authoritative, we are ready to learn about the most prominent group. And this fourth group just so happens to be the sect that our LORD called one of His most famous Apostles from!

This final group accepted all 39 Books of the Bible as authoritative, but like the Essene’s and the Samaritans, they added extra-biblical rules of purification contained in traditions passed down from previous generations. And the members of this very influential sect of Judaism, whose name means **“separated ones”**, were called **“Pharisees”**.

About this powerful sect, Paul wrote: **“My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. “They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.”**<sup>8</sup> So, Paul, who was a lifelong Pharisee, considered this group to be the ***strictest*** sect of Judaism.

And Paul did not actually consider himself to be an ex-Pharisee, because very late in the book of Acts, Luke recorded: **When Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, “Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!”**<sup>9</sup>

The Apostle Paul was a second-generation Pharisee, who was called to follow JESUS in the Way after a dramatic encounter with the risen LORD on the road to Damascus. But, if Paul was a member of this group that named themselves **“the separated ones”**, how did he once separate himself?

Remember that we have already learned: the Samaritans separated themselves from the other sects of Judaism by claiming that Mount Gerizim was where GOD was to be worshipped. And the Essenes separated themselves from the other sects of Judaism by forming small, closed communities filled with Gnostic heresies; like the community at Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. But the Pharisees did not separate themselves ***geographically*** like those two groups. Instead, they separated themselves by strict adherence to certain ritual laws of purification.

About this, Mark records: **Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to [JESUS], having come from Jerusalem. Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a**

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<sup>8</sup> Acts 26:4-5

<sup>9</sup> Acts 23:6

special way, holding the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.<sup>10</sup>

Did you notice that Mark said: **“they washed their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders”**? Like the Essenes, the Pharisees added rules to the Bible, in the form of what they called **“the Oral Law”**, passed down from generation to generation, from one rabbi to the next. And modern-day Judaism proudly traces itself back to these same Pharisees; as it follows the same **“Oral Law”** or **“traditions of the elders”** that the Apostle Paul once followed.

But Mark went on to record: **Then the Pharisees and scribes asked [JESUS], “Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?”** He answered and said to them, **“Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ “For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.”**<sup>11</sup>

**JESUS** said to them, **“All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. “For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ “But you say, ‘If a man says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban”—’ (that is, a gift to God), “then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, “making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.”**<sup>12</sup>

Obviously, **JESUS** was not fond of the “traditions of the elders” that the Pharisees taught, because they *added* to His Word and caused people not to follow His commandments! And the truth is, the man-made **traditions** of the Samaritans, the Sadducees, the Essenes, and the Pharisees all led them away from the commandments of **GOD**, because man-made **tradition** is the enemy of the Truth of **GOD**’s holy Word.

Therefore, Luke recorded another time when a similar rebuke was issued. He wrote: **A certain Pharisee asked [JESUS] to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat. When the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner. Then the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. “Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? “But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you. “But woe**

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<sup>10</sup> Mark 7:1-4

<sup>11</sup> Mark 7:5-8

<sup>12</sup> Mark 7:9-13

**to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.<sup>13</sup>**

By strict adherence to certain ritual laws of purification the Pharisees washed the **outside** of the cup and dish, but **inside** these same Pharisees were full of greed and wickedness! And while they tithed carefully from the least valuable of their spices, they ignored things like justice, mercy, and the love of GOD. And this rebuke reminds me of one of the most important and telling rebukes JESUS ever presented the Pharisees with.

He said: **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. “Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. “Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. “Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”<sup>14</sup>**

JESUS was not against them tithing from their spices, but He compared it to straining out a tiny gnat from a liquid, while swallowing an enormous camel. And the metaphorical camel they ignored was: neglecting justice, mercy, and faith. You see, most of the LORD’s most scathing rebukes were delivered to the Pharisees, because He could see inside their hearts and minds. And JESUS knew: while they pretended to be holy with all of their external ritual purity; on the inside they were filthy and full of sin, so they did not accurately represent GOD’s holiness at all!

And because JESUS so thoroughly resisted this most influential sect of Judaism, a second-generation Pharisee whose Hebrew name is pronounced in English as “Saul” (but whose Greek name is pronounced in English as “Paul”), made it his mission in life to persecute the church of JESUS CHRIST and lock up every follower of the Way.

Paul participated in the stoning of Stephen, an innocent man who spoke the truth to the powerful members of the Sanhedrin. And Paul was on His way to the city of Damascus to arrest and imprison the followers of JESUS in every synagogue, when JESUS interrupted Paul on His journey.

Paul described the events leading up to that life-changing encounter with the resurrected MESSIAH, saying: **“Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. “This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I**

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<sup>13</sup> Luke 11:37-42

<sup>14</sup> Matthew 23:23-28

shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. “And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.”<sup>15</sup>

“While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, “at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. “And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’<sup>16</sup>

“So I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ‘But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. ‘I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, ‘to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’<sup>17</sup>

And then Paul concluded his statement by testifying: “Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, “but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.”<sup>18</sup>

Man-made Pharisaical tradition had made Paul an enemy of JESUS CHRIST and a persecutor of His faithful disciples. But one encounter with the risen LORD turned Paul’s life around! After seeing JESUS risen from the dead, there could be no doubt that JESUS was the long-awaited MESSIAH of Israel!

So, from that day forward Paul threw away the traditions of the Pharisees, and he became a follower of JESUS instead of a persecutor of His saints! But, as an Apostle of JESUS CHRIST, Paul’s letters have had more of an impact on the development of the theology of the Church of JESUS CHRIST, than the writings of any other person in history!

If the 66 books of the Bible did not include the letters of Paul, would any theological system have divided the books of the Bible into two sections labeled the Old Testament and the New Testament? If Paul’s letters were not included within the pages of our Bibles, would any disciple of JESUS ever doubt the eternal nature of GOD’s law? Countless doctrines and traditions in the modern church find their origin in the letters of

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<sup>15</sup> Acts 26:9-11

<sup>16</sup> Acts 26:12-14

<sup>17</sup> Acts 26:15-18

<sup>18</sup> Acts 26:19-20

Paul, but the fact of the matter is: Paul is by far the most *misunderstood* writer of the entire Bible!

This is why the Apostle Peter used the very last words of His final epistle to warn the Church that Paul's letters were "hard to understand". He wrote: **Consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.**<sup>19</sup>

Peter warned in Holy Scripture that Paul's letters contained some things that were hard to understand, and untaught and unstable people were twisting Paul's writings in a way that would lead to their own destruction. So, Peter warned us all to be wary of "**the error of the wicked**".

Now, the word Peter used that translators have rendered into English as "wicked" is: **ath'-es-mos**. And this Greek word literally means: "one who breaks through the restraint of law and gratifies his lusts". So, Peter was warning the Church to avoid the destructive error of **lawlessness** that some were twisting Paul's letters to try to support.

You see, Peter understood: Paul wrote his letters from the perspective of a reformed Pharisee who used to wash the outside of the cup and dish, and strain out gnats while swallowing camels. So, when we read Paul's letters and how he speaks about the law, we must always remember his history; and how he was trained from his youth to practice the ritual laws of the Pharisees that separated them from everyone else.

For a modern-day example, have you ever heard someone say that Paul wrote: "**CHRIST is the end of the law, so we no longer need to observe or keep the law.**"?

Well, I have heard people say that! But that is an incorrect quote! Paul actually wrote: **CHRIST is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.**<sup>20</sup>

Now, the word Paul used in that passage that we translate into English as "law" is the Greek word **nomos**<sup>21</sup>. And the word he used for "righteousness" was: **dik-ah-yos-oo'-nay**<sup>22</sup>. But Paul only used these two words together in 9 verses in Scripture: 5 times in Romans, 2 times in Galatians, and 2 times in Philippians. And the key to understanding what Paul meant when he used these two words together can be found in his epistle to the Philippians.

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<sup>19</sup> 2 Peter 3:15-18

<sup>20</sup> Romans 10:4

<sup>21</sup> G3551

<sup>22</sup> G1343

There He wrote: **Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.**

Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.<sup>23</sup>

Please note: the context of our key phrase here was **circumcision** and **confidence in the flesh**! And then Paul listed why he *used* to have confidence in his flesh because of what he called his “***righteousness, which is from the law***”. He was: “**circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews**”. In fact, he belonged to the sect of the Pharisees, the strictest sect of Judaism according to Paul! And he lists persecuting the church as a thing that his fellow Jews would have considered ***righteous*** according to their understanding of the law!

However, just after mentioning his former SINFUL persecution of the church, *conduct that also caused him to label himself as an insolent blasphemer in 1 Timothy 1:13 and the chief of sinners in verse 15 of that same chapter*, the next words Paul wrote to the Philippians after admitting to being a persecutor of the church, were: “**concerning the righteousness which is in the law**”, he considered himself “**blameless**”!

How can a self-admitted insolent blasphemer be “**blameless**” according to the righteousness that comes by the law? Isn’t blasphemy against the third commandment? Of Course! So, we must understand, the only way Paul could have written what he did to the Philippian church was: **he was using the phrase “righteousness according to the law” like a first century Pharisee would have understood it!**

When we read Paul’s writings, we **must** remember that he was a second-generation Pharisee. We must remember that the very name Pharisee means “**separated one**”. And we must remember that Paul was taught by the most powerful denomination of Judaism in the first century that righteousness came **through “washing the outside of the cup and dish”** while ignoring what was on the inside!

So, as someone who left those fleshly Pharisaical ordinances behind to follow JESUS,

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<sup>23</sup> Philippians 3:2-11

and as someone who was battling the powerful influence of the Pharisees in the first century, the phrase “**righteousness according to the law**” did not mean “**commandment keeping**” to Paul! Instead, it meant circumcision, a specific genealogy, and strict ritual cleanliness! And this is why, Paul wrote in another place: **Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.**<sup>24</sup>

We must always remember: Paul said that the Pharisees were the strictest sect of Judaism in the first century! Meanwhile, JESUS said that they were “full of hypocrisy”, “lawlessness”, “extortion”, and “self-indulgence”. And we must understand: both things are 100% true!

As blind guides, the Pharisees were people who commonly strained at the gnat of ritual purity, while swallowing the camel of greed, pride, and hypocrisy. So, typically: when Paul wrote about the law, or “the works of the law”, **Paul was combating the very popular Pharisaical understanding of “righteousness according to the law”, not the Biblical understanding!**

That is why he directly told Timothy: **We know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.**<sup>25</sup>

Paul thought and taught that the law was good and necessary for those who lived in lawlessness! He just did not want Christians to get wrapped up in the laws that the book of Hebrews summarized as being “**concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.**”<sup>26</sup> And Paul was not alone in that concern!

It is obvious that all of the Apostles and leaders in Jerusalem agreed, because they said: “**Concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.**”<sup>27</sup>

Truly, when we keep the historical and theological context of Paul’s writings in mind, we see: **The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;**

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<sup>24</sup> 1 Corinthians 7:19

<sup>25</sup> 1 Timothy 1:8-11

<sup>26</sup> Hebrews 9:10

<sup>27</sup> Acts 21:25

**The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.**<sup>28</sup> And this is the consistent witness of the Holy Bible; from the very first Hebrew word of Genesis to the very last Greek word of Revelation.

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<sup>28</sup> Psalms 19:7-9

## Chapter 2: The MESSIAH and The Lesser Reformation

If you were to ask the average Christian: “*What does the word ‘reformation’ mean to you?*”, they would most likely respond by describing Martin Luther nailing his 95 points of debate with Roman Catholic doctrine to a Wittenberg church door in 1517.

And the truth is: when most Christians read the letters of Paul, they look through the lens of “the Protestant reformation” and the theological influence of men like Martin Luther. Therefore, we *must* understand and recognize *that* lens and the influence of “the Protestant reformation” on modern Christian theology; if we are to perceive Paul’s writings clearly and objectively, in their native context, as he meant them to be understood.

And we must remember, when Paul became a follower of JESUS, he stopped placing his trust in fleshly things like being: “**circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee...**”<sup>29</sup> But when Luther became a follower of JESUS, he eventually stopped trusting in certain Catholic practices, such as: confessing his sins to a priest, fasting to atone for his sins, or scourging himself to atone for his sins.

So, when Paul speaks of “works” and Luther speaks of “works”, the inspired Apostle who penned infallible Scripture and the fallible reformer who penned some very dangerous doctrines were *not* speaking of the same activities!

And with this foundation laid, we can proceed by stating: to accurately understand Luther’s actions that were a key part of the Protestant reformation, we *first* must understand some historical facts about Martin Luther and exactly what disagreements he had with Roman Catholic doctrine that led him to post his “95 theses”.

As a boy from a well-to-do German family, Luther was sent to school to be educated in the ancient language of Latin. And, since the Roman Catholic Church would not allow anyone under their extensive, totalitarian influence to produce or use any other Bible translation but Jerome’s 4<sup>th</sup> century Latin version of the Scriptures (known as the Vulgate), knowing the Latin language gave Martin access to *a few* selected passages from within the precious words of the Holy Scriptures.

After learning texts such as the LORD’s prayer and the Ten Commandments, Martin was given a little more access to the translated words of the Holy Bible when, in 1497, he began attending a school run by a Catholic monastic order that went by the name: *The Brethren of the Common Life*.

But later, in 1501 (according to the Encyclopedia Britannica), Martin Luther attended the prestigious University of Erfurt. There, he eventually earned a master’s degree in liberal arts. Also, during his studies at the university, Luther stumbled upon a complete Latin

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<sup>29</sup> Philippians 3:5-6a

Bible, for the first time in his life.

Prior to Luther's first encounter with a complete Bible at 20 years old, he only heard bits and pieces of Scripture quoted from Jerome's Latin translation as part of his Latin studies or the occasional recitation of the Latin Vulgate by the priests during mass.

You see, at that time in history, the Bible was considered a dark book full of incomprehensible mysteries that only the Catholic Magisterium could accurately comprehend. Consequently, people were burned at the stake by the church for memorizing the LORD's prayer in their daily language.

The fact is, the 1229 Council of Toulouse stated: *"We prohibit also that the laity should be permitted to have the books of the Old and the New Testament; unless anyone from the motives of devotion should wish to have the Psalter or the Breviary for divine offices or the hours of the blessed Virgin; but we most strictly forbid their having any translation of these books."*<sup>30</sup>

This was the primary way the Roman Catholic Church maintained their power and influence over the people. They knew, if the people could access the Scriptures for themselves, many of them would eventually see through the demonic doctrines of the papacy and leave Roman Catholicism behind.

So, this strict, totalitarian, Roman Catholic spiritual and political dictatorship dominated the repressed culture Martin Luther grew up in. And, it unjustly kept him away from most of the wonders of GOD's Word for nearly one third of his life, even as he sought after his Creator with reverent dedication.

However, despite the impact of GOD's Word on Luther, after receiving his master's degree Luther sought to please his father by pursuing an education in law. But shortly after his studies began, Martin left his father's plans for him behind and set out to a nearby monastery occupied by the Order of the Hermits of St. Augustine.

Martin's father was very angry with him, but he justified his decision to his father by recounting how, in a moment of fear, his life took a new direction. Martin explained: he was caught outside during a terrifying thunderstorm, and after fearing for his life, he made a vow to join a monastery if GOD would simply spare him. Thus, after he survived the storm, Martin felt he had to fulfil his vow by entering the monastery even if it went against his father's wishes.

Interestingly, when Luther arrived at the monastery, he actually received his first personal copy of the Holy Scriptures in Latin. He fell in love with his little red copy of Jerome's translation of GOD's Word, and it probably is no coincidence that after two years in the monastery, Luther decided to continue his education; but no longer in pursuit of a law degree.

Instead, consistent with his vow, his love of the Scriptures, and the consistent theme of

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<sup>30</sup> [https://everything.explained.today/Council\\_of\\_Toulouse/](https://everything.explained.today/Council_of_Toulouse/)

his life-long search for peace with GOD; Martin chose to pursue a doctorate in Theology, even as he continued living the austere life of a very conservative Augustinian monk.

His studies took him from the University of Erfurt to the University of Wittenberg, and later back to Erfurt. But his education was interrupted (in approximately 1511) when he was asked by the “observant” German Augustinian monasteries he had been a part of for 6 years, to represent them before the pope in Rome.

Luther’s visit to the geographic capitol of the Roman Catholic Church began with all of the typical great expectations of a holy pilgrimage, but once there, he witnessed many things that deeply troubled his soul. From impatient priests who hurried him through his earnest offerings of prayer, to monks living in luxury even after they had taken binding vows of poverty; Luther witnessed the lack of sincere devotion in the leaders of the church he was so deeply devoted to, through the fruits of their sinful irreverence. So, Luther returned from Rome disillusioned, and more determined than ever to find true peace with GOD.

And, although we cannot prove this beyond a reasonable doubt, it is safe to conclude: Luther’s search for peace with GOD first led him to the monastery where he could not find peace. Then his search led him to the University to study theology, but he still could not find peace. And later, his search led him to Rome, where peace once again alluded him. Thus, after returning from Rome, it is logical to conclude that Luther finally began to search in the one place that could satisfy his longing for peace with GOD, and that place is the Holy Scriptures!

Meanwhile, all of his life, Luther had been taught to seek peace with GOD by confessing his transgressions to catholic priests who prescribed doing works of “penance” to pay for his sins. So, when learning about Martin Luther, it is very important to understand: Catholic “penance” always involves suffering in some way until guilt is atoned for, which to some Catholics includes fasting, self-scourging, or other harsh treatments of the body.

But these man-made methods of atoning for sin *not only* contradicted the Scriptures Luther was slowly becoming more aware of through his doctoral training<sup>31</sup>; they *also* could not subdue his tormented conscience or alleviate his doubts regarding his eternal destiny.

Here we should explain, Roman Catholic doctrine always involves people paying for their own sins in addition to the payment JESUS offered up on the cross. In a sense they are taught, “You do your very best, and JESUS will do the rest”. Therefore, they are taught that when a believer dies, they go to a place of torment called purgatory where they continued to pay for their sins until they are purged of them through suffering and eventually earn their way into the Heavenly kingdom.

And, as if this heresy wasn’t blasphemous enough, to raise money to build up the

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<sup>31</sup> Colossians 2:23

opulence of Rome, the pope claimed you could buy your way out of purgatory by purchasing what the church called “indulgences”.

These paper decrees of papal absolution were sold by representatives of Rome like a devious door-to-door salesman might sell stock holdings in some non-existent company. So, church emissaries would famously say things like: “As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs”.

People thought they could purchase the end of purgatorial torment for a beloved relative who had died, or they concluded that they could pre-purchase forgiveness for sins they were planning to indulge in. It did not matter to Rome, as long as they filled the Pope’s pockets with the pennies of the poor.

Well, after Luther returned from Rome and completed his doctorate, he began teaching the Bible under the headship of his monastery. And over time, as his understanding of the Bible increased, he began to see conflicts between Scripture and Catholic doctrine.

One very likely aid to Luther in his discovery of the many flaws within the teachings of the Catholic church was the publishing of the first printed Greek compilation of the Apostolic Scriptures in 1516. The “Novum Instrumentum” (or “New Instrument”) was produced by the Catholic scholar Erasmus of Rotterdam a little more than a year before Luther published his 95 Theses, and these two events are likely connected.

For example, Martin Luther had discovered through his Greek studies, made possible by the work of Erasmus, that Jerome’s translation of the Greek word “met-an'-oy-ah” into the Latin equivalent of the English word “penance” was incorrect. He learned that the word meant “repentance”, which is: “to change one’s mind in a way that leads to different actions”. But the word “penance” means: “the sorrowful acceptance of punishment to atone for sin”

At the same time, he learned from Paul’s writings about “justification by faith”, as opposed to “justification by works”. And this revelation, that directly contradicted the Catholic doctrines of “penance”, ultimately shaped his theology and his writings more than any other.<sup>32</sup>

You see, only with these historical facts established can we understand the circumstances that led Professor Martin Luther to nail his 95 articles of debate to the church door in Wittenberg Germany. Even though he was a devout Augustinian monk of the Roman Catholic church, he was convinced by Scripture and his conscience that the Pope had gone too far with the sale of indulgences. So, he was inviting a scholarly debate on the 95 points he posted, to discredit every conceivable aspect of the practice.

Luther’s desire to protest what he learned were despicable abuses in the Catholic Church led to conflict, persecution, and eventually reformation; especially because many of his writings were printed on newly available printing presses and distributed widely.

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<sup>32</sup> Romans 3:30-31

His popular writings, and the efforts of others who equally loved GOD's Word, began to shine *some* of the light of the Gospel into a very dark world that evil forces had been controlling for a very long time. But despite all of the persecution and pressure Luther faced, he never compromised his beliefs.

Meanwhile, when the pressure grew exceedingly dangerous, Luther was forced into hiding where he accomplished the first component of his most important achievement by translating the Apostolic Scriptures into the German language. His translation provided the German people access to at least part of GOD's Word. And Luther translated those glorious 27 Books with the help of the *second* edition of what Erasmus then called: the "Novum Testamentum" (or "New Testament").

Twelve years later, Luther finished his greatest work when he published his complete German translation of all 66 books of the Holy Bible. And through GOD's work in Luther's life, the people of Germany finally had access to **"...the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."**<sup>33</sup>

Please note: the infallible Word of GOD does not say that Martin Luther is **"able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in CHRIST JESUS"**! No, it records that the Holy Scriptures have that ability! And when we realize that the protestant reformation was simply a rediscovery of the Holy Scriptures, which led them to turn away from the man-made traditions, doctrines, and perversions of the papacy, we understand that we must look to the Bible, and the Bible alone for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness!

After all, we don't need a *new* set of man-made doctrines and traditions telling us that we cannot interpret the Scriptures without the assistance of some *new* fallible council that theologians might claim includes the theology of Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Edwards, or Darby!<sup>34</sup>

Our LORD and Savior clearly said: **"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."**<sup>35</sup>

And His beloved Apostle John explained: **Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.**<sup>36</sup>

Therefore, the only *inspired* litmus test we must enforce on all Christian doctrine is: does it conform to the doctrine of CHRIST and the inspired writings of His Word?<sup>37</sup>

The fact is: the exemplary principle Martin Luther and his fellow reformers attempted to adhere to in their pursuit of the Truth can be summarized as: ***All of the Bible and the***

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<sup>33</sup> 2 Timothy 3:15

<sup>34</sup> 1 Corinthians 4:6

<sup>35</sup> John 8:31-32

<sup>36</sup> 2 John 1:9

<sup>37</sup> 1 Timothy 6:3-5

***Bible alone!*** And that is the *only* message we must faithfully preserve from his experiences.

If we allow Martin Luther, or any *other* fallible man from non-Biblical history to become a litmus test for how we interpret Scripture, then we miss the fact that Scripture was the only tool GOD used to set those remarkable men free from the deceptions of *their* time. And we face new deceptions that require we consult the same infallible tool!

Plus, Martin Luther knew he was susceptible to making mistakes. So, it has been reported that he said under threats of excommunication and death: *“Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason -I do not accept the authority of the popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other- my conscience is captive to the Word of GOD. I cannot and will not recant anything for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. GOD help me, Amen.”*

Martin Luther is no longer here for us to try to convince with Scripture and plain reason. And I don't think he would like it if anyone used his writings in any way that is similar to how the Catholic church used papal edicts and church councils to argue against the plain reading of GOD's Word! Therefore, in our lives, we must follow ***his example*** of relying on the Bible and the Bible alone, not ***his doctrine*** that was still developing in a world where Catholic theology reigned, and the Bible was essentially kept under papal lock and key!

As our beloved brother James exhorted: **Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.**<sup>38</sup>

James plainly declared that ***the Word of GOD is able to save our souls***, just as it saved Luther and countless others during the protestant reformation! But would it surprise you to know that Luther called the epistle of James: *“an epistle of straw”*?

Yes, because Martin Luther did not understand the historical context of Paul's letters that were written to oppose the aspects of the Law the Pharisees focused their attention on -aspects that were **“concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances”**<sup>39</sup>- Luther felt that there was a contradiction between the letters of Paul and the epistle of James.

As a Professor of Biblical studies at the University, he said of it: ***“We should throw the epistle of James out of this school, for it doesn't amount to much. It contains not a syllable about Christ. Not once does it mention Christ, except at the beginning. I maintain that some Jew wrote it who probably heard about Christian people but never encountered any. Since he heard that Christians place great weight on faith in Christ, he thought, ‘Wait a moment! I'll oppose them and urge works alone.’***

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<sup>38</sup> James 1:21-22

<sup>39</sup> Hebrews 9:10

***This he did.”***

First of all, the epistle of James is built on the everlasting foundation of JESUS and His authoritative doctrines. Because James would have never written: “...count it all joy when you fall into various trials”<sup>40</sup>, if JESUS had not first taught: “**Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”**”<sup>41</sup>

Likewise, James wrote: **Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.**<sup>42</sup>

However, he only said this because JESUS taught: “**But woe to you who are rich, For you have received your consolation.**”<sup>43</sup>, and: “**How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.**”<sup>44</sup>

James also wrote (in what we call “the second chapter” of his letter): **My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality.**<sup>45</sup>

So, to claim that the epistle of James “contains not a syllable about Christ. Not once does it mention Christ, except at the beginning”, is a grave and wicked error! No, the entire letter is inspired *teaching* on the doctrine of CHRIST; doctrine that James called “**the faith of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the LORD of glory**”!

And if someone cannot see that the LORD’s Sermon on the Mount was the source for James writing: **But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your “Yes” be “Yes,” and your “No,” “No,” lest you fall into judgment.**<sup>46</sup>, then I don’t recommend you rely on that person as a trustworthy Bible teacher!

Secondly, James did not urge “works alone” as Luther claimed. No, James specifically said works should flow *from* our faith to “**complete**” or “**perfect**” it. But it is this issue of “faith” and “works”, or more precisely: how they fit together in GOD’s plan of salvation, that Luther and most modern protestant theologians cannot understand.

James wrote: **What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and**

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<sup>40</sup> James 1:2

<sup>41</sup> Matthew 5:11-12

<sup>42</sup> James 1:9-11

<sup>43</sup> Luke 6:24

<sup>44</sup> Luke 18:24-25

<sup>45</sup> James 2:1

<sup>46</sup> James 5:12

destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?

And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.<sup>47</sup>

Imagine that you heard JESUS say: “**If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.**”<sup>48</sup>

To receive those words in faith you must believe: that JESUS said them, that they have been accurately preserved and translated, and that they are factually true. But how can you *demonstrate* that you really *believe* those words? If you guessed “*you ‘keep His commandments’*”, then you have answered correctly!

You see, faith without obedient works is “**dead**”, much like a tree that sprang up from the earth after the seed of GOD’s Word was implanted, but bore no *good* fruit. And: “**Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.**”<sup>49</sup>

That is why James said: **Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.**<sup>50</sup>

No life will spring up in the soil of our lives if we don’t hear the Word of GOD and receive it with faith. But if we don’t act on what It instructs us to do, we are deceiving ourselves; and we will never bear the fruit JESUS is looking for!

You see: The Bible is not simply a book of declarative statements that we must believe! No, it is a book full of imperative commands that repeatedly warns us to “obey”<sup>51</sup>!

That is why JESUS said: “**Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the**

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<sup>47</sup> James 2:14-26

<sup>48</sup> John 15:10

<sup>49</sup> Matthew 7:19

<sup>50</sup> James 1:21-22

<sup>51</sup> Having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. Hebrews 5:9

kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’<sup>52</sup>

Likewise, that is why Paul summarized his entire Apostolic ministry by saying: **“Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, “but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.”**<sup>53</sup>

Sadly, Luther didn’t (and most modern Bible teachers still don’t) interpret Paul’s letters in a way that is consistent with Paul’s own summary of his ministry! Many confused teachers like Martin Luther claim that Paul taught: only “faith” was necessary, while they wrongly *claim* that Paul warned against “works” **and** even GOD’s “law”!

Brothers and sisters, this was **“the error of lawlessness”** Peter warned us about! Because the fact is: the **repentance** Paul said he preached about everywhere is permanently connected to both **sin** and **GOD’s law**.

For example, Paul wrote: **“...I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced.”**<sup>54</sup>

Paul was afraid that he might have to mourn over many that **“sinned”** in Corinth and had not **“repented”** of the sins they practiced; sins that clearly violated the laws of GOD!

Please consider: If GOD’s law did not exist, not one person would ever need to repent! Yet, to a gathering of idolaters, Paul said: **“God ...now commands all men everywhere to repent”**<sup>55</sup>. There is no doubting that Paul believed: *repentance is changing our minds to affirm that GOD’s law is just and good, because sin is the breaking of GOD’s law!*

John confirmed this inseparable connection between GOD’s law and sin by writing: **Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.**<sup>56</sup>

Ezekiel confirmed the inseparable connection between GOD’s law and sin when he recorded GOD saying: **“If a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die.”**<sup>57</sup>

Daniel confirmed the inseparable connection between GOD’s law and sin when he

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<sup>52</sup> Matthew 7:21-23

<sup>53</sup> Acts 26:19-20

<sup>54</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:21

<sup>55</sup> Acts 17:30

<sup>56</sup> 1 John 3:4

<sup>57</sup> Ezekiel 18:21

prayed: **“Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him.”**<sup>58</sup>

And Paul confirmed the inseparable connection between GOD’s law and sin when he wrote: **What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “You shall not covet.”**<sup>59</sup>

Therefore, because *repentance is agreement with GOD’s law that states sin is wrong and we must turn away from it*, JESUS said: **“I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”**<sup>60</sup>

Those who are not breaking GOD’s laws are called **“righteous”** or **“just”**. Those who are breaking His laws are called **“sinners”**. And JESUS made it clear, only **“sinners”** need to repent! So, when Paul preached that people must **“repent, turn to GOD, and do works worthy of repentance”**, he was telling them to stop sinning against GOD’s law!

This is why Paul wrote: **The law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.**<sup>61</sup>

And he explained to Timothy: **We know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.**<sup>62</sup>

Before we repented and decided to follow JESUS, we were all sinners<sup>63</sup>. And Paul makes it clear: if someone is a “sinner”, they *must* be confronted with GOD’s Law to see that they need to be saved **from** the just punishment their sin deserves! However, the Law cannot save us from our sin and make us righteous! No, *only the blood of JESUS our Savior can do that!*

Yes, just as the blood of animal sacrifices was given to the people atone for sin in **the first covenant** that was officiated by the Levitical priests<sup>64</sup>, the blood of JESUS is the

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<sup>58</sup> Daniel 9:11

<sup>59</sup> Romans 7:7

<sup>60</sup> Luke 15:7

<sup>61</sup> Romans 7:12

<sup>62</sup> 1 Timothy 1:8-11

<sup>63</sup> All have sinned and fall short of the glory of GOD. Romans 3:23

<sup>64</sup> “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.” Leviticus 17:11

only way to atone for sin in ***the new covenant***<sup>65</sup>. And JESUS Himself officiates over that glorious covenant as our heavenly High Priest!

So, the blood of the covenant changed, the priesthood changed, and the High Priest sat down in the heavenly Holy of Holies after completing His loving sacrifice of Himself for our sins. But the moral Laws of the Covenant did not change!

This is why the promise of the New Covenant given to Jeremiah by GOD clearly stated: **“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— “not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”**<sup>66</sup>

And the book of Hebrews repeats this prophecy given in Jeremiah and explains in several places it is speaking of the new covenant established by the blood of JESUS our eternal High Priest!

But sadly, even after JESUS inaugurated the new covenant, many Jews in the first century were convinced that they could cleanse away their own sins through **“foods, drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances”**<sup>67</sup> like circumcision.

So, Paul explained: **What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.**<sup>68</sup>

Did this mean that Gentile Christians did not keep GOD’s commandments? Certainly not!

And we can prove this because Paul wrote to the gentile Christians in Corinth: **Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.**<sup>69</sup>

Just after telling the Corinthian Church to expel a member who was committing sexual

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<sup>65</sup> “For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” Matthew 26:28

<sup>66</sup> Jeremiah 31:31-33

<sup>67</sup> Hebrews 9:10

<sup>68</sup> Romans 9:30-32

<sup>69</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

immorality<sup>70</sup>, Paul warned them not to associate with sinners who were: **“sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner”**<sup>71</sup>.

Then, Paul made it clear that sinners will not inherit the kingdom of Heaven. And he reminded the congregation, ***some of them*** repented and came out of those sins, to be washed clean by the blood of JESUS! So those sins were clearly in their past, and if anyone kept on practicing them, they were to be **avoid** and **expel** such people!

And we must not miss the fact that the only reason “fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners” won’t inherit the kingdom of GOD is because they are violating the Creator’s righteous laws!

So, since we can prove that the Gentile Christians were not violating GOD’s laws, why did Paul write that Israel has **“...not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law.”**?

What “works of the law” were they seeking righteousness through that contradicted the righteousness that comes through faith in JESUS? Well, Paul is the perfect person to tell us, because he once tried to establish his own righteousness according to the same works of the Law!

He wrote: **We are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.**<sup>72</sup>

Can you see how people in Paul’s time were taught to seek righteousness? They thought they could obtain righteousness through **“foods, drinks, various washings and fleshly ordinances”**<sup>73</sup> like circumcision or genealogy! But JESUS called those things “washing the outside of the cup and dish” while “the inside was full of hypocrisy”, “greed”, and “lawlessness”. Thus, Paul gave up those fleshly attempts at righteousness to obtain the righteousness that comes through faith in JESUS!

But Paul did not give up obedience to GOD’s moral Laws! Instead, he wrote: **Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.**<sup>74</sup>

So, to understand the fallible writings of Martin Luther, we must understand the Catholic

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<sup>70</sup> 1 Corinthians 5:4

<sup>71</sup> 1 Corinthians 5:11

<sup>72</sup> Philippians 3:3-7

<sup>73</sup> Hebrews 9:10

<sup>74</sup> 1 Corinthians 7:19

errors **he** rejected when he came to JESUS. And, to understand the infallible writings of the Apostle Paul, in a similar way we need to understand the Pharisaical errors **he** rejected when he came to JESUS.

Only then can we avoid the persistent and unrejected errors of reformers like Martin Luther, and embrace the eternal and infallible truths of the holy Scriptures; from the very first Hebrew word of Genesis to the very last Greek word of Revelation!

## Chapter 3: The MESSIAH and The Epistles of Paul

If you were to ask the Apostle Paul: “*What does the word ‘reformation’ mean to you?*”, he would respond by describing the blood of JESUS CHRIST willingly shed when He became our eternal, spotless Passover Lamb<sup>75</sup>. Plus, he would point to the “tearing of the veil”, described by Matthew, Mark and Luke<sup>76</sup>, as evidence of that great reformation.

Matthew recorded: “**JESUS cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.**”<sup>77</sup>

And we can be confident that Paul would point to that precise moment in History as “the *great* reformation” because: in one of Paul’s epistles, he actually mentions the veil tearing just before he writes about a monumental, Messianic reformation!

However, *before* we can learn about that important passage and the great reformation it describes, we first need to discuss some simple facts about Paul’s epistles (and even the epistles written by his fellow Apostles), to learn how to properly regard the 27 books of the Apostolic Scriptures.

The word “**epistle**” is the English *transliteration* of the Greek word: “**ep-is-tol-ay**”. And, here we should explain: a transliteration is: “*the act or process of writing words using a different alphabet*”<sup>78</sup>.

Plus, transliterating a word often involves modifying the original pronunciation of the word to make it simpler to pronounce in a secondary language. In this way: “**bap-tid'-zo**” becomes “**baptize**”, “**ang'-el-os**” becomes “**angel**”, and “**ep-is-tol-ay**” becomes “**epistle**”.

Now, with those linguistic details understood, we see that Thayer’s Greek Lexicon records that the word “**ep-is-tol-ay**” is a noun that means: “**a letter**”<sup>79</sup>; and it comes from the verb “**ep-ee-stel'-lo**” that means: “**to send one a message or command**”, “**to write a letter**”, or “**to enjoin [meaning: order<sup>80</sup>] by letter, to write instructions**”.<sup>81</sup>

Truly, when we search the Scriptures to see all of the places the word “**ep-is-tol-ay**” was used, we see (in the Septuagint and the Apostolic Scriptures): the word always refers to **official** letters, typically sent from someone in **authority**.

In second Kings 20 (and in Isaiah 39), the word “**ep-is-tol-ay**” is used when “**an official**

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<sup>75</sup> 1 Corinthians 5:7, Romans 3:21-26, Luke 22:15-20

<sup>76</sup> Matthew 27:50-53, Mark 15:37-38, Luke 23:44-46

<sup>77</sup> Matthew 27:50-52

<sup>78</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/transliteration>

<sup>79</sup> <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?t=kjv&strongs=g1992>

<sup>80</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/enjoin>

<sup>81</sup> <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?t=kjv&strongs=g1989>

**letter from an authority**” was sent by the son of the King of Babylon, along with a delegation bearing gifts, to King Hezekiah when he heard of his illness.<sup>82</sup>

In second Chronicles 30, the word “**ep-is-tol-ay**” is used when “**an official letter from an authority**” was sent by King Hezekiah to the people of Israel and Judah to instruct them to come to Jerusalem in the *second* month of the year to keep the Passover.<sup>83</sup>

In Ezra chapter 4, the word “**ep-is-tol-ay**” is used when “**an official letter from an authority**” was sent by a tax collector, a chancellor, and a scribe to King Artaxerxes complaining against the rebuilding of Jerusalem.<sup>84</sup>

Also, in Ezra chapter 5, the word “**ep-is-tol-ay**” is used when “**an official letter from an authority**” was sent from a governor to King Darius to request a search of the king’s records.<sup>85</sup>

In Nehemiah chapter 2, the word “**ep-is-tol-ay**” is used when “**an official letter from an authority**” was sent from King Artaxerxes to the governors and managers near Jerusalem.<sup>86</sup>

Also, in Nehemiah chapter 6, the word “**ep-is-tol-ay**” is used when “**an official letter from an authority**” was sent from Nehemiah the governor to the enemies of Jerusalem.<sup>87</sup>

In Esther chapter 3, the word “**ep-is-tol-ay**” is used when “**an official letter from an authority**” was sent from King Artaxerxes to his rulers and governors authorizing the slaughter of the Jews.<sup>88</sup>

Also, in Esther chapter 9, the word “**ep-is-tol-ay**” is used when “**an official letter from an authority**” was sent from Mordecai and Queen Esther to all of the Jews commemorating the day the Jews were authorized by the King to defend themselves.<sup>89</sup>

In Acts chapter 9 (and Acts chapter 22), the word “**ep-is-tol-ay**” is used when “**an official letter from an authority**” was sent by the Sanhedrin to the synagogues of Damascus authorizing Paul to take Christians captive and bring them to Jerusalem.<sup>90</sup>

In Acts chapter 15, the word “**ep-is-tol-ay**” is used when “**an official letter from an authority**” was sent by the Apostles and Elders of Jerusalem to “**the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia**” explaining that they did not have to be circumcised and keep the customs of the Jews associated with ritual purity beyond 4

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<sup>82</sup> 2 Kings 20:12-13

<sup>83</sup> 2 Chronicles 30:1-12

<sup>84</sup> Ezra 4:6-24

<sup>85</sup> Ezra 5:6-17

<sup>86</sup> Nehemiah 2:7-9

<sup>87</sup> Nehemiah 6:5-19

<sup>88</sup> Esther 3:13-15

<sup>89</sup> Esther 9:26-29

<sup>90</sup> Acts 9:1-2, Acts 22:3-5

basic forms of physical defilement.<sup>91</sup>

And, in Acts chapter 23, the word “**ep-is-tol-ay**” is used when “**an official letter from an authority**” was sent by the Roman Commander Claudius Lysias to the Roman governor Felix about Paul.<sup>92</sup>

So, we must understand that the word “**epistle**” always involves “**an official letter from an authority**” when we carefully study it through the entire Bible! Therefore, it makes sense that Paul wrote: **If anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.**<sup>93</sup>

Likewise, when we understand the word “epistle” as it is used in Scripture, we recognize **why** Paul warned: **If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.**<sup>94</sup>

Therefore, when we speak of the **epistles** contained in the 27 books of the Apostolic Scriptures, it is important to begin by understanding: they are more than just ordinary **letters** to the saints! No, Scripture uses a very *specific* word to categorize the books we know by names such as “Romans”, “1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter”, and “James” so no one can forget: these communications were written with the full prophetic weight and authority of a direct communication from JESUS to His Church!

This is obvious in the case of the epistle we know as “Revelation” because JESUS instructs John to write all he saw and heard down and send it to seven churches in the province of Asia. But through the HOLY SPIRIT, JESUS equally inspired the rest of the epistles from Romans to Jude, just as He inspired the rest of the Scriptures.

Typically, we know the author of each epistle in the Apostolic Scriptures either because the author is listed very clearly in the opening of the letter<sup>95</sup>, or the early post-Apostolic Church clearly recorded who wrote it in their historical (but non-canonical) writings.

For example, in the first seven verses of Romans we find the words: “**Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle ...to all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**”<sup>96</sup>

Likewise, the epistle that immediately *follows* Romans in our Bibles begins with the words: “**Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and**

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<sup>91</sup> Acts 15:22-31

<sup>92</sup> Acts 23:23-33

<sup>93</sup> 2 Thessalonians 3:14

<sup>94</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:37

<sup>95</sup> Epistles with clear references to the author and the location of those references: (1) Romans 1:1-7, (2) 1 Corinthians 1:1-2, (3) 2 Corinthians 1:1, (4) Galatians 1:1-2, (5) Ephesians 1:1, (6) Philippians 1:1, (7) Colossians 1:1-2, (8) 1 Thessalonians 1:1, (9) 2 Thessalonians 1:1, (10) 1 Timothy 1:1-2, (11) 2 Timothy 1:1-2, (12) Titus 1:1-4, (13) Philemon 1:1, (14) James 1:1, (15) 1 Peter 1:1, (16) 2 Peter 1:1, (17) Jude 1:1, and (18) Revelation 1:4

<sup>96</sup> Romans 1:1-7 (deleted added words “to be”)

**Sosthenes our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our LORD”.**<sup>97</sup>

So, Paul listed himself as the primary author of both epistles. And, even though the epistle we know as 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians was written by both Paul and Sosthenes, it was “**an official authoritative**” letter because the Apostle Paul was its *primary* author.

Likewise, because James (or more literally “Jacob”) was the half-brother of JESUS, a well-known and respected Elder in the Jerusalem church, and Paul and Peter both treated James as an equal<sup>98</sup>, his letter has commonly been considered an official authoritative epistle with equal weight and authority to that of any Apostle.

Therefore, since Jude (or more literally “Judas”) was the brother of James<sup>99</sup> (and the half-brother of JESUS<sup>100</sup>), as well as a well-known and respected Elder among the Apostles, his letter was commonly considered an official authoritative epistle of the Apostolic Scriptures.

In this way, *only* the epistles written in the first century by the closest companions of the Apostles, or by them directly, were treated as official, authoritative Scripture in the Church.

John Mark, who wrote the Gospel of Mark, was the cousin of Barnabas, plus he was very close with (at least) Peter and Paul.<sup>101</sup>

Likewise: Luke, who wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, was very close with (at least) the Apostle Paul.<sup>102</sup>

And the Apostles Matthew and John wrote the Gospels that bear their names.

Plus, along with his Gospel and the Book of Revelation, John wrote three epistles: The **first** was written to all Christians in general<sup>103</sup>, the **second** was written to “the elect lady and her children”<sup>104</sup>, and the **third** was written to a saint named Gaius<sup>105</sup>.

However, John did not include his name in his Gospel or three of his epistles. Meanwhile we can have great confidence that the Apostle John is the author of those writings because: early non-canonical Christian correspondence and historical accounts have survived that clearly record John wrote the books in our Bibles that bear his name.

So, all that we have learned so far leads us to the one last remaining epistle in the Apostolic Scriptures that does not contain the name of its inspired author; and we

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<sup>97</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:1-2a (deleted added words “to be”)

<sup>98</sup> Acts 15:13, Acts 21:18, 1 Corinthians 15:7, Galatians 1:18-19, Galatians 2:9,

<sup>99</sup> Jude 1:1, 1 Corinthians 9:5

<sup>100</sup> Matthew 13:55, Mark 6:3

<sup>101</sup> Acts 12:12, Acts 12:25, Acts 15:37, Colossians 4:10, 2 Timothy 4:11, 1 Peter 5:13

<sup>102</sup> Colossians 4:14, 2 Timothy 4:11, Philemon 1:24

<sup>103</sup> 1 John 2:12-14

<sup>104</sup> 2 John 1:1

<sup>105</sup> 3 John 1:1

typically know that book as “The Epistle to the Hebrews”.

From very early on, the Church has known that the Epistle to the Hebrews was considered Apostolic Scripture because it was quoted in the earliest historical (but non-canonical) writings of the post-Apostolic Church<sup>106</sup>.

For example, Clement of Rome wrote to the Corinthian Church sometime around 95 AD, when the Apostle John was still alive. And, in Clement’s letter to the saints in Corinth, he quoted extensively from the Epistle to the Hebrews at least 3 times<sup>107</sup>, and treated those quotations as authoritative, well-known, and accepted Scripture.<sup>108</sup>

Likewise, when Polycarp wrote to the Philippian church in approximately 120 AD, he quoted from the Epistle to the Hebrews at least twice, and treated those quotations as authoritative, well-known, and accepted Scripture.<sup>109</sup>

Truly, this same pattern of quoting Hebrews as Scripture was followed by Tertullian, Melito of Sardis, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, Origen, Athanasius and many more.

Plus, an interesting detail about the Epistle to the Hebrews we must not miss is: when the epistle cites a pre-Apostolic passage, it quotes from the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures known to us as the Septuagint.<sup>110</sup>

Therefore, because the “Hellenists” were Jews who spoke Greek and preferred the Greek Septuagint<sup>111</sup>, we can conclude: if the epistle was primarily written to Jews, it was clearly written to appeal to *Hellenistic Jews*.<sup>112</sup>

This is why Fausset’s Bible Dictionary explains about the Epistle to the Hebrews: ***“The use of Greek, not Hebrew, and the quotation of the Septuagint version of Old Testament prove, that it was written not merely for Hebrew but for Hellenistic Jew converts in Palestine and the East.”***

Interestingly, the Apostle Peter also wrote two epistles in Greek that quote the Greek Septuagint extensively, as well. And Peter addressed the first of his epistles very specifically.

He wrote: **Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in**

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<sup>106</sup> <https://walkingtowardsjerusalem.wordpress.com/2011/07/07/did-clement-bishop-of-rome-write-or-quote-from-hebrews/>

<sup>107</sup> Clement of Rome (96-98 A.D.) quotes Hebrews 1:4 Quote:1 Clement vol.1 p.15, quotes half of Hebrews 3:2b 1 Clement vol.1 p.10, quotes one-fourth of Hebrews 10:37 1 Clement vol.1 ch.23 vol.1 p.11 vol.9 p.236

<sup>108</sup> <https://etimasthe.com/2018/02/14/clement-of-romes-new-testament/>

<sup>109</sup> <http://www.ntcanon.org/Polycarp.shtml#Hebrews>

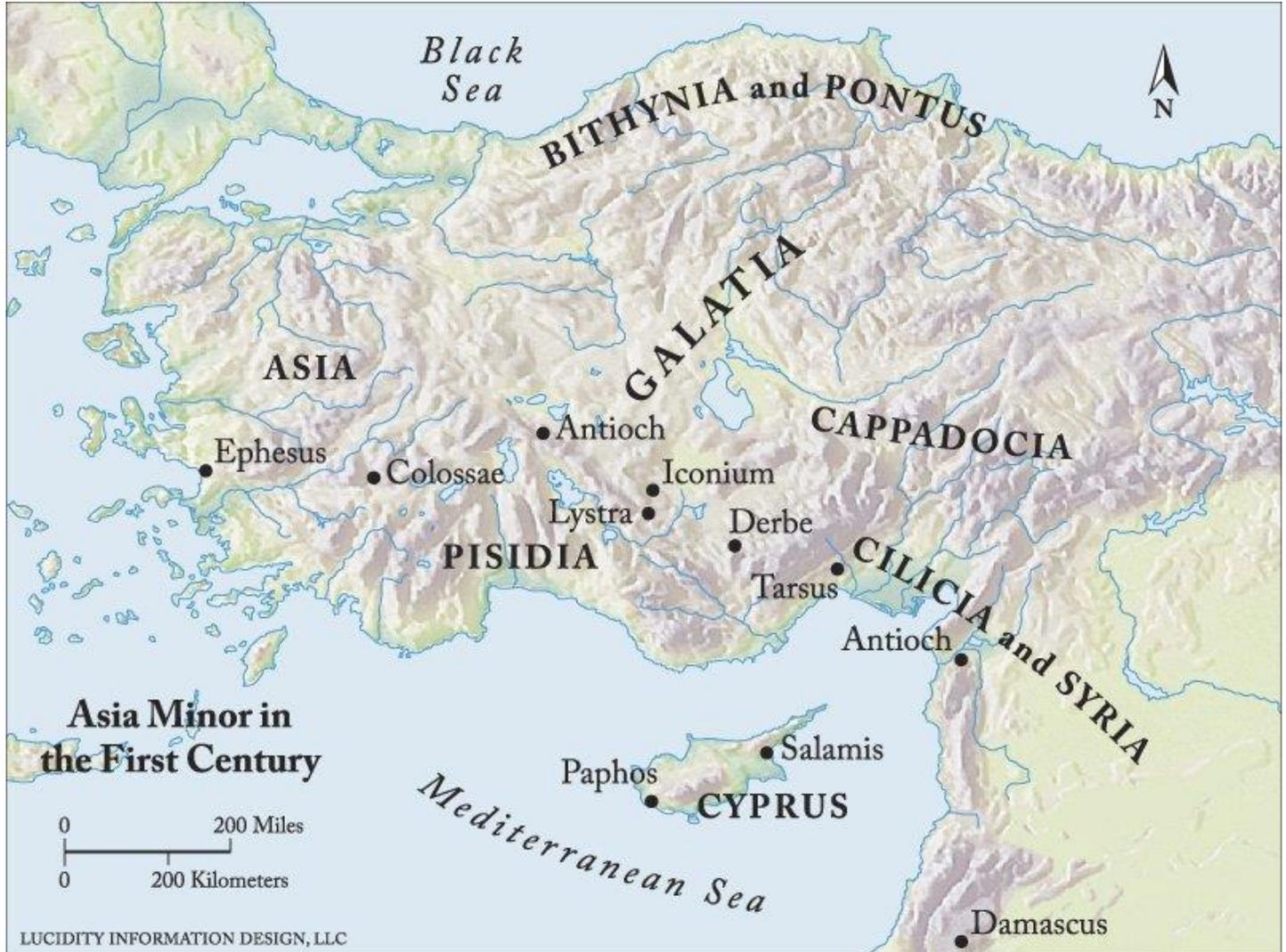
<sup>110</sup> Fausset’s Bible Dictionary reports about the Epistle to the Hebrews: “All the Old Testament quotations except two (Hebrews 10:30; Hebrews 13:5) are from the Septuagint, which was framed at Alexandria. The interweaving of the Septuagint peculiarities into the argument proves that the Greek epistle is an original, not a translation. The Hebrew Old Testament would have been quoted, had the original epistle been Hebrew.” And: “The use of Greek, not Hebrew, and the quotation of the Septuagint version of Old Testament prove, that it was written not merely for Hebrew but for Hellenistic Jew converts in Palestine and the East.” (<https://www.studydrive.org/dictionaries/eng/fbd/h/hebrews-the-epistle-to-the.html>)

<sup>111</sup> <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/ellcott/acts/6.htm>

<sup>112</sup> Acts 6:1, Acts 11:19-21

Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.<sup>113</sup>

Here we see a map of the areas Peter wrote the epistle we know as “1<sup>st</sup> Peter” to reach; and we can see that this map calls this area “Asia Minor”. Also, we should note: this area was filled with Hellenistic Jews in the first century.



Plus, we should note that Peter’s second epistle was written to the same area. And we know this because, in that second letter, Peter wrote: **Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior.**<sup>114</sup>

So, Peter clearly wrote *both* of the epistles in our Bible’s that bear his name to the saints in Asia Minor, an area filled with Hellenistic Jews who spoke Greek and read the ancient Greek translation of the Scriptures known as the Septuagint.

<sup>113</sup> 1 Peter 1:1-2

<sup>114</sup> 2 Peter 3:1-2

But one thing that we should note in Peter's second epistle, that may tell us who the Epistle to the Hebrews was written to, is found in the third chapter. There Peter wrote: **Consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.**<sup>115</sup>

So, which epistle of Paul was written to “**the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia**”? Paul wrote epistles to several specific churches in some of these areas, but Peter was clear in his own epistles who *he* was addressing. And Peter went on to clearly state to *all* of those very specific Roman provinces: “**Paul... has written to you**”.

Since that area would have contained a large number of Greek speaking Jews who were very familiar with the Septuagint, plus no *other* letter of Paul was addressed to that entire area, it is logical to infer Peter was mentioning the Epistle to the Hebrews as an epistle of Paul that was sent to that area.

This would make sense because Paul wrote about Peter: “**He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles.**”<sup>116</sup> So, Peter was sent by GOD to the circumcised, and Paul was sent by GOD to the uncircumcised Gentiles.

Meanwhile, Hebrews was exclusively written to people who were classifiable as “circumcised”, since there was so much Hebraic detail in the epistle. Thus, it would make sense: if Paul wrote one unique epistle specifically to the *circumcised* Hellenistic Jews that Peter normally ministered to, one Hebraic epistle of Paul must have been sent to the dispersed Jews in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

Also, since Paul was in a sense “treading on Peter's territory”, that would explain why he chose not to include his name in the epistle. Plus, this would also explain why Paul would write: “**I appeal to you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words.**”<sup>117</sup> But Paul gave us many other clues to guide us to the conclusion that he was the author of the letter.

However, before we look at those clues, we should note: according to the early post-Apostolic Church, Paul was most certainly the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews! Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Irenaeus, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Didymus, and John Cassian all attributed the epistle to the Apostle Paul.

And more importantly, one of the earliest, best preserved surviving manuscripts we have of a codex exclusively consisting of only Paul's writings, known as **Papyrus 46**, places

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<sup>115</sup> 2 Peter 3:15-16

<sup>116</sup> Galatians 2:8

<sup>117</sup> Hebrews 13:22

the Epistle of the Hebrews between the Epistle to the Romans and Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> Epistle to the Corinthians.<sup>118</sup>

No *other* Apostolic Scriptures but those written by Paul are included in this manuscript created between 175 and 225 AD; so this volume of Paul's epistles confirms what the early post-Apostolic Church knew and often repeated: namely that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Some in the early post-Apostolic Church who did not have access to all of the many sources we have named so far, debated who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, because the author did not name themselves internally. But for those with access to all of the available records and accounts, there was little doubt that Paul was the author of Hebrews.

And the fact is: even without the many witnesses from Church history, and the excellent manuscript evidence proving the epistle should be attributed to Paul, there are many internal evidences that point to him as well.

For instance: *unlike Peter, James, John, and Jude*, Paul often collaborated with others when he wrote an epistle. This is the case in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians, 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians, and Philemon. And in 6 of those 8 epistles, Timothy was listed in the introduction as a co-author.

Plus, in Romans, Paul sent greetings from Timothy. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, Paul noted he was sending Timothy to them as a trusted son in the faith. In 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, Paul listed Timothy as one who preached the Gospel with him in their city. In Philippians, Paul said he hoped to send Timothy to visit with them soon to learn how they were doing. Also, in 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians, Paul mentioned he sent Timothy to them, and Timothy had returned with an encouraging report.

So, Timothy literally permeates the letters of Paul, but he is never mentioned by any of the other Apostles! Plus, in four separate places in the undisputed epistles of Paul, Paul describes Timothy with the Greek word "**ad-el-fos**" that means: "brother".

And these details are important because: in the Epistle to the Hebrews Timothy is mentioned; and for the fifth time in his writings, Paul refers to Timothy with the word "**ad-el-fos**".

Also, it is evident by the usage of pronouns and plural conjugations of verbs referring to the authors in the Epistle to the Hebrews that the letter was written by a collaboration of authors under the guidance of Paul.

For example, in chapter 5, it is written: **And having been perfected, [JESUS] became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek," of whom we have much to say, and hard**

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<sup>118</sup> <https://apps.lib.umich.edu/reading/Paul/contents.html>

**to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.**<sup>119</sup>

Clearly, the writers use a plural pronoun as they write: “**we have much to say**” in the epistle.

And this usage appears throughout the letter, such as in chapter 6, where they write: **But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.**<sup>120</sup>

Likewise, in chapter 8 they write: **Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.**<sup>121</sup>

And later, in the next chapter, they explain: **...above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.**<sup>122</sup>

Truly, plural pronouns and pluralized verbs referring to the authors permeate the epistle as the authors reference themselves. But occasionally we see singular pronouns referencing the primary author, just as we find in all of the other letters Paul wrote collaboratively!

For example, in second Thessalonians we see Paul using *plural* pronouns in the following passage: **We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you.**<sup>123</sup>

But after using the word “we” in that letter at least 14 times, near the end of the epistle Paul wrote: **The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write.**<sup>124</sup>

Yes, frequently in the undisputed epistles of Paul written as collaborations, we see plural pronouns referring to the authors; but near the end of the letter, singular pronouns like “I” are used, as Paul wraps up the message.

And we see this same pattern in Hebrews, when after seeing many plural pronouns referring to the authors, we later read: **I appeal to you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words. Know that our brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly.**<sup>125</sup>

Also, Paul used a singular personal pronoun when he wrote about himself and their kindness to him, saying: **you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an**

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<sup>119</sup> Hebrews 5:9-11

<sup>120</sup> Hebrews 6:9

<sup>121</sup> Hebrews 8:1

<sup>122</sup> Hebrews 9:5

<sup>123</sup> 2 Thessalonians 3:4

<sup>124</sup> 2 Thessalonians 3:17

<sup>125</sup> Hebrews 13:22-23

## **enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.**<sup>126</sup>

Now, this mention of “**chains**”, along with a *personal* pronoun indicating the author was the one enduring them, is also an important internal witness to the identity of the author, because this pattern is only ever found in the epistles of Paul.

For example: Paul uses the same phrase “**my chains**” in Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. And Paul indicates he was “**in chains**” in Ephesians and 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy. So, this phrase being repeated along with the phrase “**brother Timothy**” strongly indicates Pauline authorship.

But there is another internal indication that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, because the closing words of the letter: “**Grace be with you all**”<sup>127</sup>, are used in some form or another by Paul as a salutation or benediction in the following undisputed epistles: Romans, 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians, 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians, 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy, 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.

Likewise, the concept of the Christian life being like “**running a race**” is only ever found in Paul’s epistles. Once in Romans, once in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, once in Philippians, once in Galatians, and once in Hebrews.

Another unique word combination only found in the epistles of Paul that describes certain classifications of doctrine is seen when we compare 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3 and Hebrews 5. In both passages Paul speaks of the basic doctrines of the faith as “**milk**” and the more advanced doctrines as “**solid food**”.

Plus, Paul is the only Apostolic writer to refer to Habakkuk 2:4. In Romans, Paul quoted that passage when he wrote: **For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”**<sup>128</sup>

And later in Hebrews he quoted it again, writing: **Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.**<sup>129</sup>

The fact is: there are many more of these internal indications that demonstrate: Paul was the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Plus, we have seen that there are indications in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter that the Epistle to the Hebrews was the letter Peter was thinking of when he reminded his audience their “**beloved brother Paul had written**” to them.

And it is very likely that Timothy, the half-Greek and half-Jewish companion of Paul who grew up in Asia Minor, as Paul did, was involved in the writing of the Epistle to the Hebrews as well.

So, **where** did Paul write the Epistle to the Hebrews? Well, in the closing of the letter, he

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<sup>126</sup> Hebrews 10:34

<sup>127</sup> Hebrews 13:25

<sup>128</sup> Romans 1:17

<sup>129</sup> Hebrews 10:38

explains: **Greet all those who rule over you, and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.**<sup>130</sup>

And, when would Paul have been in Italy with the time necessary to have written this epistle? Well, Luke answers that question when, in the Book of Acts, he recorded: **Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him.**<sup>131</sup>

And later Luke added: **Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.**<sup>132</sup>

According to Church historians, Paul arrived in Rome as a prisoner in AD 61 and he was released in AD 63. Plus, there is strong internal evidence that suggests Hebrews was written by Paul in the early to mid-60's. Therefore, it is very likely that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews in collaboration with his faithful companions Luke and Timothy while he was imprisoned in Rome, or shortly after he was released.

And if that timeframe **was** when Paul wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, it may have been that Paul wrote the letter as a pastoral response to the generous gifts being sent to him from the Jewish believers in Asia Minor, who had compassion on Paul while he was in chains.

None of these conclusions would have been controversial in any way, up until the time of the Protestant reformation. But sadly, untaught and unstable men like Martin Luther believed that the Epistle to the Hebrews did not doctrinally agree with Paul's undisputed epistles.

Therefore, even though Luther *once* believed that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written by Paul, he later wrongly decided: it was not written by an Apostle, it was not inspired Scripture, and it should not be considered canonical!

In fact, similar flaws in Luther's theology led him to conclude that Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation were uninspired, non-canonical, and not worthy to be placed among the rest of the Scriptures.

In His 1522 translation of the Apostolic Scriptures, Luther placed Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation at the very end of his volume, and prefaced all four with these sentences: ***“Up to this point we have had to do with the true and certain chief books of the New Testament. The four which follow have from ancient times had a different reputation.”***

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<sup>130</sup> Hebrews 13:24

<sup>131</sup> Acts 28:16

<sup>132</sup> Acts 28:30-31

Then, in his introduction to the Epistle to the Hebrews, Luther wrote: **“we cannot put it on the same level with the apostolic epistles”**.

Additionally, in his introduction to the Epistle of James, Luther heretically said: **“In a word, [James] wants to guard against those who relied on faith without works, and is unequal to the task [in spirit, thought, and words, and rends the Scriptures and thereby resists Paul and all Scripture]”**.

And in his introduction to the Book of Revelation, he ignorantly wrote: **“I miss more than one thing in this book, and this makes me hold it to be neither apostolic nor prophetic. First and foremost, the Apostles do not deal with visions, but prophesy in clear, plain words, as do Peter and Paul, and Christ in the Gospel. For it befits the apostolic office to speak of Christ and His deeds without figures and visions; but there is no prophet in the Old Testament, to say nothing of the New, who deals so out and out with visions and figures. And so I think of it almost as I do of the Fourth Book of Esdras, and can nohow detect that the Holy Spirit produced it.”**

Luther was one of the men Peter warned about, who twisted Paul’s undisputed epistles and the rest of the Scriptures “to his own destruction”. And Luther fell into the error of lawlessness by misunderstanding how Paul’s epistles, including the epistle to the Hebrews, all fit together with the rest of the Bible! Therefore, those deceived teachers who follow in Martin Luther’s dangerous footsteps, like to point towards two passages in Hebrews, as well as how the epistle was written, as supposed proof Paul could not have written the book.

First, they point at Hebrews chapter 2, where it is written: **“how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him.”**<sup>133</sup>

And, about this passage, Luther wrote: **“Thus it is clear that he speaks of the apostles as a disciple to whom this doctrine has come from the apostles, perhaps long after them. For St. Paul, in Galatians 1:1, testifies mightily that he has his Gospel from no man, neither through men, but from God Himself.”**

So, Luther’s point was that Paul would not have written as if he needed the Apostles to confirm what they heard JESUS teach in person. And Luther pointed to Galatians 1:1 as proof of his point.

However, Galatians 1:1 simply says: **“Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)”**.<sup>134</sup>

Can you see the deception in Luther’s argument? Galatians 1:1 says nothing of how Paul received the Gospel! No, it is a passage describing where Paul received *his*

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<sup>133</sup> Hebrews 2:3

<sup>134</sup> Galatians 1:1

***Apostleship!*** Perhaps that is why Luther did not actually *quote* the passage in his argument!

The fact is, Paul himself wrote: **For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Thereafter He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, of whom the majority remain until now, but some have died. Thereafter He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. And last of all, as of one born out of due time, He appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am...**<sup>135</sup>

Paul was not a first-hand eyewitness to the events of the Gospels or the teachings of JESUS delivered before His death, burial, and resurrection! Scripture records that JESUS met Paul on the road to Damascus **after** He had risen from the grave, **after** He appeared to His Twelve Apostles, and **after** He ascended into heaven.

Therefore, “the twelve” actually did confirm to Paul what they personally saw and heard. And **after** Paul “received” their testimony, he recorded it in his epistle to the Corinthian Church. Therefore, Hebrews 2:3 is perfectly consistent with all that Scripture records about Paul.

But the second argument Luther made against Hebrews being an epistle of Paul, flowed out from his heretical quote, that translators render into English as: **“Be a sinner, and let your sins be strong, but let your trust in Christ be stronger, and rejoice in Christ who is the victor over sin, death, and the world. We will commit sins while we are here, for this life is not a place where justice resides. We, however, says Peter are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth where justice will reign. It suffices that through God's glory we have recognized the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. No sin can separate us from Him, even if we were to kill or commit adultery thousands of times each day.”**<sup>136</sup>

Any person who twists the epistles of Paul to the point that they write such a terrible thing, like the heresy Martin Luther wrote, will obviously have a problem with Hebrews chapter 10.

And we can say this confidently, because there it is written: **For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse**

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<sup>135</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:3-10a

<sup>136</sup> A Letter from Luther to Melancthon: Letter no. 99, 1 August 1521: From Wartburg Castle (<https://media.ctsfw.edu/Item/GetFullText/5560>)

**punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The LORD will judge His people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.<sup>137</sup>**

Since true repentance always requires agreeing with GOD’s law that sin is wrong and we need to turn away from all sin, anyone who keeps on willfully sinning has not repented. So, if they don’t repent, they will face the just judgment of GOD!

That is why, in one of his undisputed epistles, Paul wrote: **[GOD] “will render to each one according to his deeds”: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.<sup>138</sup>**

So, we can see: Romans and Hebrews are perfectly consistent in every way. But those who are deceived like Luther, will point to one more minor difference between the Epistle to the Hebrews and the rest of Paul’s epistles. And that minor difference comes down to the writing style and more formal composition of Hebrews compared to Paul’s other writings.

But this objection fails to note several key facts that the Scriptures clearly record. First, Paul often cowrote his epistles with others, he commonly employed scribal help from men like Tertius, and typically Paul only physically wrote the end or “salutation” of the epistle in his own hand, which is why there are sometimes two “amens” in the closing of Paul’s letters.

Second, most of Paul’s epistles were written to a very specific group of saints and they addressed some very specific problem or heresy Paul heard those saints were facing. But the Epistle to the Hebrews was written to demonstrate how the new and living way JESUS opened to the Father in the New Covenant was far better than the old Levitical way established in the Laws of the First Covenant.

Therefore, since the topic was much more broad and the audience was far less defined, in the case of Hebrews, the writing style and composition might easily appear different. As John’s Gospel is compositionally different compared to the Book of Revelation, and Moses’ book of Genesis is compositionally different compared to the Book of Leviticus, Paul’s Epistle to the Romans is compositionally different compared to his Epistle to the Hebrews.

Third, since this was the only letter Paul ever wrote exclusively to Hebraic, circumcised

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<sup>137</sup> Hebrews 10:26-31

<sup>138</sup> Romans 2:6-11

people who were well trained in the Law and the Prophets, logically it would not quite match Paul's other epistles that had to be composed in such a way as to be easily understandable to Gentile converts.

After all, it was most certainly Paul who wrote: **To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.**<sup>139</sup>

Truly, the amazing epistle we know by the shortened title: "Hebrews" stands out amongst all of the holy Scriptures as the best place to turn to understand exactly how the New Covenant and the First Covenant fit together perfectly. And only those who can fully harmonize the message of Hebrews with the rest of the Apostolic epistles are prepared to properly perceive the Scriptures; from the very first Hebrew word of Genesis, to the very last Greek word of Revelation.

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<sup>139</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:20-22

## Chapter 4: The MESSIAH and The Great Reformation

So far, in our study of the Apostle Paul, we have learned how Luke wrote about the **historical context** of Paul's life. Plus, we gleaned from the 4 Gospels important details about the **religious context** of his life, by comparing the denominations associated with (and competing against) *Judaism* in the first century.

Then we discovered that when we combined the **religious** and **historical** contexts recorded in the Bible, we could better understand the sect of *Judaism* Paul came from, called the *Pharisees*.

Truly, if Paul were a reformed *Sadducee*, *Samaritan*, or *Essene*, his epistles would have been written from a very different perspective! But, as a reformed *Pharisee*, his epistles make perfect sense to those who understand all that the Bible records about *Pharisees*.

Also, the rest of the Scriptures provide even more context to the epistles of Paul. After all, the Bible is clear: Paul was a disciple of JESUS, an Apostle of JESUS, and a preacher of the good news about JESUS.

Therefore: JESUS, Peter, John, James, Jude - along with all of the pre-Apostolic Scriptures JESUS and His disciples quoted so frequently from as authoritative - provide the necessary **doctrinal context** to the epistles of Paul.

Even Paul himself wrote: **If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.**<sup>140</sup>

So, Paul warned us to withdraw from anyone who does not agree with the teachings of JESUS our LORD, or any other Biblical teaching that exhorts us towards godliness. Therefore, Paul most certainly wanted his readers to remember the doctrinal context of JESUS and the rest of the Scriptures as they read his epistles!

Now, please imagine that someone studied the epistles of Paul, but ignored the **religious**, **historical**, and **doctrinal** contexts recorded in the Holy Scriptures regarding Paul. What if such a person were to read Paul's letters without recognizing the critically important Biblical framework those contexts create?

Can you see why Peter would call such a person: "**untaught**" and "**unstable**"? Yes, if anyone does not keep in mind all that the Scriptures had to say before and after Paul wrote his inspired epistles, including all that his fellow Apostolic writers wrote in their inspired epistles, the words: "**untaught**" and "**unstable**" would perfectly describe such a

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<sup>140</sup> 1 Timothy 6:3-5

person!

And, Paul would describe that person in the same way, because he plainly said those who don't consent to the words of our LORD and the doctrine that agrees with godliness are: "**proud**", they "**know nothing**", they are "**destitute of the truth**", and they have "**corrupt minds**".

The truth is: if someone ever tries to diminish, extinguish, discard, or contradict any one of the 66 books of the Holy Bible, they are demonstrating for all to see: They are one of the "**untaught and unstable**" people the Apostles Peter and Paul warned us about!

And since most false teachers typically try to twist the epistles of Paul to perform this diabolical feat, the best way to refute their abominable heresies is to turn to 2 Timothy chapter 3, and read to them the following passage.

Paul wrote to Timothy, his spiritual "**brother**" and metaphorical "**son**" in the faith: **You must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**<sup>141</sup>

Paul exhorted Timothy to continue in the things he had learned; things that were perfectly consistent with the "**Holy Scriptures**" Timothy knew from his childhood. And friends, the only "**Holy Scriptures**" Timothy could have *possibly* known from his childhood were the pre-Apostolic Scriptures found between Genesis and Malachi!

Yes, the 39 Books found before Matthew in our modern Bibles were all that existed from Timothy's childhood. And Paul clearly wrote that they were "**able to make**" Timothy "**wise for salvation through faith which is in CHRIST JESUS**".

Every clear declaration in Scripture that something is "**able**" or "**capable**" of benefitting us in some way is a form of *implied* conditional statement. In other words: while the pre-Apostolic Scriptures are "**able to make you wise for salvation**", they will not do so if you don't **know** and **pay attention** to them!

Therefore, if someone does not **know** or **pay attention** to the pre-Apostolic Scriptures, they reject the ability of GOD's Word to make them "**wise for salvation through faith in JESUS**"; and they essentially become "fools" when it comes to understanding that salvation.

And Paul proves that was his meaning, when he went on to say: "**All Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness**". In Paul's sentence, the word we translate into English as "**profitable**" is an adjective, and it describes the relationship "**All Scripture**" has to four very important nouns. So,

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<sup>141</sup> 2 Timothy 3:14-17

linguistically, we can accurately and honestly create simpler, shorter sentences to understand better what Paul told Timothy.

First, Paul was teaching: “**All Scripture is profitable for doctrine**”. Therefore, there is sound authoritative “**teaching**”<sup>142</sup> to be found in every single verse of every single book of the Holy Bible!

And if any interpretation of any part of the Bible contradicts the doctrine presented in another Book of the Bible, that interpretation must be in error. We know this is a fact, because Paul said: “**all Scripture**” (not “some”) is still “**profitable for doctrine**”.

This conclusion is confirmed by JESUS, Who said: “**It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’**”<sup>143</sup>

Likewise, Paul was teaching: “**All Scripture is profitable for reproof**”, or more literally: “**conviction of guilt**”. Therefore, we should read every single book of the Bible honestly searching for anything that may leave us feeling convicted, because that is one of the “**profitable**” uses of “**all**” of the “**Scripture(s)**”.

In fact, the Holy Scriptures are the sword of the HOLY SPIRIT<sup>144</sup>, and JESUS told us: “**When He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.**”<sup>145</sup>

So, very similarly, Paul was also teaching: “**All Scripture is profitable for correction**”. Therefore, we must search **all** of the Scriptures ready to accept GOD’s correction<sup>146</sup> that can lead us back more accurately to “**the Way of Righteousness**”<sup>147</sup> we are called to walk in.

Truth is a path that Scripture illuminates brightly<sup>148</sup>, therefore we are told: **My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor detest His correction; for whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights.**<sup>149</sup>

And this passage is a perfect way to transition to the last item Paul listed that “**All Scripture is profitable for**”, and that item is “**instruction**”. Now the reason Proverbs 3:11-12 is so applicable to both the third and fourth items Paul listed is: not only does it mention “**correction**”, it does so in the context of a father-son relationship.

You see, the noun Paul used in the declaration: “**All Scripture is profitable for instruction in righteousness**” that we translate as “**instruction**” is the Greek word: **pahee-di'-ah**. And this Greek word that means: “**the whole training and education of**

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<sup>142</sup> Doctrine = did-as-kal-ee'-ah (G1319) Definition:

<sup>143</sup> Matthew 4:4 (Deuteronomy 8:3)

<sup>144</sup> Ephesians 6:17, Hebrews 4:12

<sup>145</sup> John 16:8

<sup>146</sup> Correction = ep-an-or'-tho-sis (G1882) Definition: restoration to an upright or right state

<sup>147</sup> 2 Peter 2:21

<sup>148</sup> Psalms 119:105

<sup>149</sup> Proverbs 3:11-12

**children**” comes from the Greek word: **paheece**, that means: **“a child”**.

So, Paul’s final item in his list of what **“All Scripture”** is **“profitable for”** is based on the Greek root word for **“children”**, and it refers to the complete education and training of a child. And this is why our Savior clearly stated: **“My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.”**<sup>150</sup>

JESUS made it clear that we are part of His family only when we **“hear the Word of GOD and do it”**. And Paul made it clear that we must **“hear”** and learn from: **“All of the Scriptures”** as children who desire to seek the instruction of our Heavenly Father!

Then Paul made it clear that **“All of the Scriptures”** **“thoroughly equip”** the man (or woman) of GOD for **“every good work”**. Therefore, if someone ignores, dismisses, or sets aside any part of the Holy Scriptures as no longer **“profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction or instruction in righteousness”**, they are no longer **“thoroughly equipped”**!

You see, the Apostle Paul clearly taught **“All Scripture”** **“is profitable”**, **“able to make one wise for salvation”**, and **“thoroughly equipped for every good work”**.

Meanwhile, even though the protestant reformation recognized the wise principle **“Sola Scriptura”** that means **“Scripture Alone”**, it did not hold fast to the idea of **“Tota Scriptura”** that means **“All Scripture”**.

Men throughout church history, like Martin Luther, have wrongly elevated themselves into a place of **“higher criticism”**<sup>151</sup> where they wrongly judged certain books of the Bible **“uninspired”** or **“fallible”**. Plus, they have often wrongly concluded that somehow JESUS actually **did** come to destroy the Law and the Prophets<sup>152</sup>.

So tragically, one day we will hear JESUS say to many of those who follow after the traditions and doctrines of the reformers (while ignoring the doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness **“All Scripture”** is still **“profitable for”**): **“Have you not read?”**<sup>153</sup> and **“Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”**<sup>154</sup>

And, now we understand how **“the error of lawbreakers”**<sup>155</sup> typically revolves around accepting *parts* of the Bible while rejecting or ignoring other *parts* according to the doctrines and traditions of men.

So, we can understand why such **“lawbreakers”** would say such wickedly foolish things as: **“No sin can separate us from [JESUS], even if we were to kill or commit adultery thousands of times each day”**.

We reject such heresies, because we agree that every disciple of JESUS must rely on

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<sup>150</sup> Luke 8:21

<sup>151</sup> [https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Higher\\_criticism](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Higher_criticism)

<sup>152</sup> “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets.” Matthew 5:17a

<sup>153</sup> Matthew 12:3-5, Matthew 19:4, Matthew 22:29-32, Mark 12:24-27

<sup>154</sup> Matthew 7:23

<sup>155</sup> 2 Peter 3:17 (“wicked” = ath'-es-mos (G113) Definition: one who breaks through the restraint of law and gratifies his lusts)

**“All of the Scriptures, and the Scriptures alone”** for **“doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness”** and **“die to sin”** as Scripture teaches<sup>156</sup>. Therefore, we are ready to learn about the Messianic “reformation” Paul wrote about in his epistle to the Hebrews!

If you search out the word **“reformation”** in the following Bible translations, you will find only **one** single passage containing that word: The American Standard Version, the Amplified Bible, the Disciple’s Literal New Testament, the Evangelical Heritage Version, the English Standard Version, the Geneva Bible, the King James Version, the Modern English Version, the New American Standard Bible, the New King James Version, the World English Bible, and many more.

Now, the passage all of those English Bible translations will send you to as the only place to find the English word “reformation”, is Hebrews chapter 9, verse 10.

The word Paul used in that passage, that we translate into English as “reformation” is: **dee-or'-tho-sis**. And this Greek word means: **“in a physical sense, a making straight, restoring to its natural and normal condition something which in some way protrudes or has [become] out of line”**. Also, when it is used in the context of **“of acts and institutions”** it means: **“reformation”**.

You see, the compound Greek word **dee-or'-tho-sis** is formed by combining the Greek word **dee-ah'** that means **“through”** with the Greek word **or-thos'** that means **“straight”**, or **“upright”**. And the word **“reformation”** is a good translation of **“dee-or'-tho-sis”**, because the English prefix **“re”** means **“to do over again”**, while the English word **“formation”** means: **“the act of giving form or shape to something”**.

For example, in the protestant reformation, the Roman Catholic church had twisted the definition of what it meant to follow CHRIST to include: paying for your own sins through penance, purchasing the “right” to sin through indulgences, and many other such abominations.

So, men like Martin Luther attempted to **“straighten”** or **“reform”** the definition of what it meant to follow JESUS to match their understanding of what they felt the Scriptures taught.

Sadly, as we have demonstrated, Martin Luther’s understanding of what the Scriptures taught was *deeply* flawed, but he did reform *some* of the crooked practices of the Roman Catholic church.

On the other hand, the great “reformation” Paul wrote about in Hebrews chapter 9, was a perfect **“straightening”** of all that men like the Pharisees and the Sadducees had made crooked. Plus, JESUS reshaped and reformed the way we approach GOD through Him. The first reform JESUS accomplished was a **doctrinal** reform. So, in the recorded

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<sup>156</sup> Romans 6

teachings of JESUS our Shepherd we see how the scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees had twisted the Scriptures to the point that JESUS could not agree with any of those groups.<sup>157</sup>.

And while JESUS **rebuked** those religious leaders for their many errors, He also **taught** us the true and right way to interpret and understand the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings<sup>158</sup>.

Brothers and Sisters, JESUS demonstrated He is the greatest doctrinal reformer in all of History when He said: **“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. “If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. “And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.”**<sup>159</sup>

Since JESUS is the Judge<sup>160</sup> who will determine who is guilty of adultery and who repented and walked in His righteous ways, passages like the ones we find in the sermon on the Mount, or the judgments of Revelation chapters 2 and 3, are very, very valuable to understanding how the judgment will unfold!

Likewise, passages like these are very, very valuable for all of the LORD’s true disciples to discern how they should feel about sin<sup>161</sup>.

Instead of allowing satan to deceive us into believing: **“No sin can separate us from [JESUS], even if we were to kill or commit adultery thousands of times each day”**; the true disciple of JESUS knows: it would be better to lose a body part than to continue in the sin of adultery and end up in hell for eternity!

However, even as JESUS filled the Law to the full and restored the correct reading of His Commandments, He simultaneously had to correct certain things the Pharisees had elevated to a more important position than He ever meant for them to occupy.

We see JESUS correcting the way His people understood the Levitical purification and food laws in Mark’s Gospel, where JESUS said: **“Hear Me, everyone, and understand: “There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!”**<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Matthew 16:11-12

<sup>158</sup> Matthew 22:37-40

<sup>159</sup> Matthew 5:27-30

<sup>160</sup> 2 Timothy 4:1, Romans 2:16

<sup>161</sup> Matthew 18:8-9

<sup>162</sup> Mark 7:14-16

Then, Mark recorded how His disciples responded to those plain words, saying: **When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. So He said to them, “Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, “because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?” And He said, “What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, “thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. “All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”**<sup>163</sup>

While His disciples did not yet understand, JESUS was trying to teach them two very important things. First: true defilement occurs in the **heart** not the stomach.

And second: The food laws of Leviticus chapter 11 were issued along with the laws of ritual purity found in chapters 12-15, because Nadab and Abihu had just died in chapter 10 of Leviticus for defiling His Tabernacle.

Thus, after mentioning their death in chapter 10 of Leviticus, and after presenting the foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances associated with His earthly Tabernacle, the LORD said: **“Thus you shall separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness when they defile My tabernacle that is among them.”**<sup>164</sup>

JESUS knew that those laws concerning only foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances were given to teach them how deadly serious it was that His holiness **physically** dwelled in the midst of their camp, in the Tabernacle. Therefore, those laws were given as a **temporary** method of **ritual** cleansing to protect them from defiling His Tabernacle, while they waited for a far better method of cleansing!

Also, the LORD’s description in Mark regarding how our bodies process foods makes perfect sense, because: the method of cleansing prescribed for coming into contact with anything listed as “unclean” was very, very simple. It was described by the LORD with these words: **“These are unclean to you among all that creep. Whoever touches them when they are dead shall be unclean until evening.”**<sup>165</sup>

Over and over in chapter 11, the method of cleansing given to purify anyone who came into contact with the corpse of an unclean animal was to wait **“until evening”**. And if the corpse touched their clothing, they were to wash with water and be **“unclean until evening”**.

So, when we combine the actual words of Leviticus with the words of our LORD in Mark, we see: even **if** they ate those foods listed as unclean, it would pass through their

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<sup>163</sup> Mark 7:17-23

<sup>164</sup> Leviticus 15:31

<sup>165</sup> Leviticus 11:31

system, and they would only be “**unclean until evening**”. And the teachings of JESUS regarding food were actually preparing the way for **the second phase** of His great reformation.

We know this because, after JESUS fulfilled His role as the greatest doctrinal Reformer ever, at the cross our LORD reformed the **religion** of Judaism! Through His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension JESUS became the perfect Sacrifice **and** the perfect High Priest, who serves in a perfect Tabernacle in the Heavens, where He is seated on the Throne surrounded by perfected saints, and all of His holy Angels!

And the amazing Epistle to the Hebrews, along with the rest of the Apostolic Scriptures, carefully documents the amazing **religious** reformation JESUS accomplished through His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension.

Now when we use the English word “**religion**” these days, many people have been wrongly taught that **religion** is somehow bad, or unrelated to the Christian faith. But this is not true.

The fact is, the word “**religion**” is accurately used to translate some of the Greek words used in the Apostolic Scriptures. For example, in Acts, it is written: “**They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.**”<sup>166</sup>

And in James, it is written: **If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.**<sup>167</sup>

The Greek word being translated into English as “**religion**” in those passages is: **thrace-ki'-ah**, and it means: “**religious worship, especially external, that which consists of ceremonies**”.

You see, prior to JESUS reforming the “**religion**” of Judaism, religious leaders such as the Pharisees taught that “**pure and undefiled religion**” consisted of things like “**foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances**”<sup>168</sup> like circumcision.

Therefore, Luke recorded: **A certain Pharisee asked [JESUS] to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat. When the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner. Then the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. “Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? “But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you.”**<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Acts 26:5

<sup>167</sup> James 1:26-27

<sup>168</sup> Hebrews 9:10

<sup>169</sup> Luke 11:37-41

Can you see the basis of why James later paired the words “**pure and undefiled**” (words once associated with ritual cleanliness) with the idea of serving people like widows and orphans? Clearly, in the SPIRIT, James derived that teaching from the words of JESUS that associated “**cleanliness**” with acts of sacrificial charity!

So, it was actually a recognition of *the reformation of the cross* when James wrote about “**pure and undefiled religion**” no longer involving abstaining from certain foods, the “**washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches**”<sup>170</sup>, or being physically circumcised.

Likewise, it was a recognition of *the reformation of the cross* when GOD sent Peter the sheet vision of Acts chapter 10<sup>171</sup>, and commanded Peter to “**rise, kill, and eat**”!

We can see that Peter did not understand the reformation of the cross yet, when He replied to the heavenly command: “**Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.**”<sup>172</sup>

And Peter still did not understand when the Heavenly voice replied: “**What God has cleansed you must not call common.**”<sup>173</sup>

Now, we know Peter did not understand yet, because Scripture records: **Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon’s house, and stood before the gate.**<sup>174</sup>

And, because Peter did not fully understand all of the implications of the vision yet, the HOLY SPIRIT told Peter: “**Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them.**”<sup>175</sup>

So, Peter obediently went to the home of Cornelius and preached the gospel to him. Then, while Peter was still speaking: “**the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.**”<sup>176</sup>

Luke records that “**those of the circumcision were astonished**” when the uncircumcised, ritually impure Gentiles received the HOLY SPIRIT! And for the first time, they understood how JESUS reformed their religion!

Now, word of the mighty reformation of the cross had to spread from one person to another, so Luke records how the good news spread in Acts chapter 11. **When Peter**

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<sup>170</sup> Mark 7:3-4

<sup>171</sup> Acts 10:9-12

<sup>172</sup> Acts 10:14

<sup>173</sup> Acts 10:15

<sup>174</sup> Acts 10:17

<sup>175</sup> Acts 10:19-20

<sup>176</sup> Acts 10:44-45

came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, saying, **“You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!”**<sup>177</sup>

Here, in the contention raised by these men of the circumcision, we can see the two biggest effects of the reformation of the cross. First, ***circumcision*** was no longer required. And second, the **foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances**<sup>178</sup> of Leviticus 11-15 were no longer required for purification.

And to prove this, Peter explained: **“I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object descending like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came to me. “When I observed it intently and considered, I saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. “And I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’”**<sup>179</sup>

Then Peter added: **“But I said, ‘Not so, Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth.’ “But the voice answered me again from heaven, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common.’ “Now this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven. “At that very moment, three men stood before the house where I was, having been sent to me from Caesarea. “Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house.”**<sup>180</sup>

And finally, Peter recounted: **“And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. “Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, ‘John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ “If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?”**<sup>181</sup>

Then, in Acts 15, the whole Church debated if the Gentile disciples of JESUS had to be circumcised and keep the laws that were **“concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation”**<sup>182</sup>.

But after much debate, Peter referred back to the events of Acts chapter 10, and summarized: **“God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, “and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. “Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? “But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be**

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<sup>177</sup> Acts 11:2-3

<sup>178</sup> Hebrews 9:10

<sup>179</sup> Acts 11:5-7

<sup>180</sup> Acts 11:8-12

<sup>181</sup> Acts 11:15-17

<sup>182</sup> Hebrews 9:10

**saved in the same manner as they.”<sup>183</sup>**

Then the whole Church understood the glorious reformation of the cross, and they sent a letter to the Gentile disciples declaring they did not need to concern themselves with foods and drinks, various washings, or fleshly ordinances to be ritually pure. They only had to keep themselves from blood, things strangled, things offered to idols, and sexual immorality to remain physically pure.<sup>184</sup>

Truly, the Scriptures declare: in the New Covenant “**purification**” through the Levitical law is no longer required, because those who have repented of their sins and put their faith in JESUS have put off the body of the flesh, and they are new creations in CHRIST!

Therefore, this is why Paul wrote: **And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased.**<sup>185</sup>

Friends, “**the offense of the cross**” is found in the fact that it completely reformed the Levitical system that relied on fleshly commandments to purify people outwardly! But, through the cross we are purified both inside and outside, to the point that we can actually enter the Holy of Holies and be at one with GOD!

Yes, Paul explains about the veil torn when JESUS gave up His Spirit on the cross: **The Holy Spirit [was] indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing.**<sup>186</sup>

You see, in Leviticus chapter 16, the veil before the Holy of Holies was shut, and even the Levitical high priest could only enter just once a year, on the day of Atonement, only for a short time to ritually cleanse the sanctuary.

But, when JESUS tore that veil, He declared the way into GOD’s presence was now open! And through His precious blood, we could all be fully cleansed enough to finally approach the throne of Grace!

This is the main message of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the context behind Paul most misunderstood writings! Therefore, when **we** understand that wonderful message, we can correctly understand all of the Scriptures: from the very first Hebrew word of Genesis, to the very last Greek word of Revelation!

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<sup>183</sup> Acts 15:8-11

<sup>184</sup> Acts 15:23-29

<sup>185</sup> Galatians 5:11

<sup>186</sup> Hebrews 9:8

## Chapter 5: The MESSIAH and Paul's Reformed Religion

The English noun “**metaphor**” comes from a compound Greek word made up of two separate words. The first word is the preposition **met-ah'**, which means: “**with**”, “**amid**”, “**among**”, or sometimes “**after**”. And the second word is the verb “**fer'-o**”, which means “**to carry**”. So linguistically, the word “**metaphor**” refers to conceptually placing two things side by side to learn something about one of the items through the features of the other.

Correspondingly, the English noun “**parable**” comes from the compound Greek noun **par-ab-ol-ay'**, which comes from combining the Greek preposition “**par-ah**” (that means “**by**” or “**near**”) with the Greek verb “**bal'-lo**” (that means “**to throw**”).

So, even while the term **parable** is commonly applied to narrative stories, that fact is: those stories are filled with **metaphors** because both words refer to placing a familiar item next to a parallel but unfamiliar item, to reveal something about the unfamiliar item. Therefore, as teaching tools, metaphors and parables can make difficult-to-understand ideas or concepts much more accessible for everyone.

And we need to understand this because our LORD is **very** fond of metaphors and parables! Yes, He **frequently** uses common ordinary items from our everyday lives to teach us deeper truths about spiritual things, eternity, and our relationship with Him.

For example, JESUS said: “**I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.**”<sup>187</sup>

Just as **light** illuminates, helps people see, defeats the darkness, and brings life to the earth (through processes like photosynthesis), **JESUS** illuminates, helps people see, defeats the darkness, and brings life to all who come to Him!

And in another place, JESUS taught: “**A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. “Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. “And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. “But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold.” When He had said these things He cried, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”**”<sup>188</sup>

Then, to His disciples, he explained: “**Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. “Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.**”<sup>189</sup>

“**But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with**

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<sup>187</sup> John 8:12

<sup>188</sup> Luke 8:5-8

<sup>189</sup> Luke 8:11-12

joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.<sup>190</sup>

“Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.<sup>191</sup>

“But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.”<sup>192</sup>

Just as seeds contain the genetic information that brings a fruit-bearing plant to life when they are received into healthy soil, the Word of GOD contains the necessary information to bring spiritual life, when it is received into a noble and good heart.

So, JESUS ‘placed’ seeds ‘alongside’ the Word of GOD to teach us deeper truths about the Bible. He taught about four types of soil to teach us about four types of people, who each interact with His Word in different ways. And He compared the good ground to a person with a good heart; and revealed the good heart will be characterized by good fruit (a metaphor for persistent obedience to GOD’s Word).

Likewise, JESUS used several metaphors<sup>193</sup> when He said: **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. “Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. “Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”**<sup>194</sup>

Here JESUS compared the Scribes and the Pharisees to cups with clean **exteriors** and dirty **interiors**. The dirty interior is metaphorically connected to the extortion and self-indulgence they harbored on the **inside**. And we will learn later, what JESUS was metaphorically saying when He said they only cleaned the **outside** of the cup and dish.

But before we learn about the parallel item in **that** important metaphor, we should also note: JESUS compared the Scribes and the Pharisees to freshly painted tombs that looked good on the **outside**, but **inside** they were filled with dead men’s bones and every other type of uncleanness. And those unclean contents metaphorically represented the hypocrisy and lawlessness that JESUS knew was **in the hearts** of the Scribes and the Pharisees.

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<sup>190</sup> Luke 8:13

<sup>191</sup> Luke 8:14

<sup>192</sup> Luke 8:15

<sup>193</sup> According to modern terminology, the use of words such as “like” or “as” technically makes the comparisons JESUS makes here “simile”; which comes from the Latin word “similis” which means alike or similar. However similes are essentially metaphors that include words such as “like” or “as”.

<sup>194</sup> Matthew 23:25-28

Clearly, those passages and many more reveal that JESUS wants His people to be clean on the *inside*, in their hearts! So, JESUS taught: **“Hear Me, everyone, and understand: There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!”**<sup>195</sup>

Now, here we should also note: not all of the metaphors presented to us by our LORD to teach us important truths were *spoken* by Him as teachings and recorded in the Gospels. No, some of the metaphorical teachings of our LORD are found within His Commandments and Laws. And, one such case of a metaphor hidden within a command, is recorded in Matthew.

Matthew’s gospel records that JESUS said: **“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.”**<sup>196</sup>

Now, you might be wondering: “What part of ‘the great commission’ is metaphorical?” And we would have to answer that question by turning to Romans chapter 6.

In that chapter of Romans, Paul wrote: **What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.**<sup>197</sup>

Yes, baptism is a *metaphorical* representation of us being buried with JESUS. But what normally has to happen before someone is buried? If you said they have to die first, you are correct! Truly, people are typically only ever buried *after* they have died.

Therefore, Paul writes: **The death that [JESUS] died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.**<sup>198</sup>

Truly, “**death to sin**” is a metaphor for repentance, and baptism is a metaphorical declaration that we have “**died to sin**”! Therefore, during baptism, our metaphorical “**old man**” is buried with JESUS so we can rise from the water completely “**born again**”! And our metaphorical “**new man**” is then “**dead to sin**”, yet “**alive to GOD**” inside bodies that

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<sup>195</sup> Mark 7:14-16

<sup>196</sup> Matthew 28:19-20a

<sup>197</sup> Romans 6:1-4

<sup>198</sup> Romans 6:10-13

are now rededicated to righteousness!

Obviously, Scripture is filled with amazing metaphorical connections between the physical world and the spiritual world. And these metaphorical insights are all given to teach us: how to live in victory over sin, the flesh, and the devil, and ultimately inherit the Kingdom of GOD!

For instance, at Passover: we eat the unleavened bread and remember that it metaphorically represents the body of JESUS pierced for our transgressions, and broken for our iniquities.

Also, at Passover: we drink the fruit of the vine and remember that it metaphorically represents the blood of JESUS shed to wash away our sins and make us white as snow.

Then, during the week of Unleavened Bread: as we remove all leaven from our homes and fast from all leaven in our food, we remember that the missing leaven metaphorically represents sin. And because we have “died to sin”, it is no longer welcome in our bodies, our lives, or our homes.

Then at Firstfruits<sup>199</sup>: as we offer up the firstfruits of our spring harvest to the LORD, we remember that if we live out the metaphor of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and “die to sin”, we will inherit the eternal life JESUS, the metaphorical Firstfruits<sup>200</sup> of the resurrection, received when He rose from the grave!<sup>201</sup>

Then, at Pentecost: as we eat from the two loaves and commemorate the coming of the HOLY SPIRIT: we remember the metaphorical connection between the two tablets containing GOD’s commandments and those loaves, we remember the SPIRIT has metaphorically written His law on our hearts and minds, and we remember that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of our GOD!

Then, at Trumpets: as we sound our earthly trumpets and remember the sounds of the heavenly trumpets that announced the descent of the LORD to Mount Sinai, we look forward to the sounding of the heavenly trumpets once again announcing the final descent of JESUS our King!

Then, at Atonement: as we fast and seek the LORD’s face in the *heavenly* Holy of Holies, we remember how the priest entered the *earthly* holy of holies once a year, on that same day, to cleanse the Tabernacle so GOD could metaphorically be “**at one**” with His people.

And, at Tabernacles: as we live in tents for a week, rejoice before the LORD, and remember the journey of the Israelites through the wilderness; we also remember: our bodies are metaphorically like tents that we will one day trade in for new glorified

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<sup>199</sup> Day 1 in the count to 50 that always falls on the day after the Sabbath that follows the 15<sup>th</sup> of Abib

<sup>200</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:20

<sup>201</sup> Romans 6:5

permanent homes, this world is metaphorically like the wilderness we are just passing through, and one day we will Tabernacle forever with our LORD in His glorious Kingdom!

Additionally, since Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles all have deep connections with the Exodus, as we celebrate those holy festivals, we remember that we are on a metaphorically similar journey through the “wilderness” of this present world. And one day, if we faithfully follow the leading of the HOLY SPIRIT as they followed the pillar of cloud and fire, we will reach the true Promised Land and “cross over the Jordan” into the Kingdom of GOD!

Truly, the First Covenant and the New Covenant fit together like a hand and a glove, and those who discard either one can never properly understand the other! But, while many metaphorical items transferred seamlessly from the First Covenant to the New Covenant, a select few did not.

For example, even though physical circumcision was clearly a mandatory requirement in the First Covenant, the HOLY SPIRIT demonstrated (in an equally ‘clear’ way) physical circumcision is *not* a requirement in the New Covenant.

In Acts 14 and 15, Luke recorded the following about Paul and Barnabas: **They sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed. Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. So they stayed there a long time with the disciples.**<sup>202</sup>

Then, Luke explained: **Certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”**<sup>203</sup>

**Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.**<sup>204</sup>

Luke reported that Paul and Barnabas were located in the city of Antioch (in Syria) when certain men from Judea (the province where Jerusalem is located) came to visit and teach. Now, the debate in Antioch (a debate that began with the teaching of those men) and their subsequent visit to Jerusalem, took place in approximately 49 AD. Therefore, 19 years after JESUS ascended into Heaven, mandatory physical circumcision was still being vigorously debated in the Church.

And we can understand why many took that fleshly ordinance so seriously when we read how the LORD said to Moses: **“When a [proselyte]<sup>205</sup> dwells with you and wants to**

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<sup>202</sup> Acts 14:26-28

<sup>203</sup> Acts 15:1

<sup>204</sup> Acts 15:2

<sup>205</sup> Septuagint: pros-ay'-loo-tos: a proselyte, one who has come over from a Gentile religion to Judaism

**keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it. One law shall be for the native-born and for the [proselyte] who dwells among you.”<sup>206</sup>**

Since JESUS our LORD was sacrificed as our Passover Lamb<sup>207</sup>, and it is during the Passover meal that the Church eats the unleavened bread while remembering His body, and drinks the fruit of the vine while remembering His blood, it would seem logical to conclude that physical circumcision was a requirement for every Gentile convert.

But Paul and Barnabas recognized that the HOLY SPIRIT was indicating something new! And this was due to the fact that Paul and Barnabas witnessed the HOLY SPIRIT work miracles among, and fall upon, many uncircumcised Gentile converts!

Luke recorded: **All the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.**<sup>208</sup>

Likewise, Paul also wrote to the Gentile converts: **Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?**<sup>209</sup>

Yes, because the uncircumcised Gentiles who repented and believed on JESUS to be saved received the HOLY SPIRIT just as Cornelius did in Acts chapter 10, later in Acts chapter 15, Paul and Barnabas argued with the men from Judea who came to Antioch and said: **“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”**

And for the same reason, in Acts 11 Peter argued with certain men from Jerusalem who: **contended with him, saying, “You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!”**<sup>210</sup>

Technically, those who demanded the Gentiles be circumcised had the stronger Biblical argument *at that moment in time*, but there was still much more Scripture to be written! And Paul, Barnabas, and Peter knew first-hand how the HOLY SPIRIT put His seal of approval on many uncircumcised Gentiles who simply repented and believed the Gospel!

This is why Paul asked the Galatian believers who were being told by false teachers that

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<sup>206</sup> Exodus 12:48-49

<sup>207</sup> 1 Corinthians 5:7, John 1:29, John 19:14-16

<sup>208</sup> Acts 15:12

<sup>209</sup> Galatians 3:2-5

<sup>210</sup> Acts 11:2-3

they still had to be physically circumcised: **This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?**<sup>211</sup>

Like Cornelius, they had already received the HOLY SPIRIT by “the hearing of faith”! But certain false teachers were telling them things like: **“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”**<sup>212</sup>

And we can tell that Paul used the phrase “the works of the Law” to refer to things like physical circumcision, because he also wrote to them: **Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.**<sup>213</sup>

Likewise, we can tell the phrase “the works of the Law” refers to external religious customs such as physical circumcision, because Paul also wrote: **Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.**<sup>214</sup>

And in the same context of “the works of the Law” contrasted with “the hearing of faith” Paul wrote: **For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.**<sup>215</sup>

**Brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased.**<sup>216</sup>

**As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.**<sup>217</sup>

**For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.**<sup>218</sup>

And: **For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.**<sup>219</sup>

All of these passages from Paul’s epistle to the Galatians that speak about physical circumcision must form the foundation of our understanding of what Paul meant by: “**the works of the Law**”!

And when we combine the 34 mentions of circumcision in Paul’s epistles with Luke’s 10 mentions of circumcision in Acts, and remember the circumcision debates of Acts 11 and Acts 15, we can understand the **historical** and **doctrinal** context surrounding the **religious** reformation Paul preached.

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<sup>211</sup> Galatians 3:2

<sup>212</sup> Acts 15:1

<sup>213</sup> Galatians 5:2

<sup>214</sup> Galatians 2:3

<sup>215</sup> Galatians 5:6

<sup>216</sup> Galatians 5:11

<sup>217</sup> Galatians 6:12

<sup>218</sup> Galatians 6:13

<sup>219</sup> Galatians 6:15

Now, when we hear the English word “**religion**” we must remember to think of that word as Paul thought of the Greek word “**thrace-ki'-ah**”. And this Greek word, which means: “**religious worship, especially external [items] that consist of ceremonies**” is most certainly related to the practice of physical circumcision.

That is why the same Apostle who said: “...**according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee**”<sup>220</sup>, later wrote: **Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.**<sup>221</sup>

Before Paul’s *religion* was reformed by JESUS, his confidence rested on fleshly, external, and ceremonial items like: circumcision, genetics, ritual washings, and avoiding certain foods.

And this was what JESUS meant when He said the Pharisees were like dirty cups washed only on the outside or freshly painted tombs! The Scribes and the Pharisees focused exclusively on the outward *metaphorical rituals* GOD gave them to teach them to be pure and clean on the inside. And because they lost sight of the deeper meaning of certain religious customs such as circumcision, JESUS said they cleaned only their outsides, while their insides were still filthy!

But after Paul’s religion was reformed by JESUS, Paul set aside those external, fleshly, ceremonial attempts at righteousness; and put his faith in JESUS to provide him with a far better righteousness, that cleansed him *both inside and out!*

You see, after watching the HOLY SPIRIT fall on countless Gentiles who had done none of the things Paul once *thought* made him righteous before GOD, Paul understood: circumcision was one of the *metaphorical* religious customs of the First Covenant that the HOLY SPIRIT set aside when the New Covenant was instituted.

Therefore, Paul wrote: **For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.**<sup>222</sup>

In this passage, Paul taught that physical circumcision metaphorically represented a *spiritual* circumcision of the heart. Therefore, in the New Covenant, what really matters

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<sup>220</sup> Acts 26:5

<sup>221</sup> Philippians 3:2-7

<sup>222</sup> Romans 2:28-29

to GOD is a person's *inward* circumcision, not the *outward* physical sign!

And this shift in focus **towards** inward purification and **away from** the old Levitical rituals of purification that focused on *outward* things like “**foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation**”<sup>223</sup> characterizes the religious reformation JESUS instituted!

So, just one chapter after Paul explained *inward* circumcision was what really mattered, Paul explained: **Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.**<sup>224</sup>

Likewise, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul wrote: **As the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches. Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.**<sup>225</sup>

There are many false teachers these days who try to conflate (or permanently connect) circumcision with the keeping of GOD's commandments. And they claim that when the Apostles taught the Gentiles did **not** have to be physically circumcised, they were also teaching that the Gentiles did **not** have to keep the commandments of GOD. But this heretical lie is the exact opposite of what Paul really taught!

Paul taught that the **outward** sign of circumcision was no longer a requirement in the New Covenant. But he simultaneously taught that sincere obedience to GOD, and the sanctification that obedience fostered, still mattered.

In fact, in Romans Paul clearly taught that circumcision was a “**sign**” (or “**mark**” or “**token**”) of righteousness; not a means of being righteous.

There, he wrote: **“Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin.” Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while**

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<sup>223</sup> Hebrews 9:10

<sup>224</sup> Romans 3:29-30

<sup>225</sup> 1 Corinthians 7:17b-19

**still uncircumcised.**<sup>226</sup>

Truly, Abraham is called “**the father**” of all who walk in the steps of faith Abraham demonstrated by his actions. So, Abraham is “**the father**” of all who faithfully follow the MESSIAH, both the circumcised **and the uncircumcised**.

Therefore, Paul pointed out in his epistle to the saints in Rome that Abraham was declared righteous **before** he was circumcised, not **after**. Plus, Paul explained, physical circumcision was a metaphorical “**sign**” or “**seal**” of the righteousness Abraham **already** had by faith.

But what was the metaphorical meaning of physical circumcision you might ask? Well, much like how baptism symbolizes dying completely to the lusts of the flesh so we can truly love GOD with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength; circumcision symbolized putting off the lusts of the flesh for the same reason!

This is why Moses prophesied: “**The LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.**”<sup>227</sup>

But, in the New Covenant, the religious custom of circumcision that indicated a **partial** separation from the flesh was replaced by baptism. And Baptism represents an **all-encompassing** separation from the flesh!

Therefore, Paul wrote to the saints in Colossi: **In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.**<sup>228</sup>

The sign of circumcision given to Abraham and Moses was the sign of the First Covenant, but baptism is the sign of the New Covenant in CHRIST! And the circumcision of CHRIST, in which we die to the flesh, is the circumcision of the heart Moses prophesied about!

But, unlike physical circumcision that took place just after **physical** birth, the circumcision of CHRIST that occurs at baptism occurs after our **spiritual** birth, when we are “**born again**”!

Yes, since we must be old enough to choose to **die to sin** in true repentance before we can be symbolically buried; baptism is no longer a religious custom meant for infants! Instead, only those who can understand that they are dying to sin and being metaphorically buried with JESUS should be baptized in the New Covenant!

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<sup>226</sup> Romans 4:8-12

<sup>227</sup> Deuteronomy 30:6

<sup>228</sup> Colossians 2:11-13

But, can you see how the Acts 15 debate over the necessity of physical circumcision was frequently the subject of Paul's epistles? We see it in Romans. We see it in Galatians. We see it in Philippians. We see it in Colossians. We see it in Titus. And we see it in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians.

The debate that was settled in Acts 15 plagued Paul throughout his life. And this was because many Jews refused to accept the testimony of the HOLY SPIRIT and the letter of the Apostles and Elders of Jerusalem.

So, after the Jerusalem letter was distributed, Paul battled against those Jews who continued teaching the Gentiles that they *must* be physically circumcised. He called them “**dogs**”, “**evil workers**”, and “**the mutilation**”<sup>229</sup> in Philippians. He wished they would “**cut themselves off**”<sup>230</sup> in Galatians. And he warned Titus: **There are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped...**<sup>231</sup>

Plus, in his epistle to the Galatians, Paul made it clear that physical circumcision could actually lead a person away from JESUS, if they were physically circumcised for spiritual reasons.

About this, Paul wrote to the Galatians: **Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.**<sup>232</sup>

Once we realize how circumcision was the sign of the First Covenant, but baptism is the sign of the New Covenant in CHRIST, we can understand why Paul would have been so opposed to people turning back to the religious rituals of the First Covenant that could *never* actually make any one righteous!

So, as a reformed Pharisee, who once was only concerned with washing the outside of the cup and dish while the inside was full of blasphemy, malice, and pride, Paul did not want anyone to confuse the saints and mislead them back to the errors he once practiced.

And when we understand the religious reformation behind the transition from circumcision to baptism, we are far more likely to properly understand the Scriptures; from the very first Hebrew word of Genesis, to the very last Greek word of Revelation.

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<sup>229</sup> Philippians 3:2-3

<sup>230</sup> Galatians 5:11-12

<sup>231</sup> Titus 1:10-11

<sup>232</sup> Galatians 5:2

## Chapter 6: The MESSIAH and The Levitical Law

The English word **carnal** that appears in certain English translations of the Bible comes from the Latin word **carnalis**, which means: "**fleshly**" or "**of the flesh**". And very often, when we hear the term "**carnal**" employed, it is being used in the context of "**fleshly lusts**"; like the bodily passions Peter cautions us against, by writing: **Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.**<sup>233</sup>

Therefore, in several English Bible translations -for instance: the Lamsa Bible, The Douay-Rheims Bible, the Godbey New Testament, The Haweis New Testament, and the Worsley New Testament- the Greek word translated as "**fleshly**" in many English translations is actually translated "**carnal**" in Peter's warning.<sup>234</sup>

Similarly, A.W. Pink used the word "**carnal**" in this way when he accurately observed: **"The nature of Christ's salvation is woefully misrepresented by the present-day evangelist. He announces a Savior from hell rather than a Savior from sin. And that is why so many are fatally deceived, for there are multitudes who wish to escape the Lake of fire who have no desire to be delivered from their carnality and worldliness."**

So, because the most common way to use the word "**carnal**" is to refer to "**fleshly desires**", the Cambridge Dictionary defines the word "**carnal**" as: "**relating to the physical feelings and wants of the body**".<sup>235</sup>

Likewise, the Meriam Webster Dictionary defines the word "**carnal**" as: "**relating to or given to crude bodily pleasures and appetites**".<sup>236</sup>

But in some passages of the Bible, the words "**carnal**" or "**fleshly**" are not used to describe sinful "**lusts**" or "**desires**". Instead, in those passages, the words "**carnal**" or "**fleshly**" are used to describe a certain way of thinking.

In Romans chapter 8 Paul wrote: **What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.**<sup>237</sup>

But more literally and consistently translated, the same passage records: **What the law**

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<sup>233</sup> 1 Peter 2:11

<sup>234</sup> [https://www.biblehub.com/parallel/1\\_peter/2-11.htm](https://www.biblehub.com/parallel/1_peter/2-11.htm)

<sup>235</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/carnal>

<sup>236</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/carnal>

<sup>237</sup> Romans 8:3-8

**was powerless to accomplish, in that it was weakened by the flesh, God accomplished by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and because of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law would be filled to the full in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their thinking on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the thinking of the flesh is death, but the thinking of the Spirit is life and peace. Because the thinking of the flesh is hostile to God; for it does not submit to the law of God, for it does not have the power. So then, those who are in the flesh do not have the power to please God.**

Obviously, throughout the passage Paul contrasts the flesh and the SPIRIT, to reveal that the flesh does not have the **power** to submit to the law of GOD, but the SPIRIT gives us that **power** when we set our minds on the things of the SPIRIT! And, in different forms, Paul used the Greek word for “**power**” 3 separate times in the passage; because it was the overarching theme of Paul’s teaching.

Paul was explaining: because of the powerlessness (or weakness) of the **flesh**, the Law is powerless to save us from our sins. But JESUS came in the flesh, to condemn sin, and open the way for us to die to the flesh and its *powerless* thinking, and live in the law-fulfilling power of the **SPIRIT!**

And, although Paul did not mention it in this particular passage, Paul plainly taught that we can only receive the SPIRIT after we have been justified by faith in JESUS.

For example, in Galatians Paul wrote: **Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.**<sup>238</sup>

The Law contains a curse for all those who refuse to keep it<sup>239</sup>, but JESUS saved us from that curse, by bearing a curse written in the Law in our place<sup>240</sup>. And all those who put their faith in JESUS to be delivered from the curse written in the Law, receive the promised HOLY SPIRIT, and partake in the blessing of Abraham.

Yes, the cross of JESUS makes it possible for all those who repent and put their faith in Him to be purified of their sins, and filled with the HOLY SPIRIT. And the HOLY SPIRIT makes it possible for us to follow JESUS in obedience to the Law of GOD.

Like people stranded in a tumultuous sea of sin, who shipwrecked our boats when we each chose to sin against GOD; we were floating hopelessly in the water, doomed to eventually die and sink into the depths of hell.

Meanwhile, JESUS was born in a boat just like ours, but He kept his vessel intact by

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<sup>238</sup> Galatians 3:13-14

<sup>239</sup> Deuteronomy 11:26-28

<sup>240</sup> And if there be sin in anyone, and the judgment of death be upon him, and he be put to death, and you hang him on a tree; his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but you shall by all means bury it in that day; for everyone that is hanged on a tree is cursed of God; and you shall by no means defile the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance. Deuteronomy 21:22-23 CAB

never sinning, though He was tested in every way.

And JESUS has a ship big enough for everyone to be rescued, plus he can walk on water! So, He endlessly navigates the seas, calling out to the drowning sinners: “repent”! And, for all those who hear His voice and respond in true repentance: He plucks them from the murky waters of sin, He fills them with the life-giving breath of His Spirit, and He instructs them to remain onboard His ship, a vessel that represents righteousness.

So, those who listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd and allow Him to rescue them, set their thinking on the things of the SPIRIT and walk in His guidance. Therefore, they are **empowered** to fulfill the righteous requirement of the law.

But those who refuse His salvation and set their thinking on the things of the flesh, are those who are still in the vast sea of sin, **powerless** to fulfill the righteous requirements of the Law, because the power must come from a relationship with JESUS CHRIST.<sup>241</sup>

Truly: Paul made the point that there are two ways of thinking: we can set our thinking on **fleshly** things, or we can set our thinking on the things of **the SPIRIT**. And if anyone persists in setting their thinking on the things of **the flesh**, they will be powerless to truly submit to the Law and please GOD.

So, clearly one premise of Paul’s logical argument was: we must submit to GOD’s Law to please GOD. But Paul’s conclusion was: the flesh does not have the power to perfectly submit to GOD’s law. However, the SPIRIT can supply that power if we set our minds on the things of the SPIRIT.

Meanwhile, Paul’s foundational premise was: The Law is powerless to save us if we refuse to come to JESUS! And Paul explained, the Law cannot save us because: even when our spirit is **willing** to obey the laws of our Creator, without the Holy SPIRIT, our flesh is **powerless** to obey GOD’s laws perfectly.

Truly, JESUS expressed something very similar, when He said: “**The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.**”<sup>242</sup>

Even though JESUS did not speak those words in the context of sin and salvation from sin *and* its eternal consequences; the expression: “**The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak**” is still a fundamentally true principle that many other passages of Scripture confirm.

Therefore, because GOD knew His people were powerless to perfectly obey His Law without ever stumbling, the Law contained many ceremonial provisions to temporarily compensate for the weaknesses of mankind’s fallen condition.

In a sense, those provisions were like **temporary** flotation devices, sent by JESUS to keep the people from drowning until His ship arrived. And the ministry of the Levitical priests only foreshadowed the salvation that JESUS would bring, when He came to earth to save sinners from their sins.

These provisions included: the Levitical priesthood, along with all of the sacrifices, and

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<sup>241</sup> John 3:18-21

<sup>242</sup> Mark 14:38b

**foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances**<sup>243</sup> of the Levitical system.

Therefore, every sound-thinking student of the Bible must remember: the provisions of the Law given to **temporarily** compensate for the weaknesses of the flesh can be identified by looking for and recognizing any language that indicates “**cleansing**”, “**purification**”, “**justification**” or “**sanctification**” through fleshly means.

And this is very important because: many people either wrongly assume that **all** of GOD’s Laws were given to teach mankind how to distinguish between moral and immoral choices. Or, they wrongly assume **all** of GOD’s Laws were only temporarily given until the New Covenant arrived.

Obviously, all of GOD’s Ten Commandments are laws dealing with morality; but GOD’s other laws that deal with rituals that purify, cleanse, or justify through fleshly means are **not** laws that define morality!

Instead, the many divine laws associated with the **Levitical** priesthood that were given to outwardly cleanse GOD’s people and even temporarily atone for sin can be classified as “**Levitical laws**”.

And, in a similar way, the many divine laws associated with how the appointed leaders of Israel should **judge** sinners who violate GOD’s moral laws can be classified as “**Judicial laws**”.

So, the sound-minded student of the Bible understands they are reading a “**Judicial Law**”, written to decide how just punishments should be issued by the appointed judges of Israel, when they read: “**If a man causes disfigurement of his neighbor, as he has done, so shall it be done to him— ‘fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he has caused disfigurement of a man, so shall it be done to him.’**”<sup>244</sup>

In this passage, GOD is commanding the **judges** to rule “**equitably**”; meaning judges should apply an **equal** punishment to those who cause the disfigurement of another; identically matching the injury inflicted upon the victim. In other words, in disfigurement cases, they were not to double, multiply, or magnify the punishment of those who harmed another human being<sup>245</sup>.

But over time, false teachers in Israel either forgot or ignored how this passage was given to guide Israel’s appointed leaders in **judicial** matters, but never an individual’s **personal** conduct. And those false teachers claimed that this passage meant every individual could **personally** seek out vengeance against their neighbor.

However, we know that was not GOD’s will, because He commanded: “**You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.**”<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Hebrews 9:10

<sup>244</sup> Leviticus 24:19-20

<sup>245</sup> Compare to: “If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep.” Exodus 22:1

<sup>246</sup> Leviticus 19:18

So, JESUS taught: **“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist<sup>247</sup> an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also.”<sup>248</sup>**

JESUS was not disagreeing with His own law! No, He was disagreeing with those who were using a **“Judicial Law”** to justify taking *personal* vengeance.

And like our GOD, who pours out His blessings on both the just and the unjust, we can and should patiently overlook the *minor* wrongs others do to us<sup>249</sup>; and show grace and kindness to those who trespass<sup>250</sup> against us, even when they don’t deserve it.

Meanwhile, JESUS also commanded the Church to regard those who unrepentantly sin<sup>251</sup> against their fellow saints as **“tax collectors and heathens”**, if they won’t repent when the Church confronts them for their sin.<sup>252</sup>

Plus, when He returns, JESUS plans to cast every sinner who refuses to repent of their lawlessness, into the fire where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.<sup>253</sup> So, JESUS is most certainly *not* against the appointed authorities punishing sinners<sup>254</sup>! He is only against individuals who twist His law, so they can pursue vengeance and refuse to forgive those who trespass against them<sup>255</sup>.

And we easily understand the point JESUS was making in Matthew 5:38, when we acknowledge that the phrase **“an eye for an eye”** is a quote from a **“Judicial Law”** written to guide the appointed *authorities*, not a **Moral Law** written to guide every individual.

Likewise, when we carefully look for and recognize language that indicates **“cleansing”**, **“purification”**, **“justification”**, or **“sanctification”** through fleshly means, we can easily spot passages in the Apostolic Scriptures that are somehow connected to (or contrasted against) the **Levitical laws** of the First Covenant.

You see, the debate in Acts chapter 15, was not about the Moral Laws of GOD such as the Ten Commandments! And that is very easy to perceive, because Peter said: **“So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their**

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<sup>247</sup> anth-is'-tay-mee: to set one's self against (to fight against)

<sup>248</sup> Matthew 5:38-40

<sup>249</sup> Matthew 6:14-15

<sup>250</sup> par-ap'-to-mah: to fall beside or near something; a lapse or deviation from truth and uprightness, trespass

<sup>251</sup> ham-ar-tan'-o: to miss or wander from the path of uprightness and honour, to do or go wrong; to wander from the law of God, violate God's law, sin

<sup>252</sup> “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.” Matthew 18:15-17

<sup>253</sup> “The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, “and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Matthew 13:41-42

<sup>254</sup> For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Romans 13:3-4

<sup>255</sup> Matthew 6:15

hearts by faith. Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.”<sup>256</sup>

Peter noted that GOD made no distinction between the circumcised Jews and the uncircumcised Gentiles, because He gave them both the HOLY SPIRIT. And Peter points out the only way the Gentiles and the Jews could have **both** received the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT was if they had **both** been purified in the same way, namely through faith!

Yes, the truth Peter was explaining in Acts chapter 15 was also a common theme in Paul’s epistles and even the words JESUS said to Paul. And that theme is: purification (or: justification or sanctification<sup>257</sup>) by grace through faith in JESUS CHRIST!

But, often when the Apostles of our LORD spoke about purification, justification, or sanctification by faith, they frequently contrasted it against the purification, justification, or sanctification they grew up practicing, which was purification, justification, or sanctification by the works of the Law!<sup>258</sup>

By the way, we must understand that purification and justification are closely connected words, because justification is a **Judicial** term and purification is a **Levitical** term.

For someone to be **justified** they had to be declared **innocent** of violating GOD’s Moral Law by the judges GOD established. But for someone to be **purified** they had to be declared **clean** or **pure** by observing the laws that govern **the Levitical system** GOD established.

Therefore, we see the word “**justify**” used in the following **Judicial** passage: **You shall abstain from every unjust thing: you shall not slay the innocent and righteous, and you shall not justify the wicked for gifts. And you shall not receive gifts; for gifts blind the eyes of the seeing, and corrupt just words.**<sup>259</sup>

But we see the word “**purify**” used in the following Levitical passage: **‘Then a man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and store them outside the camp in a clean place; and they shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for the water of purification; it is for purifying from sin.’**<sup>260</sup>

So, “**justification**” typically refers to a **Judicial** declaration that a person is innocent of sin, whereas “**purification**” typically refers to a **Levitical** declaration that a person has been cleansed from sin, ceremonial defilement, or ritual impurities.

Therefore, Paul tends to use terms associated with “**justification**” in his epistles that were addressed to Gentiles. Because, in Acts 15, the Apostles and Elders of Jerusalem recognized and declared that the Gentile disciples of JESUS did not have to observe the

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<sup>256</sup> Acts 15:8-11

<sup>257</sup> Acts 26:18

<sup>258</sup> Galatians 2:16

<sup>259</sup> Exodus 23:7-8 CAB

<sup>260</sup> Numbers 19:9

Levitical laws of purification<sup>261</sup>.

Consequently, because Gentiles were much more familiar with **judicial** concepts like “justification”, and much less familiar with **Levitical** concepts like “purification”, Paul desired to write to them in the context they could more easily understand.

But, now that we recognize there are Moral Laws, Judicial Laws, and Levitical Laws in the Bible, we can test to see if we can recognize each category by the language of the Scriptures.

In Exodus, GOD said: “**You shall not receive a false report. You shall not agree with the unjust to become an unjust witness.**”<sup>262</sup> So, which category of the Law should this passage be labeled as part of?

It would certainly be part of GOD’s Moral Law, because it would be “immoral” to receive a report we knew to be false. Plus, making agreements with unjust people to **become** a false witness obviously violates the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment.

Additionally, because judges are people who “**receive**” reports, this passage does apply to judges. However, because the passage does not **exclusively** apply to judges, it is not a **Judicial Law**.

Likewise, this law would also apply to Levitical priests, but it does not mention anything that would **exclusively** apply to Levitical purification. So, it is not a **Levitical Law**.

But how about this next passage. Was a **Moral, Judicial, or Levitical** Law being issued when GOD said: “**He that touches the dead body of any man, shall be unclean for seven days. He shall be purified on the third day and the seventh day, and shall be clean; but if he is not purged on the third day and the seventh day, he shall not be clean.**”<sup>263</sup>?

If you guessed that it was a **Levitical Law**, you are correct. And we know this is true because this Law speaks about “**purification**” through fleshly means, and being “**unclean**”.

And Moses was obviously issuing a **Judicial Law**, when he said: “**Then I commanded your judges at that time, saying, ‘Hear the cases between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother or the stranger who is with him.’**”<sup>264</sup>

We can easily see this is a Judicial Law because, just before this passage, Moses said: “**So I took of you wise and understanding and prudent men, and I set them to rule over you as rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, and rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens, and officers to your judges.**”<sup>265</sup>

Plus, we see the noun and verb forms of the word “**judge**” in the passage in question, so there can be no doubt, these passages apply exclusively to Judges, so they are part

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<sup>261</sup> Romans 3:20-26

<sup>262</sup> Exodus 23:1 CAB

<sup>263</sup> Numbers 19:11-12

<sup>264</sup> Deuteronomy 1:16

<sup>265</sup> Deuteronomy 1:15 CAB

of the **Judicial Laws** recorded in GOD's Word.

But now we will consider a more difficult test, with an example from a sermon Paul gave in the book of Acts, in a synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia on the Sabbath day.

Paul said: **“Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.”**<sup>266</sup>

In context, we know JESUS is the man Paul was speaking of, but what part of the Law of Moses had to do with the **“forgiveness of sins”**? To answer the question, we must understand, **the Moral Law** only defines sin<sup>267</sup>; it can never offer **“forgiveness for sins”**<sup>268</sup>.

Or, in other words, the Moral Law is **like a mirror** to show us if our face is dirty<sup>269</sup>. But the mirror of the Moral Law cannot cleanse us from that dirt.

Next, we must consider the **Judicial Law**. And we can see that the **Judicial Law** only lays out the specific temporal consequences for sin, but it can never offer **“the forgiveness of sins”**. So, the Judicial Law is like a **warning**<sup>270</sup> that alerts us to what will happen if we allow our faces to become dirty. But it cannot **reveal** the dirt like the Moral Law can. Nor can it **cleanse** us from the dirt. And this only leaves the **Levitical Law** to consider, in regards to Paul's teaching.

Obviously, the Levitical Laws that governed how people were **cleansed** from their sins in the First Covenant were what Paul had in mind when he contrasted the way those Laws of Moses were used for **“the forgiveness of sins”**<sup>271</sup>; to how true forgiveness could be obtained through faith in JESUS!<sup>272</sup>

Likewise, this agrees with what we saw Peter teaching earlier, which was: GOD gave the Gentiles the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT after **purifying** their hearts **by faith!**

Yes, just as Paul spoke in Acts 13 about **justification by faith** in JESUS, Peter spoke about **purification by faith** in JESUS in Acts 15. And, they both spoke of those things in the context of the Levitical rituals contained in **the Law of Moses!**

So, you see: The **Moral Laws** of GOD continued seamlessly into the New Covenant, and the **Judicial Laws** are still good and righteous for GOD's appointed civil authorities to employ, but the **Levitical Laws** of fleshly cleansing were replaced when JESUS died

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<sup>266</sup> Acts 13:38-39

<sup>267</sup> What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “You shall not covet.” Romans 7:7

<sup>268</sup> Leviticus 4:27-31

<sup>269</sup> But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. James 1:22-25

<sup>270</sup> [They are people] who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them. Romans 1:32

<sup>271</sup> “So the priest shall make atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him.” Leviticus 4:31b

<sup>272</sup> In [CHRIST] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:14

on the cross.

Yes, the offense of the cross<sup>273</sup> is that it replaced the Levitical Laws of purification. And many Jews who grew up practicing the Levitical Law to wash the outside of the cup and dish<sup>274</sup>, were greatly offended by statements like: **“By JESUS, everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.”**<sup>275</sup>

So, Paul explained in Hebrews: **Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.**<sup>276</sup>

Paul’s main point in this section of Hebrews was: JESUS did not descend through the Levitical line of priests. Instead, He was born of the tribe of Judah, and made our eternal High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek; as it was written of the MESSIAH, in the Psalms.<sup>277</sup>

Also, Paul’s argument pointed out: since the Law of Moses mentioned nothing about a high priest arising from Judah, but the Psalms mention an eternal High Priest serving in the order of Melchizedek, it is clear that there had to be a change in the Law.

So, Paul concluded: **For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.**<sup>278</sup>

As we stated in our metaphor earlier, the Levitical system of purification was like a temporary flotation device, sent by JESUS to keep His people from drowning until He came to fully and completely save His people from their sins. But once JESUS came, the Levitical system was no longer required.

And sadly, if anyone keeps relying on that Levitical system to save them from drowning in the sea of sin, they reject the far better salvation JESUS is offering!

But we must understand about the Levitical system of the First Covenant, it was a ***carnal*** or ***fleshly*** system that was **“concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.”**<sup>279</sup>

But in the New Covenant, JESUS ushered in a new ***spiritual rebirth*** for His people; no longer concerned with the ***fleshly ordinances*** that were imposed until the great

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<sup>273</sup> Galatians 5:11

<sup>274</sup> Matthew 23:25-26

<sup>275</sup> Acts 13:39

<sup>276</sup> Hebrews 7:11-12

<sup>277</sup> For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. For He testifies: “You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.” Hebrews 7:14-17

<sup>278</sup> Hebrews 7:18-19

<sup>279</sup> Hebrews 9:10

## Messianic Reformation!

Therefore, in Galatians, Paul compared the Levitical system to the Messianic system by writing: **Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar– for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children– but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.**<sup>280</sup>

And Paul concluded: **Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.” So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.**<sup>281</sup>

Scripture compares the Levitical system of salvation from sin to *Ishmael*, Abraham’s *fleshly* attempt to obtain the promise of GOD. But *then* Scripture compares the Messianic system of salvation from sin that obtained the promise of GOD through the *miracle* GOD Himself worked, to *Isaac*!

Also, Scripture compares those of the *physical circumcision* who persecute those who are *truly circumcised* with the inner circumcision of CHRIST, to how Ishmael, the son born according to the **flesh**, persecuted Isaac, the son born according to the **SPIRIT**.

Plus, because the Levitical system of fleshly purification was instituted to demonstrate the destructive nature of sin and the impossibility of saving ourselves from sin without CHRIST, it was the “**yoke**” both Paul and Peter spoke of: that neither they nor their fathers were able to bear!<sup>282</sup>

As Paul said in Romans about the Levitical Law: **Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.**<sup>283</sup>

Every time they sinned under the Levitical Law, various beautiful creatures of GOD had to be slaughtered for that sin. Therefore, when Paul was relying on the Levitical Law for purification from sin, his sin produced *death*, and revealed how terrible his sin actually

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<sup>280</sup> Galatians 4:21-26

<sup>281</sup> Galatians 4:28-31

<sup>282</sup> “Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?” Acts 15:10

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” Galatians 5:1

<sup>283</sup> Romans 7:12-13

was.

Yes, just as an uncomfortable temporary flotation device reminds a shipwrecked person they are still in the water, and a heavy **yoke** reminds a slave that they still lack freedom, the **Levitical Law** reminded all who were under it: all those who sin are slaves of sin<sup>284</sup>, and the wages of sin are death<sup>285</sup>.

But once JESUS came to set us free from sin<sup>286</sup>, we no longer needed the Levitical Law to purify us **or** to remind us of the terrible realities of sin!

And the truth is, those who turn back to the fleshly ordinances of the Levitical Law for justification, purification, sanctification, or any other religious reason, become **enslaved** again to **carnal** or **fleshly thinking**.

Meanwhile, as we saw earlier, Scripture teaches that those who set their minds on the things of the flesh cannot please GOD! So, we see: someone can set their minds on the things of the flesh in two very different ways!

They can turn away from GOD's Moral Law, by turning to the moral lawlessness of the world. Or they can turn away from salvation by grace through faith in CHRIST, by turning back to the Levitical Laws that were instituted to lead us to CHRIST.

And when we acknowledge the three categories present within the Laws of our Creator, and comprehend how JESUS redeemed us from **the Levitical Law** when we were crucified with Him<sup>287</sup>, we are far better equipped to comprehend the Scriptures properly; from the very first Hebrew word of Genesis to the very last Greek word of Revelation.

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<sup>284</sup> Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. John 8:34

<sup>285</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23

<sup>286</sup> Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. "And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. John 8:34-36

<sup>287</sup> "For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain." Galatians 2:19-21

## Chapter 7: The MESSIAH and Biblical Grace

When it comes to Biblical words that are typically associated with the Apostle Paul, there is probably no word more misunderstood, or frequently twisted to justify ongoing sin, than the word “**grace**”.

So, whenever we think of grace, we must never forget that the Scriptures warn: **Certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness (or more literally: unrestrained filthiness) and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.**<sup>288</sup>

Yes, even as the last books of the Bible were being written, false teachers were **already** trying to turn GOD’s grace into an excuse for sin! And those false teachers were leading **many** people astray. But Scripture reminds us that we must understand GOD’s grace in the light of the Exodus.

By GOD’s grace: those who put the blood on their doorway were “passed over” during the final plague in Egypt. By GOD’s grace: they passed through the Red Sea on dry ground. By GOD’s grace: they received the promise of a land flowing with milk and honey. And by GOD’s grace: they heard GOD’s voice and received His commandments when He descended to Mount Sinai.

With signs and wonders like manna and quail, GOD poured out His grace on the children of Israel when He took them by the hand to lead them through the wilderness! Meanwhile, Paul wrote: “**with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.**”<sup>289</sup>

So, the Apostle Paul warned: **Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.**<sup>290</sup>

In many places, Scripture teaches us to understand our salvation “**by grace through faith**” in Christ as being perfectly foreshadowed by the Exodus of Israel. And when we see GOD’s grace in the context of the Exodus, we realize that we must obediently

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<sup>288</sup> Jude 1:4-5

<sup>289</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:5

<sup>290</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:6-12

cooperate with His grace and continue turning away from sin, if we are to inherit the promises!

This is why Paul plainly stated: **What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it!**<sup>291</sup>

Therefore, before we even begin to discuss **grace**, we must state from the start: grace is **never** a reason to disobey or discard the Moral Laws of GOD!

No, when Scripture contrasts justification through the Law to justification through Grace, we will see that the Levitical Law was what was being discussed, never the Moral Law! So, with Paul we say: may anyone who teaches otherwise be accursed, for they are teaching a **false** Gospel<sup>292</sup>!

And with that warning issued, we must understand: it is not Scripture's fault that so many people misunderstand **grace**! No, the Bible teaches us everything we need to know about true, Biblical **grace**. In fact: if we search out the Greek word most often translated into English as "**grace**"; it appears in the Apostolic Scriptures 156 times, and it appears in the pre-Apostolic Septuagint 78 times.

However, when you search an English translation for the English word "**grace**", you will find: instead of the word "**grace**" appearing 234 times, it only appears 129 times! Therefore, the careful student of the Scriptures must ask: "*Where are all the missing passages about 'grace'?*" And the answer to that important question can be seen in passages such as Luke 1:30.

In Luke 1:30, within each of the following English translations, the Greek word for "**grace**" was translated as "**favor**"<sup>293</sup>; in the American Standard Version, The Complete Jewish Bible, The Holman Christian Standard Bible, The Darby Translation, The English Standard Version, The GOD's WORD Translation, The Hebrew Names Version, The King James Version, The Lexham English Bible, The New American Standard Bible, The New International Version, The New King James Version, The New Living Translation, The New Revised Standard, The Revised Standard Version, The Third Millennium Bible, The Webster Bible, The World English Bible, The Weymouth New Testament, and Young's Literal Translation.

But all of these translations render the same Greek word<sup>294</sup> into English as "**grace**" in passages like Ephesians 2:8, where it is written: **For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.**<sup>295</sup> Obviously, the answer to the question "*Where are all the missing passages about 'grace'?*" is: the Greek word for "**grace**" is inconsistently translated. But most importantly, we must understand: it is translated in an inconsistent

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<sup>291</sup> Romans 6:1-2

<sup>292</sup> But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. Galatians 1:8-9

<sup>293</sup> Or "favour", an antiquated spelling.

<sup>294</sup> Strong's number G5484

<sup>295</sup> Ephesians 2:8-9

manner to reinforce the faulty theological suppositions that have developed over time surrounding the concept of “**grace**”.

Meanwhile, the Greek word Paul used in Ephesians 2:8 was **transliterated** into English long ago; and the fact is: most of us would easily recognize the sound of the Greek word Paul used!

We transliterate the first letter of the Greek word Paul used, the letter **Chi** that looks like the English letter “**X**”, into English as “**ch**”.

We transliterate the second letter of the Greek word Paul used, the letter **Alpha** that looks like the English letter “**a**”, into English as “**a**”.

We transliterate the third letter of the Greek word Paul used, the letter **Rho** that looks like the English letter “**p**”, into English as “**r**”.

We transliterate the fourth letter of the Greek word Paul used, the letter **Iota** that looks like the English letter “**i**”, into English as “**i**”.

We transliterate the fifth letter of the Greek word Paul used, the letter **Tau** that looks like the English letter “**t**”, into English as “**t**”.

And we transliterate the sixth letter of the Greek word Paul used, the letter **Iota** that looks like the English letter “**i**”, into English as “**i**”.

So, when we sound out the English **transliteration** of the word Paul used in Ephesians 2:8, we see: Paul used the word: “**Chariti**”! Now we typically write that word with a “**y**” at the end, and we have slightly modified the meaning of the word over time. But even though Paul would pronounce the word a little differently (with a “**Kh**” sound<sup>296</sup> at the beginning), Paul would definitely recognize our modern word “**Charity**” as very similar to the word he used many times in his epistles.

And we get a glimpse of the original meaning of the word **Charity** when we look at the second definition listed in Merriam Webster’s online dictionary, where they describe **Charity** as: “**benevolent goodwill**”.<sup>297</sup>

Please note the similar definition listed under the word **Favor**, which they define as: “**friendly regard shown toward another especially by a superior**”.<sup>298</sup>

You see, the words “**charity**”, and “**favor**” were once closely associated linguistically, but over time “**charity**” took on a specific context of “**generosity and helpfulness especially toward the needy or suffering**”. Therefore, **favor** is now the better translation of the Greek word that is frequently (but not consistently) translated into English as: “**grace**”.

Now many popular teachers these days define “**grace**” as: “**unmerited**” favor<sup>299</sup>. Therefore, Merriam Webster’s online dictionary reports the definition of **grace** as:

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<sup>296</sup> As in “Bach”

<sup>297</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/charity>

<sup>298</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/favor>

<sup>299</sup> <https://billygraham.org/devotion/gods-unmerited-favor/>

**“unmerited”<sup>300</sup> divine assistance given to humans for their regeneration or sanctification.** ”<sup>301</sup> But we need to consider if the word “**unmerited**” belongs in an accurate definition of grace.

The word “**merit**” is defined as: “**a praiseworthy quality**” or “**virtue**”, or “**character or conduct deserving of reward, honor, or esteem**”.<sup>302</sup> So, unmerited favor would be favor given without regard to the quality, virtue, character, or conduct of the recipient.

Now with this definition in mind: the first time the word “**grace**” is used in Scripture, the Bible records: **The LORD said, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.” But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God.**<sup>303</sup>

In context, it would seem that “**Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD**” because he was a “**just**” man. Therefore, this passage does not *seem* to teach the concept that grace is “**unmerited**” favor, since it specifically describes the virtuous *character* of Noah.

Also, the word “**found**” used in English translations of Genesis 6 comes from either a Hebrew verb that means: “**to find or attain to**”, or a Greek verb that means “**to find a thing sought**”. And Noah is recorded as one who “**found**” grace in the eyes of the LORD; meaning: Noah’s **conduct** was involved in how he received GOD’s grace.

Therefore, the first mention of GOD’s grace in the Bible, includes information about the virtuous character of the recipient of GOD’s grace, and a verb that indicates the recipient “**found**” GOD’s grace.

Yes, as a shipwrecked mariner floating in the sea might look for a ship to rescue them from their troubles, people can **seek for** and actually **find** grace.

And the Bible mentions people “**finding grace**” with either GOD or someone in authority: 15 times in Genesis, 4 times in Exodus, 3 times in Numbers, 1 time in Deuteronomy, 1 time in Judges, 3 times in Ruth, 6 times in 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel, 3 times in 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel, 1 time in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings, 7 times in Esther, 4 times in Proverbs, 1 time in Luke, 1 time in Acts, and 1 time in Hebrews.

But “**finding**” is not the only verb ever associated with the word we translate as “**grace**”! No, there are **other verbs** connected with the word we translate as “**grace**” or “**favor**” in GOD’s Word.

In Acts chapter 13, Luke records: **Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.**<sup>304</sup>

The word translated as “**continue**” is **ep-ee-men'-o**, and it means “**to stay at or with**”.

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<sup>300</sup> Emphasis added

<sup>301</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/grace>

<sup>302</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/merit>

<sup>303</sup> Genesis 6:7-9

<sup>304</sup> Acts 13:43

So, Paul and Barnabas found it necessary to persuade people to “**remain**” or “**abide within**” GOD’s grace.

Just as a rescued mariner must **remain** on the ship that rescued him to safely make it home, we must **continue** in GOD’s grace to the end, with patience and endurance.

Also, Paul and Timothy found it necessary to write to the saints in Corinth: **We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.**<sup>305</sup>

Now the word translated here as “**receive**” actually means “**to take hold of**”. Therefore, GOD’s grace is not only something we must “**continue in**”, it is also something we can “**take hold of**”. And if we “**take hold**” of GOD’s grace, but neglect to “**continue in it**”, we prove we “**took hold**” of His grace in vain.

Or, in other words: When the glorious ship of grace arrives to save us from the murky waters of sin, we must choose to **take hold** of the rope of salvation, if we are to be rescued and lifted from our hopeless condition.

But if we later abandon the ship of grace by choosing not to **continue** in it, we **took hold** of the rope of salvation in vain.

And this leads us to Paul’s letter to the Galatians, where he wrote: **You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.**<sup>306</sup>

Now the word Paul used, that here is translated as “**fallen**” means: “**to fall out of, to fall down from, to fall off**”. So, much like how a rescued mariner can fall off of the deck of a ship, and end up back in the sea; we can **fall** from GOD’s grace and return to the deadly waters of sin.

And we must note that, in this passage, Paul revealed: a **fall** from grace occurs when a person attempts to be **justified** by the Law! Therefore, if we choose to put our trust in the life vest of the Levitical Law, we abandon the rescue vessel of grace, and return to the waters of sin JESUS already saved us from!

So, this is why Paul wrote: “**I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.**”<sup>307</sup>

If the “life vest” of the Levitical Law could actually save us from sin, then the death of our LORD would serve no purpose. But just as a life vest cannot supply perfect dryness to anyone floating in the water, or carry them to their anticipated destination; the Law cannot make anyone righteous, nor can it convey us to the promised land.

**The Moral Law** that reveals the difference between the righteous and the sinner is like the **surface** of the water, revealing the difference between the wet and the dry. And only those mythical people<sup>308</sup> who have kept the moral law perfectly could ever say they didn’t

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<sup>305</sup> 2 Corinthians 6:1

<sup>306</sup> Galatians 5:4

<sup>307</sup> Galatians 2:21

<sup>308</sup> For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of GOD. Romans 3:23

need JESUS to save them.

**The Judicial Law** is like a series of warning signs floating on the water, posted to caution against the consequences of being wet. And, while Judicial Laws can help protect a society from totally drowning in sin, they can never save an individual from sins murky depths.

And **the Levitical Law** is like a life vest given to keep people from drowning in sin until rescue arrived. But those who choose the life vest of the Levitical Law over the salvation JESUS is offering will eventually die in their sins.

None of these items can make a sinner righteous! And none of these items can carry us to the promised land! No, they can only serve to **define, warn, and temporarily preserve** until the true Savior arrives!

Therefore, if anyone turns back to the Levitical Law for righteousness, they “**set aside**”, “**reject**”, or “**refuse**” GOD’s grace.

Also, please note that **Paul contrasts the law and grace** here in this passage, and **connects GOD’s grace with JESUS**. This was a theme in Paul’s epistles; and this passage is one of several that warn against rejecting GOD’s grace by trusting in the Levitical Law for righteousness.

However, Paul was never contrasting **all** three categories of GOD’s law against grace, because in Romans he wrote: **Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!**<sup>309</sup>

Since sin is the violation of GOD’s Moral Law and Paul clearly states we are not to use grace as a license to sin, clearly **grace is not opposed to GOD’s Moral Law!**

No, like a ship compared to a life vest, GOD’s grace allows us to float high above the waters of sin, safe and dry and free from sin, but the life vest of the Levitical Law could not set us free from the water. So, just as the water no longer has dominion over those who escape from it onto a boat; sin no longer has dominion over those who escape from its grasp into the LORD’s glorious ship of grace!

And because the Levitical Law could not actually set anyone completely free from sin, John wrote: **For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.**<sup>310</sup> But nowhere in Scripture is grace contrasted against GOD’s Moral Commandments!

No, grace is only ever contrasted against the “**foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances that were imposed until the time of reformation**”<sup>311</sup>!

For example, about foods, Scripture teaches: **It is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied**

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<sup>309</sup> Romans 6:14-15

<sup>310</sup> John 1:17

<sup>311</sup> Hebrews 9:10

with them.<sup>312</sup>

So, **grace** is directly contrasted against **foods** in the Bible! And those who judge others over their **foods**, or preoccupy themselves with **foods** have not yet fully understood how the **grace** of GOD has set them free from the Levitical Law!

Likewise, Paul made this same point about the fleshly ordinance of circumcision in Romans. In that epistle, he wrote: **Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.**<sup>313</sup>

Then, after Paul set the stage by explaining physical circumcision was the topic he was addressing, he added: **What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.**<sup>314</sup>

Then Paul added: **Just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin." Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised?**<sup>315</sup>

And Paul concluded: **Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised. For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.**<sup>316</sup>

**Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.**<sup>317</sup>

You see, Paul's point in Romans 4 was all about the fleshly ordinance of circumcision

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<sup>312</sup> Hebrews 13:9

<sup>313</sup> Romans 3:28-30

<sup>314</sup> Romans 4:1-5

<sup>315</sup> Romans 4:6-10a

<sup>316</sup> Romans 4:10b-13

<sup>317</sup> Romans 4:16

and how it was not necessary to be physically circumcised to be saved. In other words, Paul was reiterating and proving from Scripture what was decided in Acts chapter 15!

So, when we see grace and faith contrasted to **the law and works**, it is never a discouragement against obeying GOD's commandments! Certainly not! Instead, it is a discouragement against the Levitical works of the law performed in the flesh such as circumcision, various washings, and abstinence from certain foods.

Therefore, Paul wrote: **Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.**<sup>318</sup>

We must remember, the Apostle Paul who warned against seeking salvation through the works of the law, also said: **“Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.”**<sup>319</sup>

Plus, he wrote to Titus: **This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.**<sup>320</sup>

Untaught and unstable teachers who preach that Paul taught against good works don't understand: Paul was only against **Levitical** works done in the **flesh**! He was never against **good works** done in the SPIRIT's power, in obedience to GOD's Moral Law!

And now that we have explored the passages that contrast the Levitical Law to Grace, we need to *continue* evaluating whether the word **“unmerited”** belongs in an accurate definition of grace. And there are several more passages to consider as we answer that question.

In the Psalms, it is written: **The LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.**<sup>321</sup> So, one way to **find** GOD's grace is to **“walk uprightly”** according to this Psalm.

And the same Greek Septuagint word translated as **“grace”** in Psalm 84 is translated as **“favor”**, in Proverbs, where it is written: **Let not mercy and truth forsake you; but bind them about your neck: so shall you find favor; and provide things honest in the sight of the Lord, and of men.**<sup>322</sup>

Therefore, we can find **“grace”** or **“favor”** by binding mercy and truth around our necks as an ornamental necklace.

Likewise, if we seek after **good**, we will find grace. For it is written: **He who earnestly seeks good finds favor, but trouble will come to him who seeks evil.**<sup>323</sup> And the same word often translated as **“grace”** is here translated **“favor”** in this passage.

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<sup>318</sup> 1 Corinthians 7:19

<sup>319</sup> Acts 26:19-20

<sup>320</sup> Titus 3:8

<sup>321</sup> Psalms 84:11

<sup>322</sup> Proverbs 3:3-4 CAB

<sup>323</sup> Proverbs 11:27

Similarly, the same language underlies the word “**favor**” in Proverbs 12, which explains: **A good man obtains favor from the LORD, but a man of wicked intentions He will condemn.**<sup>324</sup> Therefore, the pursuit of morally virtuous things is a pursuit of GOD’s grace.

But another key way to *find* GOD’s grace is through humility. Because in three separate passages we are told: **“The Lord resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.”**<sup>325</sup>

Peter, who repeated that Proverb, also used the same Greek word for **grace** when he wrote: **For this finds God’s favor, if because of conscience toward God someone endures hardships in suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if you sin and are mistreated and endure it? But if you do good and suffer and so endure, this finds favor with God.**<sup>326</sup> Yes, enduring suffering while doing good is a sure way to “**find grace**” in the eyes of the LORD!

So, we have seen that Scripture teaches there are certain virtues and activities that are highly recommended because they “**find**” GOD’s favor. Therefore, while we can understand why “**unmerited**” was added to the definition of Grace, it is not really an accurate addition.

Instead, a better adjective to describe how GOD’s grace is never owed to anyone, and GOD could rightly judge every human being for sinning against His Moral Law would be: “**undeserved**”.

No one **deserves** GOD’s grace, instead we all deserve His judgment for breaking His commandments. But GOD is rich in mercy, and full of grace! So, He sent His Son JESUS to save us from our sins, and lead us to His kingdom! And the fact is: JESUS is the manifestation of GOD’s grace to mankind, and no one can do anything to **deserve** salvation by faith in JESUS!

And GOD’s grace is very, very important to find, because it is the only way we can be saved from sin and the terrible eternal destiny that awaits every sinner who refuses to repent and take hold of GOD’s glorious grace.

Paul explains: **God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ JESUS.**<sup>327</sup>

Our sin had separated us from our Creator, the Source of Life! But GOD the Father lovingly sent JESUS His Son to save us from our sins. And, when we repented and put our faith in CHRIST, JESUS lifted us up out of the waters of sin, and placed us in His ship of grace.

We did not deserve this rescue. No, we understand that we deserved death, because

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<sup>324</sup> Proverbs 12:2

<sup>325</sup> Proverbs 3:34 CAB, 1 Peter 5:5, James 4:6

<sup>326</sup> 1 Peter 2:19-20 NET

<sup>327</sup> Ephesians 2:4-6

we sinned against GOD's righteous Laws. So, even after we are safely onboard the ship of salvation, we remember: we could have never saved ourselves. Yet we did have to respond to our Savior's voice with repentance and faith to take hold of our LORD's hand.

And this was what Paul was teaching when he explained: **For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.**<sup>328</sup>

Just as the Israelites could not say that they delivered themselves from Egypt, or parted the waters of the Red Sea; we cannot say we delivered ourselves from the waters of sin!

Yes, we all recognize that JESUS pulled us up out of the water when we put our trust in Him, and no amount of struggling could have made us any less wet! Plus, we all recognize: we have all sinned and broken GOD's commandments, so we were all deserving of death. But GOD gave us **grace**, instead of what we deserved. And for that we will sing His praises forever!

So, now that we understand that grace is GOD's "**undeserved favor**", must remember: even though we can never really **deserve** His grace, we can **seek** it, **find** it, **continue** in it, **fall** from it, and **reject** it. Therefore, all of us who are already passengers on the glorious ship of grace must remember to continue on that ship.

And all those still drowning in the waters of sin must understand: **only** JESUS can save you from the terrible hell that awaits all those who die in their sins. So, take His hand today, and allow Him to pull you to safety; away from the waters of sin that currently enslave you, and into dry places of righteousness and holiness that GOD dwells in.

**For the saving grace of God has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people as His own possession, zealous for good works.**<sup>329</sup>

And this is **the true grace of GOD** proclaimed by the holy Scriptures; from the very first Hebrew word of Genesis to the very last Greek word of Revelation!

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<sup>328</sup> Ephesians 2:8-9

<sup>329</sup> Titus 2:11-14 CAB

## Chapter 8: The MESSIAH and 5 Pauline Precautions

Through our studies so far, we have witnessed **why** Luke recorded about Paul: **He reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.**<sup>330</sup>

Just as Paul reasoned persuasively in the synagogues every Sabbath, Paul also **reasoned persuasively** in his epistles, to convince people of the truth of what he was writing.

Now, the word we translate as “**reason**” means: “**to ponder**” or “**to converse, discourse with one, argue, or discuss**”; while the word we translate as “**persuaded**” means: “**to induce one by words to believe**”.

And whenever one person **reasons** with another person in order to **persuade** them to believe what they are saying, it has traditionally been called: “**making an argument**” for or against something; or in more abbreviated terms: “**arguing**”.

Because society has moved away from GOD and absolute truth: education has suffered, people are less fact-based, individuals are more emotionally driven, conversations are now much less logical.

Therefore, the word “**argue**” is now associated with people yelling at, or acting in a threatening manner towards each other. But, in nearly all cases<sup>331</sup>, those forms of argument are logical fallacies known as: a faulty appeal to **emotion** and a faulty appeal to **force**.

Thus, real, classical **arguing** takes place when at least one person tries to logically and rationally convince another person (or group) through reason, that a certain perspective on some topic is true or false, right or wrong, better or worse, and so on.

So, we see that Paul was using logically sound arguments based on the Bible to convince people of the truth of the good news about JESUS when Luke writes: **Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.”**<sup>332</sup>

Plus, along with logical reasoning and the Bible, Paul thoroughly **explained**<sup>333</sup> whatever he was teaching, and **demonstrated**<sup>334</sup> all that he was teaching by laying out his sound conclusions before the people.

However, as you have probably noticed: The Apostle Paul was **very** gifted intellectually.<sup>335</sup> Therefore, he frequently employed **long, complex arguments** based

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<sup>330</sup> Acts 18:4

<sup>331</sup> Except in cases involving a legitimate appeal to authority, and the use of pre-authorized judicial force

<sup>332</sup> Acts 17:2-3

<sup>333</sup> dee-an-oy'-go: to open by dividing or drawing asunder, to open thoroughly

<sup>334</sup> par-at-ith'-ay-mee: to place beside or near or set before; in teaching (to explain)

<sup>335</sup> Acts 26:24-28 (Acts 22:3, Acts 5:34)

on sound reasoning and the Scriptures to prove the theological points he made in his epistles.

For example: in Romans, by **proving** that Abraham was declared righteous **before** he was physically circumcised, Paul conclusively proved physical circumcision was not necessary for righteousness, justification, salvation, or sanctification.<sup>336</sup>

And he proved that point to back up his earlier assertion, that stated: **For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.**<sup>337</sup>

Truly, we can be sure that Paul's epistle to the Romans contains<sup>338</sup> many of the arguments he made in Antioch, when certain men from Judea came saying: **"Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."**<sup>339</sup>

Yes, the saints in Rome certainly were not the **first** people Paul would have reminded: Abraham received a promise declaring he would become **"the father of many nations"**. And Paul would have reminded many people of that fact in order to prove that Abraham was the father of **all** who believe, both the circumcised and the uncircumcised.<sup>340</sup>

Also, the Corinthian church most certainly was not the **only** congregation Paul would have told: **Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.**<sup>341</sup>

Similarly, we can be sure that the saints in Rome were not the **only** Christians to hear Paul address the topic of foods by saying: **I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself.**<sup>342</sup>

And Timothy was not the **only** person to ever hear Paul declare: **Every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.**<sup>343</sup>

The fact is: Paul would have **frequently** communicated the long, complex arguments we read in his epistles. And this would have included the arguments contained in the Epistle to the Hebrews that proved a transition away from the Levitical system that was **concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.**<sup>344</sup>

We must understand: the logical arguments we see in the epistles of Paul regarding

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<sup>336</sup> Romans 4:9-12

<sup>337</sup> Romans 2:28-29

<sup>338</sup> Romans 2:26-29

<sup>339</sup> Acts 15:1-2

<sup>340</sup> Romans 4:16-17

<sup>341</sup> 1 Corinthians 7:18-19

<sup>342</sup> Romans 14:14a

<sup>343</sup> 1 Timothy 4:4-5

<sup>344</sup> Hebrews 9:10

things like circumcision and food all point back to **the debate of Acts chapter 15**. And that historical debate proved once and for all: The Gentile Christians did not have to observe the Levitical Laws of Moses instituted to preserve the nation of Israel *until* the MESSIAH came to save them from their sins.<sup>345</sup>

But throughout history, deceived men like Martin Luther have failed to see the clear connection between the events recorded in Acts and the complex arguments Paul made against the fleshly works of the Levitical Law. So, they ignorantly concluded that Paul was somehow *against* good works and the saints keeping GOD's commandments, even though Paul plainly stated the opposite!

Therefore, men like Martin Luther prove: *if* the historical context, the logical context, the Levitical context, or the overall doctrinal context is ignored in any one of Paul's more complex theological arguments, it's very easy to misunderstand what he was communicating. This is why Peter said some things in Paul's letters were "**hard to understand**".<sup>346</sup>

To this very day, there are people who wrongly believe ***all human beings lack the free will necessary to repent and believe the Gospel***, because they misunderstand things Paul wrote about GOD's foreknowledge and GOD's grace.

There are people who wrongly believe ***unrepentant sinners can inherit the kingdom of GOD***, because they misunderstand things Paul wrote about salvation through faith and GOD's grace.

And there are people who wrongly believe **it is no longer necessary to obey GOD's Ten Commandments**, because they misunderstand things Paul wrote about GOD's law and GOD's grace.

Meanwhile, just after Peter warned us that there were some things in Paul's letters that were hard to understand, he issued a clear, precautionary warning. He said: **You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked.**<sup>347</sup>

As we have already established, the word translated as wicked in this passage is: **ath'-es-mos**. And it means: "**one who breaks through the restraint of law and gratifies his lusts**". Therefore, the best available English translation of that word is "**lawbreaker**".

So, Scripture explicitly warns us of an error some people will fall into when they misunderstand the epistles of Paul, and that error is properly translated: "**the error of lawbreakers**". And we can see that many deceived teachers have ignored Peter's warning about Paul's epistles, to the point that they teach others to break through the restraint of the law to gratify their lusts.

And these false teachers not only ignored **Peter's** forewarning that specifically mentioned the letters of Paul, they also ignored **Jude's** warning that stated: **For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this**

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<sup>345</sup> Acts 15:22-29

<sup>346</sup> 2 Peter 3:16

<sup>347</sup> 2 Peter 3:17

**condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.**<sup>348</sup>

Now the word translated as “**lewdness**” in Jude’s epistle, literally means: “**unbridled** (or unrestrained) **lust**”, and when you compare the definition of the word Jude used to the word Peter used, and recognize that Jude’s epistle closely mirrors Peter’s second letter, you can see that it is not a coincidence that both Epistles speak of **lust** and a lack of **restraint!**

In Peter’s epistle, we are warned that Paul’s letters were being twisted to form the error of “**one who breaks through the restraint of law and gratifies his lusts**”. And in Jude’s epistle we were warned that GOD’s grace was literally being exchanged for “**unrestrained**” or “**unbridled lust**”.

You see, together these two inspired letters are warning the Church of the dangers of misunderstanding what the Scriptures say about **grace**, especially in the epistles of **Paul!** Therefore, we must be very careful with interpreting Paul’s letters in any way that contradicts the rest of the Scriptures, especially when it comes to the concepts of **grace**, **the law**, and **unrestrained lust**.

Or, in other words: we must never forget that Scripture itself warns us to be careful with Paul’s letters, to avoid the error of “**lawbreakers**” and those who misrepresent GOD’s grace as **a license to unleash the sinful lusts of the flesh**.

And these warnings lead us to five simple principles of precaution we can take with the epistles of Paul, to prevent what Scripture has warned us about so clearly. And the first principle of precaution is: ***Paul’s inspired and infallible epistles will never contradict themselves, so if a reading of one Pauline passage contradicts another Pauline passage, that reading is wrong.***

For example, someone is wrong if they believe Paul was saying they should not obey GOD’s commandments when they read: **Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.**<sup>349</sup>

Anyone who thinks that passage was about GOD’s Commandments instead of the Levitical law is desperately and dangerously wrong! And Paul himself proves it, because he wrote: “**Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.**”<sup>350</sup> and “**Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.**”<sup>351</sup>

But Paul’s writings are not the only Scripture that contradicts the lie that we should not obey GOD’s commandments! No, just before He taught about several of the 10 Commandments, JESUS said: “**Whoever therefore loosens**<sup>352</sup> **one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom**

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<sup>348</sup> Jude 1:4

<sup>349</sup> Romans 7:4

<sup>350</sup> Romans 7:12

<sup>351</sup> 1 Corinthians 7:19

<sup>352</sup> Literal translation of loo'-o: to loose any person (or thing) tied or fastened

of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>353</sup>

Plus, JESUS answered the question: “**Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?**”<sup>354</sup> by saying: “**Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.**”<sup>355</sup> So JESUS certainly taught that we should keep the Commandments!

Therefore, Precautionary Pauline Rule Number 2 is: ***Paul’s inspired and infallible epistles will never contradict JESUS, so if a reading of any Pauline passage contradicts the recorded words of JESUS, that reading is wrong.***

After all, Paul himself wrote: **If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.**<sup>356</sup> So, we should never listen to anyone who contradicts JESUS, and we should remember: Paul would never do such a thing!

But Paul and JESUS are not alone in teaching the fundamental truth that we should keep GOD’s commandments. No, the rest of the Apostles taught the same thing! For example, John wrote: **Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.**<sup>357</sup>

And we not only prove that we *know* JESUS by keeping His commandments, John also explains: **By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.**<sup>358</sup>

Truly, love for GOD has always been demonstrated by keeping His commandments, just as hatred toward GOD has always been demonstrated by breaking His commandments!<sup>359</sup>

Therefore, it is written: **Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.**<sup>360</sup>

And all of these passages lead us to Precautionary Pauline Rule Number 3, which states:

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<sup>353</sup> Matthew 5:19

<sup>354</sup> Matthew 19:16

<sup>355</sup> Matthew 19:17

<sup>356</sup> 1 Timothy 6:3-5

<sup>357</sup> 1 John 2:3-4

<sup>358</sup> 1 John 5:2-3

<sup>359</sup> For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. Exodus 20:5b-6

<sup>360</sup> Revelation 22:14

***Paul's inspired and infallible epistles will never contradict the rest of the Apostolic Scriptures, so if a reading of any Pauline passage contradicts any of the non-Pauline books of the Apostolic Scriptures, that reading is wrong.***

Yes, if we are to obey Peter's admonition to: "**beware lest we also fall from our own steadfastness**" we must always harmonize Paul's letters with the rest of the Scriptures to avoid "**the error of the lawbreaker**".

And we must never forget: Paul's epistles were not written in a theological vacuum! No, they were written by **one of many disciples of JESUS**, who fully embraced everything JESUS ever did or said, as well as all of the holy Scriptures JESUS taught and reinforced!

But we broke down the simple concept of Paul **agreeing** with JESUS and all of his fellow Apostles and Disciples into three separate principles because, sadly there are some deceived souls in the world today who think **only** Paul's letters apply directly to them.

They have been misled to believe that the Bible should be broken up into various dispensations, and only certain books should be applied during certain dispensations. Then, they have been told that only **Paul's** letters directly apply to this present dispensation.

Therefore, we must use Pauline Principle number 1 to show such deceived people who have been caught up in what is called "**Dispensationalism**" that their twisted readings of Paul's teachings actually contradict Paul's other writings.

Now once you get a Christian past the dangerous notion that only Paul's writings apply to them, they should obviously consider JESUS an unquestionable authority; especially since Paul himself condemned those who did not consent to the LORD's doctrine.

Therefore, because of the dangerous doctrines of dispensationalism, **only** when it comes to these precautionary rules regarding Paul's letters, JESUS is mentioned in rule number two.

Then, since neither Paul nor the rest of the Apostles would ever contradict JESUS, we can use the rest of the non-Pauline Apostolic Scriptures to test our interpretation of Paul's epistles, to verify we are reading his inspired words correctly.

But we have kept our attention on the Apostolic Scriptures, since there are many who have been deceived into thinking that the pre-Apostolic Scriptures no longer apply to them.

And rule number 3 leads us to Precautionary Pauline Rule Number 4, which states: ***Never forget the historical details recorded in Scripture that help us understand the challenges Paul was addressing, especially the writings of Luke.*** Truly, just as Paul's letters were not written in a theological vacuum, they were not written in a historical vacuum either.

Therefore, if Paul was teaching what many false teachers misinterpret Paul's letters to say, there should be at least one large controversy recorded in the book of Acts that reflects those interpretations. However, the only recorded internal controversies in Acts

revolve around **cultural differences** and **fleshly ordinances** such as circumcision and Levitical food regulations.

Yes, while there are 0 internal Church debates in Acts regarding the necessity of repentance from sin and obedience to GOD's commandments, there **is** actually one conflict recorded between the Hebrews and the Hellenists; two groups that were separated on only one **cultural** issue, and that issue was **language**.

Luke recorded: **Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.**<sup>361</sup>

**The Hebrews** were Jews that read and spoke Hebrew as their primary language, and preferred the Scriptures in Hebrew; and **the Hellenists** were Jews who read and spoke Greek, and preferred the Greek Septuagint.

And Luke documented: the Hellenists were upset that their widows were not having their needs met when food donations were divided among the needy each day. So, when their complaint reached the ears of **the Apostles**, the response of the Twelve was recorded.

They said: **"It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."**<sup>362</sup>

Then Luke wrote: **The saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.**<sup>363</sup>

Because **all** of the names Luke recorded are Greek names that have clear meanings in the Greek language, we can see that the people appointed 7 Hellenists to oversee the daily distribution. And this ended the first **internal** Church debate recorded in the book of Acts.

But the effects of that first recorded internal debate echo on in Paul's epistles, especially because this was the moment when the office of "**deacon**" was established! In fact, the word "**deacon**" originated in the verb the Apostles used in Acts chapter 6, verse two, that is translated here as "**serve**".

So, Paul was not inventing a new office in the Church when he wrote: **Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses**

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<sup>361</sup> Acts 6:1

<sup>362</sup> Acts 6:2-4

<sup>363</sup> Acts 6:5

**well. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.**<sup>364</sup>

Clearly, Paul was simply giving Timothy certain qualifications to carefully verify in a candidate before appointing them as a deacon in the Church. So, Paul concluded: **These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.**<sup>365</sup>

Just as Luke's record of the dispute between the Hebrews and Hellenists helps us understand the origin of the word "**deacon**", a word that only Paul wrote about to refer to an appointed office in the Church; Luke's record of **the Acts 15 debate** helps us understand the real historical context behind Paul's most frequently misunderstood arguments involving the Law.

We must remember Acts chapter 15, as we read: **For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.**<sup>366</sup>

Many untaught and unstable people have dangerously twisted this passage, and they wrongly believe it teaches that "*JESUS nailed the 10 Commandments to the cross so we no longer have to obey them*". But could you imagine the controversy such a teaching would have created?

If circumcision and Levitically unclean foods created such a controversy in the Church that it had to be decided by the only Apostolic council ever recorded in the Bible, what sort of controversy would have been created if someone taught the 10 Commandments were abolished?!

Obviously, the Apostles would have publicly rebuked Paul and they would have recorded such a controversy in the Bible with a warning to disregard Paul's teachings! But no such controversy was recorded, because Paul was simply restating the results of the Jerusalem council in the passage in question.

Yes, the foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances of the Levitical Law along with mandatory physical circumcision were the topics addressed in Acts chapter 15. And Paul was speaking about the Jerusalem decision that stated the Gentiles did not ever have to observe such things to be accepted into the Church, when He spoke of JESUS taking those things out of the way.

Truly, we see that circumcision and Levitical cleanliness did create hostility between the Jew and the Gentile, when we read: **When Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men and**

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<sup>364</sup> 1 Timothy 3:8-13

<sup>365</sup> 1 Timothy 3:14-15

<sup>366</sup> Ephesians 2:14-16

ate with them!”<sup>367</sup>

But JESUS “has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace”!

Because of the cross of JESUS and the grace of GOD, physically uncircumcised Gentiles can now sit with Jews at the same table, and eat of **all** of GOD’s created creatures. So, Paul wrote: **Remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands— that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**<sup>368</sup>

And then Paul concluded: **Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of GOD.**<sup>369</sup>

Can you see how this passage flowed out of the conclusion of the Acts 15 debate? It was a debate about Gentiles and circumcision; and this is a passage about Gentiles and circumcision.

Yes, in Acts chapter 15, the Apostles recognized that circumcision and the Levitical Laws were not required for the Gentiles to be declared pure enough to become living “**temples of the HOLY SPIRIT**”! And they officially stated that the Gentiles were not required to practice the Levitical aspects of the Law.

So, the Levitical aspects of the Law were what JESUS “**abolished in His flesh**”! And GOD declared those aspects were abolished by tearing the veil of the Holy of Holies from top to bottom when JESUS gave up His Spirit on the cross.

But when false teachers read Ephesians chapter 2 as if it existed in a theological and historical vacuum, they can twist Paul’s words to mean whatever they want them to mean. And by doing so, they deceive people into “**breaking through the restraint of the law to fulfill their fleshly lusts**”.

But one more defense we can use to avoid such dangerous error, is Precautionary Pauline Rule Number 5. This rule states: ***Paul’s arguments always contain repeated themes that help identify the real point he is making and define his terms, so we must study all of his arguments all the way through before drawing any conclusions.***

And one easy-to-follow example of the need for this rule is found in Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians. There he wrote: **Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?**<sup>370</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> Acts 11:2-3

<sup>368</sup> Ephesians 2:11-13

<sup>369</sup> Ephesians 2:19

<sup>370</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:29

The fact is: this passage has led some to practice baptism for the dead, and that practice continues to this very day. But these two sentences are taken from a much larger argument, and they cannot be properly interpreted until we identify the beginning and the end of the argument in question.

So, to identify **the entire argument** we must look for the repeated theological words and concepts and note when Paul changes topics in his epistle. And when we do this, we see that chapter 14 ends with Paul discussing spiritual gifts, and chapter 15 shifts topics to the gospel, and the resurrection from the dead that the good news hinges upon.

Please note the main point Paul is driving at in the following verses. He wrote: **Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.**<sup>371</sup>

Above all else, the passage is discussing the resurrection of JESUS our LORD, and the witnesses who saw JESUS risen from the dead.

Then, after a brief detour to discuss how he was born out of due time, Paul came back to his main point, by writing: **Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!**<sup>372</sup>

Then, after another detour to discuss how the resurrection ties into GOD's plan for human history, Paul returns to his main point, by asking: **Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead? And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour?**<sup>373</sup>

So, in the larger context of the complete argument, when we temporarily set aside the detours and side arguments Paul wove into his main argument, we see that some of the saints in Corinth were saying "**there is no resurrection of the dead**". That was the error Paul was correcting. And, even without the side arguments, Paul effectively argued that it is utterly ridiculous for a Christian to deny the resurrection of the dead.

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<sup>371</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

<sup>372</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:12-17

<sup>373</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:29-30

After stating the error some of them believed, Paul showed them how inconsistent their belief was, by pointing out the consequences of such a statement. If they were right, then JESUS did not really rise from the dead. If they were right, the preaching of the resurrection was an empty deception, and so was their faith. And if they were right, the Apostles were bearing false witness.

Then Paul added: if they were right, and “**there is no resurrection of the dead**”, then they were baptized in the name of a dead man. Plus, many Christians were suffering and dying for nothing, if they were right that “**there is no resurrection of the dead**”.

So, when we look at verses 29 and 30 in the context of Paul’s larger argument, we see: he was showing them how many truths of the Christian faith their dangerous assertion overthrew.

And he concluded by stating very clearly JESUS was resurrected from the dead, and one day soon, the saints will be also. Plus, Paul systematically defeated every possible objection the doubters in Corinth might have raised against resurrection. Then he proved that resurrection was how the words of the prophets would be fulfilled.

Yes, Paul was relying on the authority of the pre-Apostolic Scriptures as the final argument for the resurrection of the dead, when he wrote: **So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?”**<sup>374</sup>

But those who don’t keep Paul’s words in their immediate context, historical context, theological context, covenantal context, apostolic context, or Messianic context, often twist the words of Paul.

Meanwhile, those of us who listen to the warnings of Peter and Jude take certain precautions when we read Paul’s epistles. And we make sure to harmonize them with all of the Scriptures: from the very first Hebrew word of Genesis to the very last Greek word of Revelation.

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<sup>374</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:54-55