

## Galatians, pt. 11 (Read 2:1-10)

### Review of Chapter 1

We begin chapter 2 today, of Paul's epistle to the Galatians. We learned a lot going through the material in chapter 1.

We learned that Paul wrote this epistle to the saints among the nations, specifically the saints Galatia. These people had grown up outside the land of Israel, many of them worshipping heathen mighty ones. They had come to faith in Yeshua as the Messiah (Son of Yahweh), but were uncircumcised and foreign to much of the Torah.

We then learned that the gospel is paramount. The good news of Messiah is something that should not be negotiated. Adding something to Yeshua for salvation meant that you distorted the gospel, and Paul pronounced a curse upon people who did this.

We also learned that Shaul received his gospel in a unique way. He didn't sit in on a gospel sermon. He got it directly from the Master. Yeshua the Son of Yahweh knocked Saul of Tarsus down on his way to persecute believers, and changed his focus.

And in our last couple of lessons, we talked about Saul staying in Damascus and Arabia for 3 years, and then going up to Jerusalem, to get to know Kepha (Peter) and Ya'acov (James). **Today we're going to see how much he respected these brothers.** He revered their authority in Messiah. It's just that he did not *receive* his gospel from them.

### Galatians Two

Galatians 2:1 says that 14 years later Saul went back to Jerusalem, so it was a long time between his first trip to Jerusalem as a Messianic believer, and his second trip, back to Jerusalem.

### Barnabus and Titus

Paul took two men with him. One was Barnabus, a Hebrew. His name was actually Yoseph (Joseph) and they called him Bar-Naba which is Aramaic for "Son of Encouragement or Consolation." He must have been a really nice fellow to get a nickname like that.

Barnabus had been with Saul for a long time. He was the man who first brought Saul to the apostles, and explained to them how Saul had met Yeshua on the road to Damascus, and how in Damascus, Saul had spoken boldly in the name of Yeshua.

In Acts 11:24 Barnabus is called a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith. Barnabus was a Levite who had grown up in the Hebrew faith, circumcised the 8th day, and was taught the Torah his entire life. He was one of the early covenant Israelites to come to faith in the Messiah.

But Paul didn't only take Barnabus with him to Jerusalem in Galatians 2:1. He also took another man named Titus. Titus was not a Hebrew. Galatians 2:3 calls Titus a Greek.

## Two Types of People

The reason Paul brings Barnabus and Titus with him is to represent the two types of people receiving the gospel. Judahite and Gentile. Yehudim and Goyim. Hebrew and Heathen. Circumcised and Uncircumcised. Titus wasn't raised in the land of Israel. Titus wasn't circumcised on the 8th day, because his parents did not follow Torah. Titus was a man who came to faith in Yeshua outside of being part of the Yehudim in Israel.

Anyone that was NOT attached to Judah, Jerusalem, and the worship of Yahweh, was considered an outsider.

## More on the word Gentile

The word Gentiles in the NT is a word that describes non-covenant people. Sure, I believe that the word can describe divorced, scattered Israelites, but I do not believe the word is limited to divorced Israelites, exclusively. The word, as it is used predominantly in the NT, is a word to describe heathen people that are not members of the covenant of Yahweh. (*It's used this way in the OT; i.e. Leviticus 26:33, 38 LXX*)

When Yeshua, in teaching us to love our enemies, says in Matthew 5:47, "And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing out of the ordinary? Don't even the Gentiles do the same?" ...he is talking about heathens. He likely used the word *goyim* in Hebrew (or the Aramaic equivalent), but the point is the same. He was speaking of heathen people that greet each other as heathens.

My point is that if you were not in covenant with Yahweh in Jerusalem. If you were not a Yehudim that grew up serving Yahweh, it did not matter what your ancestral background was. It did not matter if your great grandfather was an Israelite before he got scattered and sifted into the nations, you were still considered outside of the covenant just as much as a Barbarian or Scythian (and we will talk about those groups in a later sermon).

To the Judahites in the first century, there existed two groups of people: (1) themselves in covenant with Yahweh, and (2) everybody else outside of the covenant, and Titus would have been considered outside of the covenant because he was not a Judahite.

## How These Two Receive Salvation

So Paul brings these two men with him to represent the two types of people that have received the gospel. Both Judahite (Yoseph Bar-Naba) and Gentile (Titus). Both circumcised and uncircumcised. In order to receive the forgiveness of sins, each man had to place their faith in the Son of Yahweh. Each man had to believe in Yeshua. It was the same message of salvation for both Barnabus and Titus.

It wasn't "believe in Yeshua" for Barnabus, and then "believe in Yeshua PLUS be circumcised and become a Judahite" for Titus. No, that would be a **distortion of the gospel**. The same gospel that was preached to the Judahites was also preached to the uncircumcised Greeks (outside the land of Israel), and Paul was bringing *both* with him, back to Jerusalem, as a representation of how Yahweh was working with *both* groups of people.

### **The Revelation of the Famine**

Moving on, in Galatians 2:2 we learn that the reason Paul went back to Jerusalem after all these years was because of a revelation. This revelation is a prophecy from a man named Agabus, mentioned in Acts 11:28 and following. Agabus was a prophet who had been shown by the Spirit that there would be a severe famine throughout the inhabited earth, and that this would hit the brothers in Judea fiercely. So the congregations in Messiah began sending material relief for the victims of the famine in Judea (before the famine ever happened), and one of the ways they did this was by the hands of Barnabus and Saul.

The early Judean believers in Yeshua lived very frugal. The book of Acts records for us that they all pooled their possessions together. They would give what they owned to the apostles, and the apostles would distribute to each person as there was a need. You can read about this in Acts 2:45 and also Acts 4:32-37. They weren't rich people materially.

As the Scripture commands, we are required to give to the poor, especially to those of the household of faith, so this is what the more wealthy Messianic believers were doing by sending relief to the congregations in Judea.

### **Paul Presents his Gospel**

In the second half of Galatians 2:2, Paul goes on to write that he went to Jerusalem to present to the leaders (or elders) the gospel he preached among the nations - but he did this **privately**, so that he might not be running in vain.

This is a key point that I'd like to spend the rest of this lesson discussing. We learned in chapter 1 that Paul did not *receive* his gospel from man, but here at the beginning of chapter 2 we get balance; we learn that this did not mean he disrespected the authority of the elders in Jerusalem.

When Paul went to Jerusalem to present what he had been doing, how he had been (1) teaching the gospel to the Gentiles, and (2) how when the Gentiles received the gospel, he didn't force them to become a Judahite through ritual circumcision... When he visited Jerusalem to discuss this, he didn't just bust into the city and start shouting all of this. He went *privately to the elders* and discussed the matter.

### **Paul Seeks Peace and Unity**

Now I see in this how Paul was a man of peace and unity. Paul didn't want to stir up discord with his message. He instead wanted to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3), and go and talk about this in private with the leaders in the congregation at Jerusalem. Men like Kepha, Ya'acov, and Yohanan. Galatians 2:9 calls these men **PILLARS** of the church. These were special men with authority. **These were men Yeshua had given authority to**, and thus the power of binding and loosing.

There is an early tradition concerning the authority of Ya'acov (James) the brother of Yeshua (remember Paul calls him the Lord's brother in Galatians 1:19). In an early A.D. manuscript we find this saying, "The disciples said to Yeshua, 'We know that you will depart

from us. Who is to be our leader?' Yeshua said to them, 'Wherever you are, you are to go to Ya'acov the Righteous, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being.'

That last phrase was a figure of speech used by the Yehudim to speak of someone with high authority upon the earth. Ya'acov had such authority. The early church historian Eusebius records that the apostles selected Ya'acov as the bishop of the Jerusalem congregation. Eusebius tells us that James' great piety is why he acquired the surname "the Just" or "the Righteous." It is recorded that James was allowed to enter the holy place in the temple, and he would kneel to pray for the forgiveness of the people, so much so that his knees became like pads on a camel's knees. Paul respected this authority that James had been given.

Paul wanted to make certain that he wasn't running in vain. This means he wanted to make sure he wasn't preaching for naught; that he wasn't doing anything wrong by allowing the Gentiles to receive the same salvation in Messiah as the Judahites, even though they were uncircumcised.

The leadership authority was respected. Paul trusted that if he was preaching properly, he'd get the approval of the elders in Jerusalem. They would be on board with his message if his message was really heavenly truth.

### **Respecting the Leadership**

Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey your LEADERS, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you."

Earlier in that same chapter, Hebrews 13:7 says, "Remember your leaders who have spoken the Almighty's word to you. As you carefully observe the outcome of their lives, imitate their faith."

1 Corinthians 16:15-16 says, "Brothers, you know the household of Stephanas; they are the firstfruits of Achaia and have devoted themselves to serving the saints. I urge you also to submit to such people, and to everyone who works and labors with them."

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 says, "Now we ask you brothers, to give recognition to those who labor among you and lead you in the Master and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work."

Yeshua told Peter in Matthew 16:19, "I will give YOU the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Binding and loosing in this context is not about casting out devils (as I was taught growing up), but about the power to make ruling decisions upon the earth. (*see Matthew 18:15-20*)

The original apostles and elders that knew Yeshua were given the authority to make decisions based upon *their* understanding of the scriptures. The congregations had to trust that Yahweh would work through these men, and lead through these men. This is what the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 is all about, and look who leads it up: Peter and James. Acts 15:2 says that Paul and Barnabus (among others) went to **the apostles and elders in Jerusalem** concerning this controversy. The elders in Jerusalem ultimately make the decision that - YES, the Gentiles can have salvation by grace through faith without getting circumcised, i.e. without becoming a Judahite through proselytizing.

I believe Paul understood this authority structure from the Torah. Remember, he knew the Torah profoundly. He knew Deuteronomy 17:8-13 which says, "If any case arises requiring decision between one kind of homicide and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another, any case within your towns that is too difficult for you, then you shall arise and go up to the place that Yahweh your Mighty One will choose. And you shall come to the Levitical priests and to the judge who is in office in those days, and you shall consult them, and they shall declare to you the decision. Then you shall do according to what they declare to you from that place that Yahweh will choose. And you shall be careful to do according to all that they direct you. According to the instructions that they give you, and according to the decision which they pronounce to you, you shall do. You shall not turn aside from the verdict that they declare to you, either to the right hand or to the left. The man who acts presumptuously by not obeying the priest who stands to minister there before Yahweh your Mighty One, or the judge, that man shall die. So you shall purge the evil from Israel. And all the people shall hear and fear and not act presumptuously again." (*see Exodus 18:18-26*)

Yeshua gave to his apostles the same authority that the Levite priest and judge had in the days of Moses.

### **Your Local Congregation**

Yahweh works in authority structures. When you join a congregation today, you are in essence saying that you trust the established elders of that congregation. You aren't saying they are perfect. You aren't saying they can't make a mistake. But you are saying, "I am joining this congregation because I trust the elders that lead this congregation."

If you are sitting here today, and you consider me your pastor, then you must have a strong amount of trust that Yahweh is leading and guiding me in the work I am doing. Whatever congregation a person decides to join, he or she should join with the knowledge of submitting to the elders in that congregation, and the overseer in that congregation.

And if we only submit when we agree, then are we really submitting? If my wife and I discuss a matter, and I express to her (after hearing her out), that I really think we need to move in a different direction, is she submitting to my headship if she fights me? No, she wouldn't be. Submission is seen most clearly when we submit to authority, when we disagree with that authority, out of respect for the office.

Now please don't misunderstand me, I'm not saying to blindly follow me or any man. **There is always an amount of tension that comes when you see something different in the scriptures than the man or men you've put your trust in to lead you.** The two extremes people opt for in this tension are generally the wrong reaction.

What I'm saying is this: respect the office of authority that Yahweh places in his assembly. I've told people that if I did not have this congregation, I would find one where I trusted the leadership, and I would join that congregation.

And if I had a dispute with the elders or the overseer, I wouldn't spread dissension in the body, I would privately, as Paul did, go to the leaders, and seek to express my views and study the matter out with the leaders. I would do everything in my power to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

If I continued to disagree with the leadership, but it wasn't a matter of eternal salvation, I would submit to the authority structure I placed myself under when I joined that congregation, and not sow discord among the brethren.

### **Our Lone Ranger Mentality**

I think we've inherited a lone ranger mentality to some degree from our Protestant ancestors; a mentality that thinks we are all by our self in interpreting the bible, and we don't need anyone else telling us what it means. Instead of SOLA scriptura we go with SOLO scriptura. We don't speak like the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8, "How can I understand, unless someone guides me?" Or Gamliel, the teacher Shaul sat under. It is recorded that one of his sayings was: "Do not rely on your own interpretation. Take upon yourself a teacher, and remove all doubt."

I've talked to people that have told me they don't read commentaries on the bible, because that's just the words of man. Then those same people go on to give me their commentary on the bible by explaining to me their understanding. (Men like Adam Clarke devoted a large majority of his life writing a commentary on the whole bible, and you're just gonna' act like that's no big deal?)

Listen, we are in this together, and we should all learn from one another. Paul could learn from Peter and James, and Peter and James could learn from Paul, but Paul understood that when it came down to the final straw, he had to present what he was doing to the Jerusalem elders so that he could make sure he wasn't running in vain.

Now, I don't like talking about me being the pastor here. I had a lady the other day call me Reverend Matthew. I corrected her, and told her, "Just call me brother Matthew." But, I am the overseer here, and I do believe Yahweh has placed me in that position. I promise you I will do my best not to lord over you, but instead be an example to you. I won't try to beat you over the head with anything, and I won't use this pulpit for a whipping post. I love the sheep here at this congregation. You all are so very precious to me.

And if and when you come to me about a matter, I will listen and take to heart everything you say, but if we end up disagreeing for the time being, you've got to make a decision. You've got to ask yourself, "Do I believe Yahweh is working through my pastor/teacher/shepherd or not?" If your answer is yes, then do as Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give account, so that they can do this with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable to you."

If you don't believe that Yahweh is working through your pastor and shepherd, then that is between you and Yahweh. I will still love you and be kind to you if we part ways.

Do you love Yahweh today? Do you still love me today? You're commanded to love me, and I am commanded to love you.

Some of what I said today, I did not want to say, but I felt I had to teach on it, because of what the text here says in Galatians 2:2. Paul understood the authority structure in his day, and I believe had the elders at Jerusalem told Paul that he was preaching wrongly, he would have re-evaluated himself, and submitted to Kepha and Ya'acov.

We'll pick this up next week in verse 3.

## **Galatians, Pt. 12 (Read 2:1-10)**

### **Intro and Review**

In Galatians chapter 2, Paul gives us a historical account for why he wrote this epistle. Chapter 1 was his introductory, in which he defended his apostleship.

### **Chapter 1 Review**

There's no other explanation for Paul's apostleship than a supernatural one. He didn't change to excel in the eyes of man. He was already excelling in man's eyes in Judaism. He didn't change to have a better life. His change brought on severe persecution. His change brought on people attempting to murder him for his belief.

Paul's change was from heaven. He encountered the glorified Yeshua; the Yeshua who had been raised from the dead by Yahweh, and then went to heaven to live with Yahweh. That's what happened to Paul. There's no other explanation. Paul is proof that Yahweh can change the hardest of hearts. The very heart you don't think Yahweh can change, He can change.

Paul didn't receive his gospel from men, this is true, but last week we saw that he had great respect for the men who had believed in Yeshua before him; the men who were the direct apostles of the Master (like Kepha and Yochanan), and the man who was the very brother of Yeshua (Ya'acov).

## Chapter 2:1-2 Review

Paul had been preaching his gospel to the nations for quite some time, but when he finally got around to going back to Jerusalem, in order to bring famine relief to the poor saints, he went privately to the leaders of the Jerusalem congregation. The bible tells us why he went privately to them: he wanted to make sure he had not been running in vain.

Even though we only covered the first 2 verses last week, we read verses 1-10 last week and now this week, and we've seen that Paul was not running in vain, i.e. preaching for naught. The pillars in the Jerusalem congregation gave Paul and Barnabus the right hand of fellowship according to verse 9.

What was it that the pillars in the congregation agreed with Paul on? It was that an uncircumcised-Gentile-heathen could receive the forgiveness of sins and a place in the New Covenant apart from becoming a Yehudim (Judahite) through ritual circumcision.

## To Israel First

At first, the only people that had the gospel preached to them were Israelites. Specifically those in the southern kingdom of Judah, but also to Israelites of other tribes that may have been inside the land of Israel. All of the men were circumcised. All of the women were in families where circumcision was taught and practiced. The Torah was paramount in the homes of these people.

The gospel went out to these people first, and also to proselytes to Judaism, to people who had adopted the religion of Judaism through ritual circumcision, a traditional mikvah (baptism), a sacrifice at the temple, and all proselytes were Torah observant.

So when the gospel was preached to circumcised Israelites (and circumcised proselytes); when Yeshua's life, death, burial, and resurrection was preached to these people, some accepted and others rejected. Only those Israelites who accepted had the right to be called the children of Yahweh (John 1:11-12). Those who rejected the message about Yeshua, rejected Yahweh's salvation.

When an Israelite received the gospel, there was no need to worry about getting him circumcised, or getting a man (or woman) to observe the law of Moses. Why? That is something he (or she) was already doing. Israelites that grew up attached to Jerusalem (the capital city of Israel), where the Temple stood, were already Torah observant. They were already a set apart people.

## The Gospel to the Gentiles

But when a Gentile... a heathen... someone uncircumcised... a worshiper of false, pagan mighty ones... someone NOT in the covenant of Israel... when *they* heard the gospel preached to them (as Paul was doing), and they received Yeshua, there was a dilemma: **they are uncircumcised, and they are not Torah observant.** They have not grown up in a home where any worship to Yahweh was done. In fact, they may have been a worshiper of Zeus, Aphrodite, Dionysus, or Diana, the Greek gods and goddesses of that time in the known world.



Paul's gospel was that these heathen people that accepted the message about Yeshua (the Son of Yahweh), had the forgiveness of sins and a right standing with Yahweh as covenant members, apart from physical circumcision and the works of the Torah. But some of the Judahite-Israelite believers in Yeshua did not agree.

Galatians 2:1-2 tells us that Paul brought Barnabus and Titus with him to Jerusalem. Barnabus was a circumcised Hebrew. Titus was an uncircumcised Greek. But both men had placed their faith in Yeshua Messiah, the Son of Yahweh.

### **This Week's Lesson, 2:3-5 - Circumcision**

Galatians 2:3-4 says, "But not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. This issue arose because of false brothers smuggled in, who came in secretly to spy on our freedom that we have in Messiah Yeshua, in order to enslave us."

Now, I want to get your mind thinking today on these verses. Would it have been okay for Titus to get circumcised? Yes. That wouldn't have been a problem at all.

I was circumcised as a little boy, at the hospital. Not because my parents were Jewish, and not because they obeyed Torah, but because here in the United States for a while now, it has been looked upon as a proper *medical* procedure for little boys. But this procedure is not practiced by most of the world today.

Let me read a section from the online *Circumcision Reference Library*, Urologic Clinics of North America, V12 #1, pages 123-132, February 1985, we read:

"The continuing practice of routine neonatal nonreligious circumcision represents an enigma, particularly in the United States. About 80 percent of the world's population do *not* practice circumcision, nor have they ever done so. Among the non-circumcising nations are Holland, Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Scandinavia, the U.S.S.R., China, and Japan. People employing circumcision do so either for "health" reasons or as a religious ritual practiced by Muslims, Jews, most black Africans, non-white Australians, and others."

If you continue to read the article, you will find that the reason for routine baby circumcisions in the USA goes back only to the late 1800's, and was adopted then because of a belief of the *health benefits* of the practice

I was circumcised as a baby, not on the 8th day (as the command in scripture for Abraham's descendants prescribes), but nevertheless as a baby. Does my circumcision make me ineligible for salvation in Messiah? No way, not at all.

So would the simple act of obeying the commandment of circumcision cause Titus to forfeit his right to salvation? Of course not. Titus could have gotten circumcised, and he would have been just as saved afterwards as he was before.

### **The Big Issue with Titus**

But... and here's the big issue... Paul says Titus wasn't *compelled* to be circumcised meaning he wasn't *FORCED* to be circumcised, and the issue arose because of the false brothers who came in to investigate what was going on with Paul's gospel to the Gentiles.

These false brothers, and Paul calls them false, were distorting the gospel by adding circumcision or becoming a proselyte, to the gospel. Remember in chapter 1 where Paul speaks of a different gospel? He says it's not really another gospel, it's just that some are attempting to distort (twist) the gospel of Messiah. Paul pronounces a curse on such people, and this is why Paul calls these men here "false brothers."

These men profess faith in Yeshua, yet they are going around, behind Paul's authorized preaching, and they are telling the Gentiles that have accepted Yeshua: "You aren't really saved until you get circumcised, and become a proselyte to Judah." **That's adding to the gospel.**

This is why Titus wasn't forced to be circumcised. To force Titus to get circumcised, under the pressure of these false brothers, would in essence be saying that they were correct, and that circumcision was a pre-requisite to salvation for the Gentiles. Titus would have become the trophy for the false brothers. They would have boasted in his circumcision, much like they boasted in their own.

### **Gentile Freedom in Salvation**

The freedom that the Gentiles had in the Messiah Yeshua was freedom from having to obey a law, specifically circumcision, **in order to have their sins forgiven**. Remember, they grew up as heathens. They weren't Torah observant like the Judahites who accepted Yeshua.

According to verse 4, this teaching was an attempt to bring bondage upon the Gentiles. That's because, as soon as you start teaching that a person has to keep *a* law (or *the* law in general) to receive the forgiveness of sins, you are taking the emphasis off of what Yeshua has done for us, and placing the emphasis on something we do for Yeshua.

**And** you are placing a yoke upon someone's neck that is impossible for them or you or anyone to bear. Why? Because every single person, Judahite or Gentile, has transgressed the law of Almighty Yahweh. Even many of the circumcised Israelites in the first century were wicked transgressors of the law, yet they walked around like they were the holiest thing to hit Jerusalem. Yes, they were circumcised in the flesh, but not in the heart.

### **Wicked Israelites**

The scribes and Pharisees of Matthew 23 were Israelites. Yeshua acknowledged their authority in the seat of Moses. Yeshua even said they did some things right, like paying their tithes that the law commanded. But Yeshua called them serpents, whitewashed tombs, hypocrites, and liars. Why? Because their faith rested in their own works. They trusted in their self and their own genealogy to bring them salvation.

When John the Baptizer preached by the river Jordan, he cried out to the scribes and Pharisees, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand! Produce fruit consistent with repentance! And don't just tell me 'We have Abraham as our father!' for Yahweh is able to raise up descendants of Abraham from these stones!"

John was expressing to the Pharisees that their genealogy didn't mean a hill of beans when it came to genuine salvation. To proclaim "father Abraham" in the first century was shorthand for being an Israelite. It wasn't just saying "Abraham is my father through Ishmael or one of Keturah's sons," It was saying, "Abraham is my father through Isaac, and Jacob." But Yochanan the baptizer was saying, "Don't bring me your genealogy thinking that saves you. Don't bring me your circumcision. Humble yourselves! Acknowledge you are a sinner! Repent!"

### **No Budging Off the Gospel**

The false brothers that smuggled themselves in to investigate Paul's gospel to the Gentiles had the same mentality as these Pharisees. "Whoa, whoa, whoa! You can't tell these heathens like Titus that their sins are forgiven by just believing! They aren't even circumcised! Titus needs to meet our criteria before he can be one of us! Circumcise him, make him go through our mikvah, take him to the temple and let him offer a sacrifice! Make him observe the whole Torah! Then his sins will be forgiven!"

Paul says in Galatians 2:5, "We did not yield in submission to these people for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain in you."

Paul did not compel Titus to become circumcised because of the teaching of these false brothers. Had Titus later came to Paul and said, "Paul, I'd like to be circumcised. I'd like to take on the Abrahamic sign. I'd like to eat the Passover," that would be great. There is nothing wrong at all with commandment of circumcision.

But that's not what happened. These false brothers wanted to force Titus to be circumcised so he could be saved, at least in their minds. And Paul said, "We are not budging off of this good news of Yeshua for even one hour! The truth of the good news of Messiah will remain with these Gentiles who have accepted Yeshua!"

### **What is our Message to Unbelievers?**

Brothers and sisters, we are Torah observant at this congregation, and that is a good thing, because the Torah is holy, just, and good. But if our main witness to unbelievers is about keeping a particular law instead of "Yeshua died for your sins against Yahweh's law, and it's only through faith in him that you'll be made righteous," then we are on thin ice of distorting the gospel.

If I witness to an unbeliever, and my primary message is teaching him how to wear a tunic, or make tassels, or not eat pork, or keep the Sabbath... I am bypassing his deadness in sin and his need for the Savior. An unbeliever doesn't need to learn how to keep the Torah in his or her own power. They need to learn how they haven't kept the Torah.

Learning areas of obedience is for someone who has already come to grips with the fact that they are a sinner and in desperate need of Yeshua the Son of Yahweh. Once someone experiences being born from above, THEN they will automatically want to please and love the Creator with their life, and obey His commandments.

But teaching unregenerate people how to observe laws as a natural, fleshly man or woman, is only going to make them think that their right-standing with Yahweh is based on something they are doing rather than something that has been done for them.

Listen, the Judahites in the first century were already Torah observant. They weren't sinless, but they observed the Torah, and they kept it better than any of us here today. **And they were still lost in their sins if they rejected Yeshua as their substitute.** All their works meant NOTHING, if they rejected the One whom Yahweh sent to them.

Paul said, "Nope, we aren't forcing Titus to get circumcised just because these men are smuggling themselves in and pushing him to do it. We aren't budging on it one bit. The truth of the gospel will remain. We are taking Titus with us to the meeting with the elders, and we are taking him with us uncircumcised."

My friends... are you trusting in something other than Yeshua for your salvation? I mean really ask yourself that question. Don't look around, don't worry about anyone else, just worry about yourself, be introspective. Are YOU trusting in some kind of work you are doing, as the ticket to your salvation? If so, repent today, and put all of your trust in the Savior Yahweh raised up. Yahweh sent him because you need Him. You can't be saved without Him. You can't save yourself. No good works that you do will ever be good enough to save your soul from eternal destruction.

Place your entire trust in Yeshua, the perfect-spotless-sinless Lamb today. That is the only way that you or I will ever be forgiven of our sin.

### **Galatians, pt. 13 (Read 2:1-10)**

#### **Review from Last Week**

In our last lesson I talked about the truth of the gospel, and how Paul didn't back down from this truth even for an hour. He stood firm in the face of some of the Judahites who wanted to force Titus the Greek to be circumcised. These brothers, or as Paul calls them - ***false brothers*** - believed that Titus was not saved by faith in Yeshua, while yet being uncircumcised. They believed he did not have a right standing with the Almighty, nor should he be looked upon as being equal with those in Judah who were circumcised.

#### **The Big Picture**

I don't want you to forget the big picture here. This is why we should study whole books of the bible at a time. Paul is writing all of this to the **Galatian Gentile believers in the Messiah**. The Galatians were getting off the track of the gospel, and beginning to fall into the trap of those who pushed circumcision for salvation.

Paul had already told them in chapter 1, "I am amazed that you are so quickly turning away from Him who called you by the grace of Messiah, and are turning to a different gospel."

I want you to understand this. The Galatians weren't just believing in circumcision. It wasn't like they were reading and studying, and decided that circumcision was a good commandment, and then Paul bashed them for it. Not at all. Paul was circumcised himself. There is nothing wrong with circumcision, and there is nothing wrong with being circumcised.

**But there is an enormous problem with thinking that the act of circumcision is what saves you from your sins, and places you in right standing with the Almighty.** The reason that is such a big problem is because it removes your trust off of Yeshua the Messiah, and places your trust in a work of the law. If your trust is not in Yeshua the perfect Lamb, you are still dead in your sins.

Well, the Galatians were headed in this direction. They were caving into the pressure that some of the Judahites had put on them. Paul had taught them during his missionary travels, but some of the Judahites who had professed to believe in Messiah had went behind Paul and stirred up a controversy. They were saying this: "You Gentiles aren't really in the faith unless you get circumcised. Your sins haven't really been forgiven. You want to be one of us? Then take upon yourselves our mark. Until then, you're second class."

### **Jumping off the Truth**

Sometimes you can hear the truth, believe the truth, be thankful for the truth, but then as time goes by someone comes along and causes you to question that truth. Instead of going back to your foundation, you jump on a bandwagon because someone pressures you into believing something.

Brothers and sisters, take time to research matters out before jumping on board with any and every teaching that comes down the pike. We live in a "have it now" age where people feel like something gets outdated after being circulated for 24 to 48 hours. Just because someone comes along and makes something sound good, doesn't mean it is good.

There are many people out there today who are only interested in stirring up controversy, and drawing away disciples for their own self. One of the things that Yahweh hates is "he that seweth discord among brethren." (Proverbs 6:19) And I'm a shepherd here not only to feed the sheep, but to drive away the wolves. In Acts 10:28-30, Paul told the elders of Ephesus to, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers, to shepherd the church of [Yahweh], which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. And men from among yourselves will rise up with deviant doctrines to lure the disciples into following them."

And I'm telling you to avoid these people. They are like a spiritual disease to your well-being in Messiah. Influencers that creep into a flock - wolves in sheep's clothing - always have a contrary agenda, and are never satisfied with the leadership. They always have a critical spirit, **and they always try to lead without leading**, by spreading division and planting seeds of dissension in the body of Messiah. Paul spoke of such people in Romans 16:17 when he said, "Now I implore you brothers, watch out for those who cause dissensions and pitfalls contrary to the doctrine you have learned. Avoid them."

### **Paul Warns the Galatians**

I believe that is what Paul is warning the believers about. These false brothers that crept it unawares, and told the Galatian Gentiles that they weren't really saved until they got circumcised, were wolves from the pits of hell.

But, and this astounds me, people were then jumping off of trusting in Yeshua to trusting in circumcision. I guess it shouldn't astound me, because as humans we want to feel like we have something to do with our salvation. We want to feel like our effort is what made us right with Yahweh. We're better than the next fellow because of something we did or who we think we are genetically. And it makes a human feel pride to be able to look down his or her nose at the next person.

**But oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive.** When we start placing our trust in who we are naturally, or on one thing that we do, instead of everything that Yeshua did, we have deceived ourselves, and are falling away from grace. And we will **never, ever, ever** have salvation, if we are trusting in a work we do instead of trusting in the One who did all of the good works, all of the time, without fail, never sinning, not even one time.

### **Did Paul "Throw Off" on the Elders?**

I want to pick this back up today with Galatians 2:6, which on the surface seems contradictory to what we covered in Galatians 2:2. Remember, in verse 2, Paul went privately to the leaders of the Jerusalem congregation to make certain he wasn't running in vain with the message he was teaching. I took an entire message to show that Paul respected their authority. Paul honored the brothers who had believed in Yeshua before him.

But now in verse 6, it sounds like (on the surface) he is throwing off on them. Look at it again:

**2:6** But from those recognized as important (what they really were makes no difference to me; the Almighty does not show favoritism) - those recognized as important added nothing to me.

Once again, you can read that in a way that sounds like he is just dismissing the Jerusalem elders flippantly. He is definitely talking about the leaders of the Jerusalem

congregation here. He mentions them as leaders in verse 2, and then also again in verse 9 where he calls Peter, James, and John pillars in the congregation.

Now, here we get to practice a particular method in Biblical interpretation. We have a verse in Galatians 2:2 that shows Paul respected the Jerusalem leadership so much that he first went and had a private meeting with them to discuss his gospel teaching to the Gentiles. Then in Galatians 2:9 he calls them pillars, which is a reference to a stone that holds something up. We also saw in the first sermon through Galatians chapter 2 the many parallel Biblical references to respecting leadership authority. For example, Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey your leaders, and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you."

Whenever you are studying a subject, and you run into *verse after verse after verse* that teaches something plainly and simply, and then all of a sudden you come to a verse that looks on the surface like it moves in another direction, don't interpret the many in light of the one, interpret the one in light of the many.

So what do we make of Galatians 2:6? Here's what I think Paul is doing. I think he is throwing off on the false brothers in Judah who esteem men like Peter, James, and John, while at the same time throw off on Paul.

In other words, the false brothers were acting like they had the backing of Peter, James, and John, and thus telling Paul, "You need to conform with us!"

Paul was saying, "No. Listen to me. You try to bring up my past to discredit me. I could bring up the past of these men too, but whatever the leaders **were** (before they came to the Messiah), is no different than who I was before I came to the Messiah."

Paul is not saying that their leadership authority makes no difference to him. He is rather saying that "what they WERE" or where they came from makes no difference to him. Yahweh does not show favoritism in this regard. He can call a fisherman, a tax collector, a carpenter, a septic tank man, or an anti-Messiah disciple at the feet of Gamliel. What we all **were** is not what is important. It's what we all are **now**, in Messiah.

Paul writes this to let his audience know that they shouldn't be concerned about his past life OR the past lives of the leaders at this point. Don't compare them with him, or him with them.

And when he says, "they added nothing to me," he is not saying that they didn't have any spiritual insight, or that he could care less what they told him. He is only making the point that they agreed with him on his gospel teaching to the Gentiles.

When Paul had the private meeting with the elders, and shared his gospel understanding, the elders were in agreement with Paul. They added nothing to his message. In other

words, "Paul, we agree. The Gentiles can be saved from their sins solely by grace through faith in Yeshua."

### **Two Apostles, Two Groups**

And then Paul goes on to explain what the elders saw during the meeting. He first says they added nothing to him, and then:

**2:7** On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter was for the circumcised.

**2:8** For He who was at work with Peter in the apostleship to the circumcised was also at work with me among the Gentiles.

The Jerusalem elders saw that Paul's gospel was legitimate. Yahweh and Yeshua were using Paul as a vessel to preach to the Gentiles, while Peter was being used as a vessel to preach to circumcised Israel. The same gospel was being taught to both groups, and that gospel was enough to save. Nothing needed to be added to the message of salvation.

I want you to notice something else here in verses 7 and 8, and that's how the word Gentiles is used interchangeably with uncircumcised. Verse 7 contrasts circumcised and uncircumcised, and then verse 8 makes the same contrast, but this time it uses the words circumcised and Gentiles. This further shows the point I've been making. If you grew up in the nations outside the land of Israel, and were uncircumcised, you were not considered part of Israel. You were considered a heathen. As a matter of fact, look at verse 9:

**2:9** When James, Cephas, and John, recognized as pillars, acknowledged the grace that had been given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to me and Barnabus, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

Now I just read that from the HCSB, but if you read it in the King James Version, it doesn't say Gentile in verse 9, it says "heathen." (*Same in Galatians 1:16; 3:8 KJV; and 2 Cor. 11:26*) Heathen is being contrasted with circumcised. In other words, you've got (1) circumcised Israel and (2) everyone else is considered a heathen Gentile.

### **The Elders Backed Paul's Gospel**

Now, let's take some more time on verse 9. Here Paul speaks of the Jerusalem elders as pillars, which is a prestigious title. Ya'acov, Kepha, and Yochanan are three of the original followers of Yeshua. They knew him personally. They are part of the foundation we are built upon. Remember where Paul says we are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Yeshua being the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20)? These three men are part of that apostolic foundation. And these three men gave the right hand of fellowship to what Paul and Barnabus had been preaching among the nations. They agreed, "Paul, keep on doing what you're doing, and we'll keep on doing what we are doing."



Paul received the apostolic seal of approval from the elders, so this means that we have to agree with their decision. The elders had the power to bind and loose. They had the authority of Yeshua, the power Yeshua gave to them, to make ruling decisions upon the earth, and then it would be done in heaven. And they ruled that Gentile heathens could be forgiven of their sin solely through faith in Yeshua, apart from physical circumcision.

What's funny here is that I've heard people say that they don't believe Paul is a genuine apostle. I've heard people talk very badly about Paul, saying he's a false apostle, and that his writings shouldn't be in the bible. As a leader here in this congregation, I counsel you to avoid such people. I have seen nothing but rotten fruit come off of the anti-Paul movement. I've even seen people who started in that direction eventually deny Yeshua as the Son of Yahweh, and start trusting in the works of the law for their salvation. I read of one lady who started with the anti-Paul doctrine, and eventually became an atheist.

I would admonish you that if any one of these anti-Paul people comes to you, bring them to me or brother Arnold, and you can sit in on the discussion. You tell them that you'd like to meet with them and the elders of your congregation.

But my point here in Galatians 2:9 is that the Jerusalem elders didn't reject Paul. They gave him the right hand of fellowship. You see this here, you see this in Acts 15 and you see this in Acts 21. The elders agreed with Paul's gospel to the Gentiles, and it's clear (when you examine all of the evidence) that Paul never taught the Judahite/Israelites to stop practicing circumcision or Torah observance. Those of the circumcision who came to believe in Yeshua were never told that they needed to stop all of that old stuff and start something new.

What Paul taught was that uncircumcised, heathen Gentiles, that had not grown up in Israel; that had not been raised in a Torah observant home; they could have salvation by grace through faith in Yeshua, period. No works of law added at all. The Judahites were saved from their sins by grace through faith in Messiah, and so were the uncircumcised heathens; by grace, through faith, in the Messiah that Yahweh sent, is the only plan of salvation that exists. All others are a distortion of the gospel.

### **Don't Forget About Us Paul**

Now I want to cover verse 10 before we end today, because that will close out one section here in Galatians 2, and the next time I teach we can begin delving into Galatians 2:11-21 (which is going to be such an enjoyable text).

Paul says in verse 10 that the elders did ask that he and Barnabus remember the poor (and Paul says they would certainly make the effort to do that). Why bring this up? What does remembering the poor have to do with the context that we've been talking about?

Well, giving to the poor in general is always a good thing to do, but I don't think that is what this verse is talking about. I think the elders had in mind a specific poor group, and that is the poor saints of Jerusalem.

Remember, that is why Paul and Barnabus went up to Jerusalem to begin with. To bring famine relief to the congregation of Messiah in Jerusalem. The congregation who sold all their possessions, and brought the money to the apostles, and then lived frugally and in common with everyone. It is these poor that the elders asked Paul and Barnabus to remember. In other words, "Preach the gospel to the Gentiles Paul, but don't forget about the mother assembly here in Jerusalem. Don't forget about where it all started."

If you make notes in your bible, write Acts 11:27-30 beside Galatians 2:10. That's where Agabus the prophet prophecies about the coming famine. Then also write Romans 15:25-27 there too. Let's turn to that one and read it.

Romans 15:25-27 // Now, however, I am traveling to Jerusalem to serve the saints; for Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution to the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual benefits, then they are obligated to minister to the Judahites in material needs.

Here Paul is making good on his promise. Paul was asked to remember - to not forget - the poor, and he never did. Every place he would go and preach among the nations, he would collect an offering for the poor saints in Jerusalem, just as he had been asked to do.

This is actually what 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 is speaking of when Paul asked the congregations of Galatia and Corinth to set aside something on the first day of the week, in accordance to how he prospered the week before, so that when he arrived he could collect the material, and carry a gracious gift to Jerusalem. 1 Corinthians 16 isn't talking about a Sunday church service where someone passes the offering plate. That's reading your 21st century mindset back into the text of scripture. No, it's speaking of people working all week long, keeping the Sabbath, and then setting a portion of their earnings aside on the first day of the week, which would be an excellent day of the week to do this on. Paul would then show up and get everything that had been collected, and take it to the poor saints at Jerusalem, who had been hit severely by the famine.

So Paul was asked by the elders, "Don't forget about us here in Jerusalem. We are the home base. This is where it all began. We are the earliest followers of Yeshua. Remember us Paul." And Paul did. Paul was a righteous, Torah observant man. He never forgot those poor saints in Messiah.

## **Conclusion**

Doesn't the bible just come alive when you really dig into it and study it in context? You gotta go back and do your homework. You gotta understand the culture, and the history, and the happenings of that time. You gotta get into the minds of the authors and readers of THAT time, because although Galatians was written FOR us, it was not written TO us.

We'll pick this back up next time I teach in Galatians 2:11-21. Take some time to read and do some meditating on this next section.

## Galatians, pt. 14 (read 2:11-21)

### Review

Chapter 2 began by Paul recounting his private meeting with the Jerusalem elders. Paul wanted to make certain that the gospel he preached to the Gentiles had the backing of the elders, **and it did**. The elders didn't force Titus the Greek to be circumcised. They stood their ground against the false brothers that had crept in. The false brothers said that Titus could not receive a right standing with the Almighty until he became a Judahite proselyte through circumcision. The elders disagreed.

James, Peter, and John realized that Paul had been given an apostleship to the uncircumcised, just like Peter had been given an apostleship to the circumcised. They gave him the right hand of fellowship, and agreed that he would go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. The message would be the same: **repent of your sins and receive Yeshua as the Messiah, Son of Yahweh, your substitute**. By faith in Yeshua, both Judahite and Gentile (circumcised and uncircumcised) could receive salvation, and fellowship in the family of Yahweh.

### Always Trust in Yeshua

Always remember that. No matter who you are. No matter who your family is. No matter what your genealogy may or may not be. **You will be eternally lost in your sins if your faith is not in the Messiah that Yahweh sent**. If your faith is in anything else. Any work you do, or anything you think you are, you will be lost, for the simple reason that you are not good enough, and I am not good enough, to gain right standing with the Holy Yahweh. It takes the blood of His unblemished Lamb, Yeshua, to make your crimson red sins whiter than snow.

### More Review

So Paul has been writing this to the Galatians to let them know that they are veering off track. They are moving away from the gospel of grace in Messiah, to a distortion of the gospel. They are turning away from trusting in Messiah, to trusting in the works of the law for their justification.

That might make me sound more like a Baptist preacher than a Torah-keeping Rabbi, but I'm not trying to sound like anything in particular. I'm not interested in taking a side, I'm just trying to properly interpret this epistle in its original context and setting.

Paul was NOT getting onto the Galatians for desiring to walk in holiness, or for desiring to learn the law and put it into practice. **Paul was rebuking them for falling into believing what the false brothers were teaching: you are not already saved in the Messiah.** *<entrance into the gate illustration>* Paul chastised them for moving into believing that a particular work or effort on their part is what made them right with Yahweh.

### **Paul's Rebuke of Peter**

Peter was one of the elders that agreed with Paul's gospel to the Gentiles, but here in our text today we see that Peter (among others) gave into peer-pressure when a situation arose, and Paul rebuked him openly and publicly for it.

### **When NOT to Rebuke**

There are some subjects - that if violated - deserve an open rebuke. Take note that I said SOME subjects. It seems like believers in the Torah-keeping movement want to openly rebuke other Torah-keepers for any and everything they disagree about. "Oh you don't say the sacred name like me? Let me rebuke you. Oh you don't keep the same Sabbath day as me? Let me rebuke you. Oh you don't wear your tassels like me? Let me rebuke you. Oh you don't keep the law like I do? Let me rebuke you (so I feel better about myself)." I'm not even making this up. I've seen all of the above take place.

Matters as these do NOT deserve a rebuke. Matters as these deserve mutual respect and cordial discussion. There are so many areas we are allowed to disagree on in the family of Yahweh. That doesn't mean we shouldn't discuss our disagreements, it just means that when the dust settles, if you and I disagree on how to observe a certain law, we are still both striving to be obedient in that area of law. We are still both wanting to love Yahweh, we just see the carrying out of that law differently. That's nothing to be rebuking anyone over.

### **When TO Rebuke**

But when it comes to the gospel. When it comes to how we are made right with Yahweh. When it comes to how our sins are forgiven. That is not up for debate.

When someone tries to add to the finished work of Yahweh through Yeshua, they are in essence saying that what Yeshua did for us - his perfect life, substitute death, and victorious resurrection - is not good enough. That is a false gospel, and anyone who comes into this assembly trying to spread that garbage will be rebuked by me as the shepherd of this congregation. **I will drive away the wolves with the staff of the gospel.**

There are not many things that would make me disallow a person from being part of this assembly. I try my best to be open and flexible and understanding to the different levels people are at. We are all in the same school, just not all in the same grade.

But one thing I am not going to budge on, even for one hour, is the truth of the gospel. I denounce anyone who tries to add to Yeshua's finished work with anything they think they are, or anything they think they do. **All of that is dung compared to Yeshua.** The whole reason Yahweh sent Yeshua for us is because we couldn't do it ourselves. It is foolishness to attempt to go back to the flesh for perfection.

### **Understanding Paul's Rebuke**

This is why Paul opposed Peter to his face when Peter came to Antioch. Verse 11 says that Cephas stood condemned. Verse 12 tells us why:

"For he used to eat with the Gentiles before certain men came from James. However, when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, because he feared those from the circumcision party. (Verse 13 goes on to say) Then the rest of the Judahites joined his hypocrisy, so that even Barnabus was carried away by their hypocrisy."

So Peter was up in Antioch visiting with the congregation there. Remember, that was the home fellowship of Paul and Barnabus, (they were sent out from there in Acts 13).

### **Table Fellowship**

Peter was okay with fellowshiping with the Gentiles in Antioch. He ate with these uncircumcised Gentiles, meaning he had *table fellowship* with them. It does not mean Peter was eating pork chops or shrimp scampi with them. Please don't read that into the text. The context is table fellowship. They were all eating food, what would be considered food biblically, in accordance with Yahweh's menu mentioned in Genesis 7, Leviticus 11, and Deuteronomy 14. When a Hebrew sat down and shared meals with someone, on a regular basis, they were considering that someone part of their inner circle. And that's what Peter was doing.

So Peter would eat with the Gentiles, and remember these Gentiles weren't heathen idolaters. They *used to be* heathen idolaters. These people from the nations once lived lives of worship and service to heathen mighty ones, but they had been delivered from that lifestyle, into the glorious gospel of the Messiah that Yahweh sent, first to the Judahites, but then also to the heathens or the Gentiles.

These believers in Antioch that Peter would fellowship with at the table were people like Cornelius. They were Yah-fearers from among the nations. They had renounced their idolatry, they prayed to Yahweh, they gave alms, they were obedient to Yahweh, they even kept the Sabbath. It's just that they had grown up outside of the covenant, *and thus* outside of the Torah, *and thus* uncircumcised. They were considered outsiders because they didn't grow up like Peter or even Paul, but they had been brought near by the blood of Messiah.

Well, Peter had no problem fellowshiping at the table with these Gentiles. Yahweh had showed him not to call any man common or unclean (Acts 10:28). He had been show that of a truth, Yahweh is no respecter of persons, but **in every nation**, he that feareth Yahweh and worketh righteousness is accepted by Him (Acts 10:34).

### **The Circumcision Party**

But when certain men from James came into the room, Peter withdrew himself from the table with the Gentiles. Peter separated himself from the table, because he feared the party that said, "Except you be circumcised, and become a Jewish proselyte, you cannot be saved."

Were these men really from James? **Well yes, and no.** Galatians 2:12 says that they CAME FROM James, but Galatians 2:9 has already taught us that James gave Paul the

right hand of fellowship. James agreed with Paul's gospel to the Gentiles. The Gentiles didn't have to become Judahites to be saved. They could be saved by being "plain, old Gentiles." Yeshua's blood is that powerful. It washes away the sin of a heathen outsider.

The apostolic letter to the church at Antioch (and to the Gentiles as a whole) helps us understand Galatians 2:12's mention of "certain men came from James." In that letter, according to Acts 15:24, the apostles and elders wrote to the Gentiles, "**Because we have heard that some to whom we gave no authorization went out from us and troubled you with their words and unsettled your hearts.**" What were these trouble-makers saying? Acts 15:1-2 tells us: "Some men came down from Judea and began to teach the brothers (Gentile brothers): 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom prescribed by Moses, you cannot be saved!' But after Paul and Barnabus had engaged them in serious argument and debate, they arranged for Paul and Barnabus and some others of them to go up to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem concerning this controversy."

James was the head elder at the Jerusalem council in Acts 15. James made the final decision that the Gentiles need not be circumcised in order to have salvation. Peter agreed with him at that council, proclaiming that Yahweh made no distinction between Judahite and Gentile, purifying all of their hearts by faith. Peter cited Cornelius' reception of the Holy Spirit as proof that Yahweh Himself testified to the Gentiles salvation, and Peter also said in Acts 15:11 "We believe **we** (Judahites) are saved through the grace of the Master Yeshua, in the same way **they** (Gentiles) are."

So the men who came from James in Galatians 2:12 were given no authorization by the elders. They did come *from* James, and they *said* they had James backing. They acted like they were the upper, spiritual class, but they weren't SENT by James. To be SENT by someone means you have that person's backing and authority. But these men went out from James without being sent. They went in their own name or authority.

### **Peter Gave in to the Circumcision Party**

But Peter gave in to these guys, fearing them more than the Almighty; he didn't want to lose his reputation with these Judahites. Peter caved in, and it led other believing Judahites around him to cave in as well. Galatians 2:13 says that even Barnabus, (the Levite brother in Messiah that traveled with Paul everywhere), joined Peter in the hypocrisy.

### **Peter and Barnabus were Hypocrites**

Why is it called hypocrisy? Hypocrisy means play-acting. It is an ancient Greek word that described a person on stage in a play, playing a part. Peter and Barnabus were being play actors. They were fine fellowshiping with the uncircumcised Yah-fearers, until these men showed up who believed that Gentiles were second class and not right with Yahweh until they got circumcised. So Peter and Barnabus got up from the table, and acted like they didn't associate with the Gentiles.

In verse 14 Paul says, "But when I saw that they were deviating from the truth of the gospel, I told Cephas in front of everyone..." Let's stop right there for now. Deviating, moving away from, veering off, straying from. The KJV says, "they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel." The NASB says, "they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel."

Peter and Barnabus were backing down from the gospel. The gospel that Paul had already gotten the right hand of fellowship for by the elders in Jerusalem. The gospel that said a heathen outsider could be saved by simply saying, "YAH, have mercy on me, a sinner," and placing their faith in the One whom Yahweh had sent. The gospel that said, "You are saved by Yahweh's work through Yeshua, and nothing else. You're in the family because you're attached and in union with Yeshua, your elder brother."

They backed down from that teaching, and Paul rebuked Peter right there out in the open in front of everybody in the room. And what did Paul tell Peter? The end of verse 14 says: "If you, who are a Judahite, live like a Gentile and not like a Judahite, how can you compel Gentiles to live like Judahites?"

Some people believe that sentence means that Peter had stopped observing the Torah and went over to believing the Torah had been abolished, but I don't believe that's the context of Paul's statement.

In light of the context, I believe the meaning of Paul's rebuke is this: "If you Peter, a Judahite, have been freely fellowshipping with these uncircumcised, Yah-fearing Gentiles up until now, how in the world can you dis-fellowship them, and act like they need to be forced to become a Judahite through proselyte circumcision?"

Peter was doing what we call *craw-fishing* on his beliefs due to pier-pressure. He backed down from the Gospel that said the Gentiles were saved apart from proselytizing to Judah; apart from being circumcised. Peter backed down on what he himself had been shown in Acts 10 with Cornelius. Paul openly and publicly rebuked him for that.

### **Importance of the Gospel**

Friends, that's how important the gospel is. It's the most important matter or doctrine in the whole Bible. It's more important than how to pronounce the sacred name. It's more important than whether or not there is pork in your beans. It's more important than what day you worship on. It's more important than wearing tassels. It's more important than all of those things, yet it is one thing that most Torah-keeping groups that I've been to over the years talk little to nothing about.

I'm not saying those other things aren't important. Any area of obedience is important, but they are all less important than knowing Yeshua. They all fall short from being able to save us from our sins. A tassel will not save you from your sins brothers and sisters. Eating clean will not save you from your sins. You could never put another piece of pork in your mouth until the day you die - but reject Yeshua, and you will be lost forever and ever because you are still a sinner that needs the atoning blood of the Messiah.

Are you saying we shouldn't wear tassels brother Matthew? Are you saying we shouldn't keep the dietary laws brother Matthew? Of course not. That would be like me saying you need your spare tire, but forget about your lug-wrench. I observe the law of Yahweh, and Paul himself walked orderly and kept the law. But Paul understood that his keeping of the law was the fruit of his salvation, not the root. The fruit is what grows off of the tree from a healthy root, and the healthy root here is the grace of Yahweh through faith in the Messiah.

I think some people aren't excited or overwhelmed about the gospel, because they have yet to realize just how badly they need the Messiah. But let me tell you something, Yahweh showed me how bad I need His salvation. Yahweh showed me how I cannot save myself. And that is who has to show you. I can't work you up to it. I can't dim the lights in just the right way to make you feel it. I can't play soft music to get you in a gospel mood. Yahweh has to reveal to you your sinfulness, and His love, and His Son.

Yahweh showed me what He showed Job. Man born of a woman is short of days and full of trouble. He blossoms like a flower then withers away. He flees like a shadow and does not last. Who can produce something pure from what is impure? How can a person be justified before the Almighty? How can one born of a woman be pure? If even the moon does not shine and the stars are not pure in His sight, how much less man who is a maggot, and the son of man who is a worm.

I am what I am by the grace of Yahweh brothers and sisters, not by the works of the law. I am what I am because of Yahweh's workmanship, not because my parents had me circumcised. I am what I am because Yahweh chose me from the foundation of the world to be in His Son. Nothing more, nothing less. Anything that flows out of that is extra, and I'm glad He has worked on me, and is still working on me. I'm so glad that I love His law, but none of that is what justifies me. None of that is what forgives my sin. My sins are forgiven because of the precious blood that ran down the tree of Calvary. Because of the precious life that was taken, the just for the unjust.

Don't ever deviate from the truth of the gospel. Don't ever try to add to something that is perfect. The law of Yahweh is perfect. Yeshua kept that law perfectly. Yeshua died as the perfect Lamb. Yahweh raised him from death to immortality because He qualified as the perfect Lamb. Don't try to add to that or take away from that. Love him, yes. Serve him, yes. Obey him, yes. But don't say that any of that adds to Yeshua. And don't tell anyone that they have to meet your standard before they can be saved from their sins.

If anyone wants to join this fellowship, all that's required is (1) they be a sinner, and (2) they repent of their sins and place their faith in the One Yahweh sent, Yeshua, His Son. Then Yahweh will grow you at your own pace. Don't look down upon someone because you don't think they are growing fast enough for your liking. And don't look down on someone because of the amount of their fruit. Remember, Yeshua said some 30 fold, some 60 fold, some 100 fold. Encourage your brothers and sisters, and rejoice that your sins are forgiven, and that your names are written down in the Lamb's book of life.



## Galatians, pt. 15 (Read 2:11-21)

### Review

Last week we covered verses 11-14 in chapter 2; how Paul rebuked Peter openly for the sake of the gospel. Peter had been freely fellowshiping with the Yah-fearing, yet uncircumcised, Gentiles. Peter was the first Israelite to get the revelation that the Gentiles - those outside of the covenant with Israel - could receive salvation in Messiah, apart from proselytizing to Israel, through circumcision. But... Peter waffled in Antioch.

Peter saw some men arrive who pushed that the Gentiles had to be circumcised in order to be saved. When these men showed up, Peter crawl-fished. He began to act like he still considered the Gentiles as second class citizens, and not real covenant members. And Paul rebuked him in front of everyone there.

### Introduction

Today we will pick this up in verse 15, and I'm not sure how far we will get, because every verse is so packed that when you start unpacking it's like unpacking a van full of suitcases for a month stay in another country.

### Two Types of People in the World

In verse 15 Paul writes, "We are Jews (Judahites or Israelites) by birth and not Gentile sinners." Paul continues to show here what I've been saying a lot in my sermons through Galatians. In the Israelite's mind there were 2 classes of people on the earth. Them and everyone else. *Them* meaning those who grew up in the faith of Torah - the covenant between Yahweh and Israel, and *everyone else* meaning those who did NOT grow up in the faith of Torah, outside the covenant.

Notice he says, "We are Jews by birth." That's another way of saying, "We've been in covenant since the day we were born. Our parents circumcised us the 8th day. Even the females have heard the Torah since they were born. There has never been a time when we didn't keep the Sabbath, or didn't eat kosher, or didn't say our prayers at meal time. We've always known the Mighty One, because that's all we've ever known. We never knew any different."

Think about it like this. There are some of us who were raised in a Christian home, and then there are some of us who were not. All I can remember is going to church, singing praise songs to the Creator, praying, taking communion, etc. In that sense, I was sheltered from the ways of the world.

But there are some of you here that did not grow up like that. You grew up outside of church. You grew up with parents who didn't care about the Bible. You may have known about certain Bible verses, but you weren't raised in a home of believers, but rather heathen unbelievers.

Now that's just an illustration, but it will help you understand Paul's bigger point here in a moment. Paul is saying that there are only 2 types of people on the earth. Jew and

Gentile. Israelite and heathen. In covenant and out of covenant. Circumcised and uncircumcised. And he places himself in the category of "in the covenant" by using that pronoun "we" at the beginning of verse 15.

He says "We are Jews by birth," talking about himself, Peter, Barnabus, and even the men who came from James. "We all grew up in the faith guys (and even Judahite gals that were in the Antioch assembly)."

### **Why "Gentile Sinners"?**

But why does he then say "Gentile sinners"? Why does he add that word sinners on the end? He is stressing the fact that anyone outside of Israel grew up as transgressors of the law. They didn't keep Sabbath. They didn't eat kosher. They didn't pray the set prayers. They didn't read or learn scripture. They dwelt in foreign nations, outside the land of Israel, and quite often grew up in homes that worshiped foreign mighty ones.

Even the Gentile Yah-fearers - like Cornelius the Italian in Acts 10 - Cornelius did not grow up in a home that feared Yahweh. Had he been born to Israelite parents, they would have circumcised him at 8 days old. But Cornelius was a grown man and yet still uncircumcised, and that was the mark that he was outside of the covenant of Israel.

So Cornelius was a Gentile sinner, and not a Torah observant Judahite-Israelite. Yet, at the time he was given the gospel, he had already left his old ways and attached himself in whatever way he could to the synagogue. He even had a good reputation with the nation of Judah, but at the same time was still considered second class because of who he was. Because of his ethnicity, Cornelius was considered an outsider. "You aren't one of us by birth, so we are going to keep you at a distance Cornelius."

The gospel to the Gentiles that Paul preached said that Cornelius could be first class by believing in the Messiah, apart from physical circumcision. Cornelius would be considered equal with Paul, Peter, and Barnabus by virtue of his faith in Yeshua as the promised Messiah.

So, Paul names the 2 groups here in verse 15, and I believe it is a low-key backhand in Peter's face. I sense sarcasm on Paul's part in verse 15, because of what he goes on to say in verse 16. Let's read it together:

15 **We** are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners;

16 Yet **we** know that no one is justified by the works of the law but by faith in Yeshua Messiah. And **we** have believed in Messiah Yeshua, so that **we** might be justified by faith in Messiah and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no human being will be justified.

### **Don't Fight the Text**

This is one of those texts that I've seen Messianic believers, Torah-keepers, and Hebrew Roots people try to explain away. What I mean is that it sounds too "anti-Torah" to them, so they try to make it say something other than what it says.

I'm not going to do that. I'm going to explain it, but I'm not going to explain it away.

The reason I think Paul is being sarcastic in verse 15 is because in verse 16 he goes on to write about how that those who are "Jews by birth" are not justified by the works of the law. In other words, Israelites are still sinners too.

### **Torah-Keepers are Sinners Too**

Torah-keepers I've met over the years (and I consider myself Torah-observant btw), they've always had a problem referring to their self as a sinner.

I taught a class one time (at another congregation) that I titled "Torah 101," and part of the class was explaining how none of us have observed the Torah in the way it was written and commanded to be observed. One guy on the front row didn't like that, and I saw him start squirming when I said it. Sometimes, when you teach, you can tell what parts people don't like, because they squirm and wince in their seat.

If something makes you squirm or wince, that may be the very part you need to listen too carefully.

### **Being IN Messiah**

After the class he questioned me on being a sinner. He said he was "in Messiah" so he couldn't be classified as a sinner anymore. Theologically, I agreed. By virtue of being "in Messiah" we are found righteous before Yahweh, but it's not because we are such righteous people, but because Yeshua was without spot or blemish as the perfect or complete Lamb.

When the Hebrew Bible uses the word "without blemish" in reference to the animal sacrifices, the underlying word is "*tamiym*," with its primary meaning being "complete." Like "not missing anything." We might illustrate this with a complete puzzle (no pieces missing) or complete pie (freshly made out of Grandmama's oven). An animal sacrifice was to be complete, nothing missing. A prize animal, with every part in tact, stunning, healthy, vibrant, etc.

Yeshua is missing nothing. He is *tamiym*. He is complete. We are missing parts; a lot of parts. And it's not just the Gentile sinners that are missing parts, but also the Jews by birth who are missing parts. When we are joined to the Messiah, Yahweh receives us BOTH as equal, because of attachment to Yeshua, not because of who we are personally, socially, or ethnically. So I agreed with the gentleman on not being a sinner in *that* sense of being IN Messiah.

But then I asked him, "Do you sin?" He was hesitant but said, "Yes." Then I asked him, "How often." This is where self righteous people get real squirmy, and I'm not just throwing off on this man, because I used to be the same way. I use to not like to talk about the FACT that I'm a sinner. But it's true. I am a sinner, and so are you, and so is every single person that has ever been born. We are all sinners. We have all transgressed Yahweh's holy law multiple times.

The man began to explain to me about Yahweh renewing our mind and heart, and putting new desires in us. I shook my head, said I agreed, and even expressed how that I believe *by the Holy Spirit within us* we can grow to further levels of holiness. But then I asked him again, "Do you still sin though?"

See, if you cannot call yourself a sinner, I'm not sure you believe the gospel. The Pharisee in Luke 18 didn't call himself a sinner. As a matter of fact when he prayed he went on and on about how good he was. But when the tax collector prayed he said, "Yahweh, have mercy on me, a sinner." The Scripture says that the tax-collector went home justified.

### **What it Means to be Justified**

Justified is a word that means to be declared innocent in Yahweh's court of law. It doesn't necessarily mean you are innocent, but that you've been acquitted. The gavel of Yah has come down on the judge's desk, and the verdict "not guilty" has been spoken by the judge himself. That's what it means to be justified.

And Paul tells Peter, Barnabus, and every Judahite in Antioch that day: "WE KNOW that NO ONE is justified by the works of the law but by faith in Yeshua Messiah," and Paul's emphasis on works of the law is in specific reference to the deeds within the law that the Judahites believed made them better than the Gentiles, specifically circumcision.

The Judahite was looking down through his nose (so to speak) at the Gentile and thinking "I'm righteous because I was born an Israelite and then circumcised, and it doesn't matter how much you believe in Yeshua, you are still unrighteous and a sinner because you were not born and Israelite and are uncircumcised." Many of the Judahites were trusting in their circumcision, i.e. their ethnicity - what family they were born into - for their justification.

Paul says, "We should know better than this guys, because if we are truly honest with ourselves, we are sinners too." Ecclesiastes 7:20 says there isn't a just man on earth that doeth good and sinneth not. Psalm 130 says that if Yahweh kept track of iniquities who could stand before him? Psalm 143 says that no one alive is righteous in the sight of Yahweh. Even the men in Israel who were deemed the holiest still fell short of being complete. Prophet Moses wasn't allowed in the promised land because he disobeyed Yah's instruction. King David tried to cover up his sin against Uriah and Bathsheba. Paul is saying, "We should know this guys. We aren't any better than the Gentiles just because we were born into this thing."

Paul goes on in the second part of verse 16 to say, "And **we** (Judahites) have believed in Messiah Yeshua, so that we might be justified by faith in Messiah, and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no human being (or no flesh - Jew by birth or Gentile sinner) will be justified."

Paul is telling all the Messianic Judahites there in Antioch, and any that may have read this epistle later. "**We** believed in Yeshua too guys! Our law-keeping fell short. It's the

Torah that is perfect, not us. It's Yeshua, the Torah made flesh, that is complete, not us. We are missing parts. We are not tamiym. Yeshua is tamiym."

### **Faith IN or Faithfulness OF?**

Do you see that phrase "faith in Yeshua Messiah" there in verse 16? Now I'm not a Greek scholar, but the Greek scholars I have read say that it can be legitimately translated two ways. "Faith *in* Yeshua Messiah" or "Faithfulness *of* Yeshua Messiah."

I like both renderings. We are justified (declared innocent in Yahweh's court) not by the works of the law. Not by being circumcised, or keeping the Sabbath, or eating kosher, or wearing the tassels. Not by doing what the law commands. That's not what declares us innocent, because we are still all sinners. What declares us innocent is by placing our faith in Messiah, who did no sin. By trusting in the One whom Yahweh sent; the One who was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin.

At the same time we are justified by the faithfulness of Yeshua Messiah. His faithfulness, not ours. Every time of our life where we have failed, he did not. Every time in our life where we didn't honor Yahweh, he did honor Yahweh. Every blemish we have, every incompleteness we have, he doesn't have. It's by his faithfulness, not our own that we are justified.

### **Don't Fight Paul's Words**

The Torah-keeper responds, "But brother Matthew, what about this, what about that, what about James 2, what about, etc." Listen to me. **Hush for second Torah-observant man or woman. Humble yourself in the sight of Yahweh.** Get a hold to *this* text. Believe what *these* Bible verses say and mean. Quit trying to focus on what you're doing, and set your sights on the One who did everything so much better than you ever will.

I'm afraid that many Torah-observant people are trusting in the works of the law instead of the faithfulness of Yeshua. I can't see into men's and women's hearts, but this is what I think is happening. People get the revelation that we should be obedient to Yahweh's law, and that is a good revelation, but I'm afraid it starts overshadowing the faithfulness of Yeshua. We begin trusting in the shadow instead of the substance. We lose sight of the fact that we are all sinners.

Brothers and sisters, the very first reason Yahweh gave us his law was to point out our sin and our need for the Savior. The first reason is not to make us feel better than others, or to even instruct us in how we ought to live. The first reason is to make our transgressions come to light. Sadly, to many first century Judahites, they didn't get it. They distorted the gospel into including themselves. I think some Torah-keepers do the same today.

If I have to trust in myself for my salvation, I'm doomed. I'm not good enough. The harder I try, the more I see my sin. The closer I get to Yahweh, the holier He looks. So I've decided to trust in the faithfulness of Yeshua. I hope you will decide the same.

## Galatians, pt. 16 (Read 2:17-21)

### Review

Two weeks ago we covered verses 15-16 of Galatians 2, where Paul spoke about the 2 groups of people in the world: (1) Judahite-Israelites, and (2) everyone else. Everyone else was a Gentile, or heathen sinner, as opposed to Judahites who grew up in the faith from birth. But Paul pointed out that the Judahites by birth were still sinners just like the Gentiles.

Paul said that WE know - speaking of himself and his fellow Judahites - (we know) that NO ONE is justified by the works of the law, but rather by faith in Messiah. Paul's meaning is that "We *should* know this brethren. **We** should know that none of us are righteous before Yahweh by the works of the law, because even **we** had to believe in Yeshua in order to be justified by faith in Him, and by His faithfulness.

### Puzzling Verses

This week we come to verses 17-21, and I will have to say that some of these verses have puzzled me over the years. As I study the Bible, I run across verses that can only be taken one way, while others could be understood in more than one way. Sometimes verses have multiple layers of meaning, but other times verses mean only one thing.

Galatians 2:17-19 are 3 verses that I'm not completely certain as to what Paul meant when he first wrote them, but I am going to do my best to explain them in context. Verses 20-21 are plainer to me, so they're easier for me to teach, and we'll get to them towards the end of the sermon. For now, let's examine verses 17-19, in the context of coming right off verses 15-16, which teaches that we are all sinners, and none of us can be justified by the works of the law.

17 But if, while seeking to be justified by Messiah, we ourselves are also found to be sinners, is Messiah then a promoter of sin? Absolutely not!

### Judahites Are Sinners Too

In verse 17 Paul speaks of people seeking to be justified by Messiah, and notice he uses the phrase "we ourselves." I believe this follows the "we" pronoun that began in verse 15, "we Judahites by birth." This is why Paul says here in verse 17, "**we** ourselves are **ALSO** found to be sinners." He has already mentioned Gentile sinners, but the Judahites by birth find themselves to **ALSO** be sinners.

I think Paul means this: "When we Judahites by birth seek to be justified by Messiah, we find out that we are just as much sinners as the Gentiles. But does that mean the Messiah promotes sin? Of course not."

We've got to always remember. Sin is bad and law-keeping is good. Sin and law-keeping are opposites. Law-keeping is always what we ought to do. Sin is never what we ought to do.

## **We Are Sinners by Nature**

The problem is this: we do what we ought not to do, and we don't do what we ought to do. It's just reality. The Law isn't the problem. We are the problem.

You don't have to tell people to sin, because we sin by nature. It's our default mode. We are fleshly, carnal beings that carry out the desires of the flesh. We are not good by nature. Our hearts are wicked, thus we are evil by nature.

Yeshua said that all these wicked things: evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies, **come from the heart of a man**, and defile a man (Matthew 15:18-20). He said that while some were so concerned about ritually washing their hands in order to be purified, their problem wasn't on their hands, it was in their hearts.

In Matthew 7:7-11, after telling his disciples and large crowds of people to seek, knock, and ask for good, spiritual things, Yeshua told those same people, "If you then - **who are evil** - know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"

Everyone of you would have done the exact same thing Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden had it been you in that Garden. You aren't any better than Adam men, or Eve women.

## **Sin is NOT Okay**

Now this doesn't okay sin. Listen carefully: preaching grace does not okay sin. Grace preached rightly means Law preached rightly. A man does not need to be forgiven of anything if he hasn't first transgressed the Law. True grace preaching realizes our need for grace, (because as Yeshua said, we are evil).

## **The Inevitable Conclusion**

So when a Judahite by birth, like Paul, sought to be justified by Messiah, and realized that he too was a sinner (just like the Gentile heathen), that did not mean that the Messiah was a promoter or minister of sin. **It just meant that Paul was a minister of sin.** Messiah came to cleanse Paul, and any other Judahite by birth that placed their faith in Messiah.

Paul then says in verse 18, "If I rebuild those things that I tore down, I show myself to be a law-breaker."

## **Paul's Relationship with the Law**

I think Paul means this: "If I go back to the law for my justification, I only show myself to be a law-breaker, or a sinner." Paul is not saying he no longer has a relationship with the law, he is just saying that he is not trusting in his obedience to the law to make him right with Yahweh. If Paul stands before the Supreme Judge on that final day apart from Messiah, Yahweh will render a verdict of guilty towards Paul, because Paul has not been complete in the law. Remember, Paul was a blasphemer and murderer before believing in

Yeshua. So apart from faith in Messiah, Paul's sins could not be removed from the eternal scales of justice.

### **The Law is Good, but has a Design**

I believe Paul's whole point here is to make sure to keep the law in its proper place. Elsewhere, Paul says that the law is holy, just, and good (Romans 7:12), and that the law is spiritual (Romans 7:14), but that doesn't mean it's to be used as an instrument of justification. It's not a tool to fix your sin problem. It only continues to manifest your sin problem.

**KEY:** If you leave Messiah and go back to the law seeking justification, it will only show yourself to be a law-breaker. Even if you profess to believe in Messiah, but try to add yourself into the equation for justification, you show yourself to be imperfect and incomplete in the law.

### **A Hammer Won't Unscrew that Screw**

I have up here a piece of 2x4 with a screw in it. The screw has a Philips head. If I'm working on a job, and I holler out to my co-worker, "Hey buddy, could you give me a tool to get this Philips head screw out of this 2x4?" what tool is my co-worker going to bring me? Of course, a Philips head screw-driver.

What if he shows up with a hammer? He walks over to me with a straight face, in all seriousness, and pulls out a brand new 28 oz. Estwing hammer. That hammer is pretty, and there is nothing wrong with that hammer. That hammer has no flaws in it, and that hammer will do what is designed to do. But I will tell you what that hammer won't do. It won't back that screw out of that 2x4.

Now you can pound away at that 2x4, and bust it all up in pieces, and maybe get the screw out, but the fact that you had to do all that, ruin the 2x4, and maybe even break the screw, only shows that you picked the wrong tool for the job.

When you try to justify yourself by keeping the law, it's like trying to use a hammer to back out a Philips head screw. The law isn't designed to justify you. The law is not the right tool for that job. The law is the tool that is used to show you your sin, but it will never remove your sin.

### **You Gotta' Have the Law Though**

Now, you would never know you were a sinner if it weren't for the law. Paul writes in Romans 7:7, "I would not have known sin if it were not for the law. For example, I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, 'Do not covet.'" You would never realize you needed help if the law did not show you your sickness. That's why the law is so necessary. **The law does what grace cannot do.** The law reveals to you your need for the Savior.

The holy, unchangeable Law shows you that you are a sinner, that's its design. The Gospel of sweet grace in Messiah removes your sin, that's its design.



### **Dead to the Law?**

This is why in verse 19 Paul writes, "For through the law I have died to the law, that I might live to Yahweh. I have been crucified with Messiah."

Through studying the law, Paul has finally realized he can't obey the law. I know that will not sit well with some of my Torah-observant brothers and sisters, but it's just a fact.

I'm not saying you can't obey the law *as a way of life*. We do that in our family. We observe the Sabbath every week. My wife and I are faithful in marriage to one another. Tisha and I honor our parents. We don't worship idols. We don't murder people, and we don't lie on anyone to get them in trouble. We are a Torah observant family, but only because Yahweh's Spirit resides in us and causes us to obey.

But if you ask me, "Brother Matthew, do you still sin?" Ha, take it to the bank friend. Of course I still sin. Through the law I died to the law too, just like Paul.

The more I study the law, the more I see sins I commit. The deeper I get into the law, the more I realize my failures, and short-comings. I die to the law by studying the law, because it drives me to Messiah. When I am attached to Yeshua, by grace through faith, I die with him. I have been crucified with Christ, not literally hanging with him on the tree, but metaphorically. His death is *for* me.

### **Don't Outgrow Yeshua**

The Messiah died for my sins (say that). Don't ever outgrow that statement. Don't ever think you're too advanced in the law to say that. Yeshua died for my sins yesterday. He died for the ones I committed today, and He died for the ones I will commit in my future. And through faith in Him, I have been crucified with him. My sins have been atoned for.

If you ever "get too big for Yeshua," you have lost sight of the big picture, because you will never get to a point where you don't need Yeshua.

And then, Paul writes in verse 20, "I no longer live, but Messiah lives in me. The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of Yahweh, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

### **We Live to and for Yeshua**

Now that Paul believes in Yeshua, it's no longer Paul living for himself anymore. It's no longer Paul saying, "Look at me and all the wonderful things I do." Paul knows that any good thing that comes out of his mind, mouth, and hands is because the Messiah lives inside of Him (see Romans 7:18-25). I believe that's another metaphor meaning that he is joined or attached to Yeshua by faith. The life he lives, is lived by faith in the Son of Yahweh.

The Son of Yahweh loved Paul, and gave himself for Paul, so that makes Paul want to live for the Messiah, and even live as the Messiah. That makes Paul want to imitate Yeshua. It makes me want to imitate Yeshua too.

### **Our Personal Savior**

Have you ever thought that the Son of Yahweh died just for you? Paul did. Paul said, "He loved **me** and gave himself for **me**." It's true that he loves everyone who has faith in him, and he gave himself for everyone who has faith in him, but don't be scared to say, "He loved **me**. He gave himself for **me**." He is your **personal** Savior. That's not just a Christian cliché, it's in the Bible. Yeshua died for you.

### **Are You Setting Aside Grace?**

Paul ends this section by writing this in verse 21: "I do not set aside the grace of the Almighty; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Messiah died for nothing."

When you set aside the grace of Yahweh; when you *frustrate* the grace of Yahweh (KJV), or *make void* the grace of Yahweh (ASV). When you say that you are saved by a work of the law you perform, like physical circumcision, or simply by being an Israelite (as many first century Judahites believed). When you say that you are right with Yahweh because of anything you are or do, you are setting aside His grace. You are picking up His marvelous grace, and laying it over here in the dirt, and acting like you don't need His grace.

If your righteousness; if your justification comes through the law - if Paul said, "Look at me. I'm from the tribe of Benjamin, and I was circumcised the 8th day, and I'm a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and I'm a Pharisee in the law, and that's why I'm so righteous before Yahweh." If Paul taught that to these Galatians, he would have been setting aside the grace of the Almighty, and saying that Yeshua died for nothing.

### **You Can't Obey Perfectly**

Why would Yeshua even have to die for your sin if you could be perfect in the law? Well, he wouldn't. The fact that every single one of us have sinned is proof enough that none of us can obey the law as it is written and commanded.

It doesn't matter what any Messianic, Hebrew Roots, or Torah observant person tries to tell me. It doesn't matter how much they want to argue that they can keep the Torah. I will always go back to the fact that they have not **always** kept the Torah. They are a sinner, and the law proves them to be a sinner. If you think otherwise, you're trying to use a hammer to back out that Philips head screw.

Friends, Yeshua is a beautiful Messiah. He is the unblemished Lamb of Yahweh. He truly is perfect in the Torah. Don't set aside Yahweh's gift of grace (Yeshua calls himself the gift of Yahweh in John 4:10). Don't make void the grace of Yahweh. Don't say you do something when you know down deep in your heart and soul you don't do it. Don't put up a facade. Don't pretend that by prettying up the outside that it makes you pretty on the inside. If righteousness came by the law, the Messiah would have never had to come and die for your sin. You need the Messiah. He is your only hope. Be thankful that Yahweh gave Yeshua, and be thankful that Yeshua willingly obeyed the Father.

Love the law, yes. Study and obey the law, yes. Imitate the Messiah, yes. But don't trust in the hammer to back out the screw. Don't trust in the Law to do what only the Gospel can do, else you will be making void Yahweh's grace, and you will be eternally lost in your sins.

The gate is narrow and the way is narrow. The more I meditate on that, the more I realize that the reason the gate is narrow is because the default human mode is to trust in something we do instead of something that has been done for us. Yeshua is the way to Yahweh. He is the narrow way. Only by trusting in the Messiah will you be saved from your sins. Don't pass that up. Receive Yahweh's free gift today. Enter through the narrow gate.