

Paul and the Law – The Torah Series

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MAIN VERSES

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We're good. Guys, you ever feel like you're going to get in trouble for reading the scriptures? Does anyone ever feel like they're going to get in trouble? See, most of the time, at least in messianic circles, we get that way when it comes to the Torah. We're going to get in trouble if we read the Torah around certain people. For us, it's Paul. Paul has some difficult things to say. And what we're going to explore today is that we're not the first ones to think that, realize that, to struggle with that. But that doesn't mean that the things Paul says shouldn't be things that we internalize, shouldn't be things that are edifying, shouldn't be a direction that we look to. So today I wanted to move the focal point of the series to one of the largest contributors to the library we call the Bible, at least the New Testament: Paul. And Matt, we've been exploring many different facets and angles of the Torah. Why would you feel it necessary to shift the view to Paul? Well, it just so happens that Paul has a lot to say about the Torah. He quotes the Torah. He says how much the Torah is a blessing. He even says how much the Torah is an obstacle. And he shares how he, a Torah observant, really Torah observant, a really Pharisee Torah observant Jew, now sees and views the Torah after his experience with Yeshua.

And it's amazing because the topic of Paul and law has been a theological topic of struggle for thousands of years. In one corner, Paul says the Torah is a blessing and the law is good. And in the same letter, he'll minimize the law in an extremely critical view. Here we have some examples. [Galatians 2:19](#): "For the law, I died to the law. Through the law, I died to the law so that I might live to God. I've been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." Well, then we have [Romans 7:12](#). [1 Corinthians 7:19](#): "for neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God." But [Romans 6:14](#): "for sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under the law, but

under grace." I like grace. Grace is good. [1 Timothy 1:8](#): "now we know that the law, the Torah, is good if one uses it lawfully." I see what you did there with the play on words.

What is Paul's problem? Just tell us, is the law good, Paul? Is the law a good thing or is it a bad thing? Be honest with us. Is it edifying or is it not? Does it give life or does it give death, Paul? Which one is it?

Wrestling with Paul's Difficult Letters

Have you ever found yourself frustrated with Paul's letters? Maybe some of you. Maybe a little overwhelmed when we attempt to understand them. Because that's interesting. Something I've come to realize over the past couple of years is that you're not the only one. Christian scholars for thousands of years are right there with you and beside you. Seriously, it's incredible. I sometimes hear people flippantly throw around the accusation that Christians, pastors, and churches all say the law is done away with because Paul says the law is done away with. And I've come to realize that's such a naive statement when you blanket throw that out because it's not true. There are many views that men and women who have devoted themselves to the study, who are believers in Yeshua, struggle with concerning Paul's letters and especially how he addresses the Torah and the law. The Lutheran, older view, very much so, draws a line in the sand. The Torah is done away with, right? And we have this new vague spirit life that we're walking into. Then you have a reformed view, which is where we get a bigger blurry line. Moral law still applies to believers, but ceremonial law is done away with. Maybe you've heard that thrown out there before. And that's a bit of an anachronism, since ancient Israel viewed all of the Torah as moral.

But regardless, you have various other views. One of the more recent views is called The New Perspective on Paul, which is fantastic as far as theology goes and trying to hash out what Paul says, but even it isolates the commandments that tend to elevate the Jewish ethos, Jewish identity markers, circumcision, Sabbath, kosher, and minimizes them, saying Paul had a problem with those because they excluded people from the kingdom of God instead of including them. One of the more balanced views, which I tend to subscribe to, is viewing the Torah as wisdom and prophecy versus a standard checklist law code.

Torah as Wisdom, Not a Checklist

A—because it's not written like a complete law code. The first 69 chapters are narrative. It's telling a story. It's not a law code. [Deuteronomy 17](#) states that it's not a complete formal law

code. "If there's a matter that's too hard for you, you can't figure it out, don't know what law to go to? Then go to the judges of Israel and ask them. Have them craft a law or an opinion about the decision that you need to go forward with and whatever situation you find yourself in, you must follow what they declare." Admit it. It doesn't have a solution for everything. It's not a simple checklist. If it were simply a written checklist you check off, we would be in sin for having indoor plumbing. Do you realize this? Because the Torah says to do that outside the camp. Bury it. Not to do it inside your homes and then filter it through the water system to make drinking water out of. It's not what the Torah says to do. But we understand that the wisdom behind the commandment has to do with sanitation. Sanitation. And so we believe that, yes, very much so, this is a more sanitary option than burying whatever you're going to do. So yeah, we do find fulfillment in the Torah, you see.

Even Paul tends to show this through his examples of extracting wisdom and using Torah commandments that he seemingly digs deeper into from the initial context and pulls things out of, Muslimox and such. But to say all this, I have a quote here from an author and professor that taught at Cambridge University in Australia. His name is Dr. Brian Rosner, and he wrote a book called Paul and Law, Keeping the Commandments of God. I enjoyed the book. Don't agree on everything, but that's fine. And here's the quote, which I do fully back. It's fantastic. He says this: "But you quickly have to make some tricky decisions about which everybody has an opinion. And it's very easy to end up with a sticky mess with lots of bits left over that no one really wants anything to do with." I think that the imagination of this statement is absolutely impeccable, accurate. It's so true.

A Messianic Perspective

See, in messianic circles, it's our tradition to have a high view of Torah. We believe that Yeshua taught the Torah. Not only that, but taught what Torah looks like when it's kept from a heart filled with the Spirit of God. Radical. Sabbath, feast days, the way we eat—we believe these hold significant value and are ways that we can show honor to God. That's what we do. But instead of starting with the question about Paul and Torah, I think it's wiser to start by asking, what was Paul's deal when it comes to Yeshua? And maybe that would be a good starting point before we jump in. Is that good? Good, because I'm not changing the slides.

Paul's Introduction of Himself

So let's go ahead and see what Paul has to say about himself. How does he introduce himself? Romans chapter 1, verse 1: "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle." Apostle is a

funny word. It's a Greek word that's spelled with English letters. The translators came to this word and were like, you know what? We're just not going to translate it. It sounds cool. It's one of those big Bible words. I am the apostle, you know. But in reality, it means someone who is an official who's sent out. Not quite as regal as apostle, but you're the one who has a job to do. It's an emissary. You're sent out.

And so here he says, "servant of Christ Jesus called to be an apostle that's set apart for the gospel of God. That's what he's sent out to deliver, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who is descended from David according to the flesh, and was declared to be the Son of God in power, according to the spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ, our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship, to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all nations."

Now look, this is important. Paul seems very passionate about what he's going to do, what the vision is, what the plan is. Who is Paul sent to? Some nations? The Judeans? Is he sent to the Jews? Is he sent out to convert everybody to Judaism? No, Paul has this vision of the message and power of the gospel of Yeshua that he himself experienced would overtake the world. It would engulf all nations. He's writing a little letter here, and these little, itty-bitty micro home churches, they tried to thrive in the synagogues. They didn't want anything to do with them, right? Where do we start? They won't let us in the synagogues. Home church. Little itty-bitty home churches popping up, right into this group in Rome.

Paul's Vision for All Nations

This has not overtaken the world. It's just in its infancy and growing. And he says here, my vision is that all nations everywhere would come to hear the message. I love that. So let's shift gears. I had seen a Christian professor make a similar presentation once, and I felt it appropriate. This is a painting, one of the paintings by the Italian artist Raphael—not the turtle, Raphael. And does anyone know what this is called formally, if you were to search for it? It's called Madonna and Baby—not the singer. It's Mary and baby Yeshua, baby Jesus.

Christian Art and Cultural Representation

What is it about this picture that sticks out to you? Baby Jesus seems very well fed, eh? Blonde hair, and he's a white baby with blonde hair. Now, why is this a white baby with blonde hair? Because Mary is a very white woman with blonde hair, right? And we chuckle because we know

that Yeshua was not bright white with blonde hair and blue eyes. He was a first-century Jewish man, very likely with very dark olive skin, presumably black, thick hair. Not a white baby. But why did Raphael portray Mary and Yeshua this way? Because he was from Italy, and there were white people in Italy, right? Okay, I love that.

Another note: whenever you see pictures of Mary in ancient art—in icons, images, or mosaics—you always see two colors. Do you know what these colors are? Cheat sheets on screen. What two colors is she wearing? It's blue, which is the color of royalty, and red, which is the color of blood because of Yeshua. It's just neat. So when you see that, you'll know why.

The Church of Annunciation

So one thing—if you've ever been to Israel, has anyone ever been to Nazareth? Nazareth, a couple of times. Okay. So Nazareth is a much larger city now than it used to be, but it's an Arab city in Jerusalem, and there is a church there. It's a Catholic church called the Church of Annunciation. The church's tradition is that this was the site of Mary's home. And this is the place where the angel came and told her that the King of creation is about to be born. And he is alive within you. You are carrying the King, the Messiah. And so that's what this church is about—churches have themes to them. The church here centers on that scene. And they esteem Mary because of what happened there.

So it's a very old church, but it underwent many renovations. In the 50s, it was torn down and rebuilt. And after it was rebuilt, artists from all over the world, from each nation, were invited to create a mosaic of either Mary or Mary and Yeshua, baby Yeshua, according to their own culture and tradition, reflecting where they come from, to display here. I don't have all of them here, but it's called the Gallery of Medanas. Here's the courtyard. All right? Sounds regal, right? And you can see them all lined up on the walls, inside, outside. And I know this might be foreign to us, but I want you to embrace and visualize the history behind these mosaics that were placed in this church. Okay, I want to show you some of these. You ready?

Mosaics from Every Nation

Here's one from Japan. Us here in the U.S., we're like, what is that? This makes us uncomfortable, right? But Bolivia, it's just so foreign. It's not like Greece, Cameroon, Central Africa. I love this one because it looks like a festive church service is going on here—very happy, right? How about Korea? You know what's interesting? Most of us might feel uncomfortable seeing this portrayal of Mary and Yeshua because we're used to the white Mary and the white

Yeshua. And it's so comfortable because I wonder if in the first century, if first-century believers saw all these portrayals of Mary and Yeshua, if it would have made them uncomfortable.

How about Chile? Here we go. We have Ethiopia, France, Italy, Bulgaria, China, El Salvador, Singapore, Philippines. So Yeshua is not in this one because it's talking about the angel coming to Mary. But look at Mary in the Philippines—Ecuador. I love the beauty in this because the images are so striking. They contrast each other so beautifully, and it's powerful.

The Gospel Reaches All Nations

Why? Because here, 2,000 years later, Paul's vision is artistically presented in Israel, in Nazareth, the hometown of Yeshua. Here we have the visual confirmation that the mission and the gospel message of Yeshua, the Son of God, the King of creation, has reached not just the Jews, not just the Romans, all nations. And we sometimes struggle with our faith. As Americans, we like to think that maybe we created Christianity. I hate to put it like that. But sometimes we're like, yeah, this is our religion. This is our faith. It's a Western religion. And no, it's not. It's a much older faith. We're only 243 years old. No, this is an ancient faith that started with this no-name rabbi from Nazareth. That's neat. Is that neat? I don't know. I was hoping you would feel that the way I did. It's just neat.

This is a religion that was so bold, and they held this message so close to their hearts that it uprooted the most powerful empire in the world. To the point where Roman officials, governors, even the emperor himself was affected personally by this message of hope and grace and mercy—the message of God's kingdom that would go beyond the walls of Israel and engulf the world. This was Paul's message, and this is what he stood for.

Paul's Conflict Over the Gospel

So when people zealous for the Torah went to Galatia and told those people they needed to undergo this ceremony—circumcision—first in order to taste the mercy and grace of God, Paul had an issue with it. Paul got very upset. And the fact that he got upset should not upset those in Torah-loving messianic circles. It shouldn't. Remember the past few messages we've been hammering the Torah as narrative and examining the story it tells throughout the Bible.

The Story the Torah Tells

It tells of a God creating mankind to be his image bearers in the world. But then mankind—Adam and Eve—they take the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil to define good and evil for

themselves, unleashing hell on earth as a result. They're exiled from God. Violence and injustice erupt in the world over the next nine chapters with a promise that the seed would come—the seed, someone who would crush the head of the beast that fuels all of it. And then the next chapter, Abraham is called, and a promise is given that through him all nations would share in God's blessings, his presence, and his relationship, that his lineage would go on to produce the seed. And his lineage forms the tribes and the people of Israel who find themselves as slaves in Egypt.

So they cry out to God. And we know how that story ends. It's through the blood of the Lamb that they are freed from slavery. It tells about a people that commit to walk with God, accept and enter into this covenantal relationship with God, and then they turn around and go their own way.

The Cycle of Law and Failure

Israel falls and they sin. So what happens? After the golden calf, more laws get added. So they continue until they fall again. More laws get added. They continue again until they fall. Okay, we're going to establish and inaugurate this priesthood. Next chapter. Aaron's sons. Okay, review. Covenant refreshed. Come on, guys. More commandments. Beginning of [Leviticus 17](#), Israel is worshiping some goats in the desert. More commandments, right? Just keep going, keep going. They botched the job again and again and again. More laws are handed down to guide them, and once again they fall. Something I'm sure that none of us can really relate to.

The Promise of a Spirit-Filled Heart

But at the end of the Torah—this is a review, I know—Moses tells Israel that they're going to enter the land, but they don't have the spirit-filled heart to stay loyal to God, to be the image bearers that God wants them to be. We spoke last week about how the prophets carried this message forward while Israel sat in exile because of their sins. Moses' prophecy. And how the prophets spoke about a king that would come, that God's kingdom would finally manifest on earth, and he would give us his spirit, and it would rejuvenate our hearts. It would engrave the Torah on our hearts. And we know this to be fulfilled in the person of Yeshua.

But the whole story of the Bible is about how the Torah was given, but it wasn't enough, because people kept breaking it and falling short. That's the Old Testament.

Paul's Response to Legalism

So when Paul hears that people are trying to tell other people that they cannot find salvation in Yeshua unless they mark off a checklist of commands—something the entire story of the Bible tells us Israel failed to do—then he gets upset. He gets upset because he knows in a very real way that we find the manifestation of Torah in and only in the person of Yeshua. Without Yeshua, the Torah condemns us to death. And it's not the Torah's fault that this takes place. This is what Paul says. Remember last week, I threw this back in here. [Romans 8](#), 8-3. [Romans 7](#), 5. Paul makes a distinction here. The way of the Spirit is not like the path of a written code. We read this verse last week. What spirit is Paul talking about? Where does he get this idea? He's referring to the spirit Ezekiel prophesied in [Ezekiel 36](#), 26.

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

This is what Paul is saying. How did Israel keep the Torah in the story of the Bible? They do a good job at it. No, not too well at all. Amos and Isaiah both testify of them keeping the commandments like a checklist. Man, they had the kosher, they had Sabbath, they did the feast days, but they didn't keep it from their heart. And Isaiah says that God looks down and sees everyone thinking that they're so righteous because they're not hammering a sledgehammer on Shabbat, and they're coming to the feast days and high-fiving everybody and yes, we are the set-apart people of God, and God says it makes me want to vomit because your hearts don't offer the grace and the love that is supposed to be manifest because of the Torah. You look like Egypt.

Paul is saying that this prophecy has come true from Ezekiel: we are released from the death and the condemnation of the law. You are released from the law. You are given a new life above the death that the Torah brings because of your sin. You have a new life, a new heart. You have the Spirit that enables you to live out the image-bearing name of God. [Romans 7](#), 10—he furthers this point: "The commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. So the law is holy and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Yes. Did that which is good then bring death to me? By no means it was sin."

Man, that's potent. Paul's central message is the debt of death mandated by the Torah, caused by the sin. It's lifted. It's lifted through the grace and the mercy of the Son of God, the King of creation, the Christ, Yeshua. Not only that, if your allegiance is to the kingdom of God, Yeshua is your king, you get a new heart. It's the prophecy of Ezekiel. You receive the gift of the Holy Spirit that molds a new heart that no longer chases sin, that no longer leads to death, that no longer manifests bitterness, that no longer manifests hate and jealousy. The Spirit molds a new

heart that beats the very thing that ended up condemning you—it beats the commandments of God. Not like a written code where this is it, just check this off. No, it beats the life-giving goodness of the commandments of God.

It's Not a Checklist

This doesn't look like a written code. Paul says this: it's not a checklist. History nugget: Israel goes into exile in Babylon. They've read all about this. They're oppressed. What are we going to do? Persia comes in, overtakes Babylon. Great, we have new oppressors. Persia lets them go back to Jerusalem, build your temple. A lot of them do go back, build the temple. Nehemiah, Ezra—they still say we're still slaves. Exile hasn't ended. We got this temple, this makeshift thing. Keep going in. Who comes in next? The Greeks. Oh, we know what happens with the Greeks. It's all about Hanukkah, right? What was the thing about the Greeks? The Greeks were trying to strip away Jewish identity. They said, take all these things away. You can become Greeks like us. Stop these commandments that make you Jewish, not Greek. Become Greek. They try to strip these things away. Israel fights against them. They win. It's great. Hey! And then within a generation, they're worse off than when they were under the Greeks.

But here's the thing. After they fought the Greeks, something happened for the next couple of centuries—a century and a half. The Judeans began to teach their children that there is something so important that you must never let go of, and that is who you are as a Judean. And do you know how you show the world and yourself and everyone else that you're a Judean? You keep Shabbat. You circumcise yourself. You eat kosher. You wear these things as a jersey on the outside to show everybody who you are. This became a big deal. The commandments of God went from a means of covenant or covenantal honor to a means of identity.

Table Fellowship and the Heart

Now enter the first century, and you see why table fellowship with Gentiles is such a big deal to the Judeans. Why was that such an unclean thing? Because it contaminates your identity, and we're not doing that whole Maccabee Greek thing again. This is the passion and the emotion that Paul was contending with. It's a checklist. We check these things off, and we're righteous for the day. It doesn't work like that. The Sermon on the Mount was Yeshua's teaching on Torah. But it didn't look like a written code, did it? It wasn't a checklist. It was a lot harder than a checklist. It looks like a person that actually embodies the Spirit of God. And if the Torah was an actual lifestyle instead of a checklist that somehow reassures you that you're righteous, then it's a lifestyle.

Don't murder. Check. I'm righteous today. With your hands or your heart? Whoa, hey, whoa. Torah doesn't talk about that. Yeah, but that's—you cannot come into the kingdom of God with a heart of hate, despite whether your hands acted on it or not.

The Transformation in Galatians

Galatians 2, 19. In this section of Galatians, Paul puts forth two existences, I guess you could say, that contrast one another. One existence finds itself revealing death, and one moves you to life. These are the verses that tend to make some Torah-loving folks sweat, huh? What do we do with these? Again, Paul is showing the transition that has taken place in his own life. Paul was a strict Torah-observant Jew, right? Right? You don't understand. Paul—I was circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, Hebrew of Hebrews. I am a Hebrew of Hebrews. As to the law, Pharisee, a strict Torah-observant Jew. Did Paul keep Torah? Did he follow Torah? Probably followed it quite a bit to the T of Torah, right? Was Paul a righteous guy before he met Yeshua? Per his own admittance, he was not. He was not.

Because why? Ezekiel's prophecy—that new heart was not in him. Here's my translation: "Through the law, I died to the law so that I might advance and live to God." I cannot do this, he says. Sin has penetrated my flesh, and instead of the law being a manifestation, and me manifesting the kingdom of God, I became enslaved to the Torah. The Torah became an opposition that I battled with instead of a blessing. So I died to it. I was crucified with Christ. And guess what? It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. The king who has the heart—he lives in me. He lives through me, thus giving me his heart. In the life I live now in the flesh, I live by faithfulness in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me. That's what Paul says here.

Paul's True Mission

Remember the lens that Paul is viewing the world through. His mission is not to bring people to be more strict when they eat kosher. His mission was to show the world what grace, mercy, and divine forgiveness look and feel like. That's what he wanted the world to experience. His mission was to promote a new world that had only been experienced in the visions of the prophets. The world where God's kingdom birthed into this world. Where justice and righteousness flooded darkness. A new humanity. And it doesn't orbit around circumcision or not eating pig or not mowing your lawn on Saturday. It orbits around the person of Yeshua. It orbits around a new creation in Yeshua with a new heart and a new spirit. It orbits around loving others and embracing the divine fellowship of God.

Our Sabbath

See, here at Founding in Truth, we're a Sabbatarian group. We love and embrace the Sabbath—the day on page two of the Bible. It's amazing because during the creation week, every day ends and begins and ends. An evening and morning was the second day. Evening and morning was the third day, fourth day, fifth day, sixth day. Every day had an ending. And then we go into the seventh day. And we're looking for that—an evening and morning was the seventh day—that conclusion. Where is the end of the Sabbath? It's not there. It's as if God's good creation has reached its climax and the rest overflows for eternity. That's what we believe. It's a culmination of God's good world and creation where he reigns. The day that embodies the rest in God's love. Something the author of Hebrews kind of takes and transcends into the faith of Yeshua. In Yeshua, we have entered into his divine Sabbath, is what he says. His divine rest. That does not negate the Sabbath day at all. It emphasizes it. It lifts it up.

So we here honor the Sabbath. We honor it to remind us of the goodness of God's reign through Yeshua. That's what we do. It doesn't make us righteous. It doesn't usher us into God's magnificent kingdom. It doesn't offer forgiveness. It doesn't make us special. It doesn't give us a new spirit and a new life. It gives us a day of rest. It gives us a day of rest. Hallelujah. It's wonderful. Thank you, God, for this blessing. And we gladly cherish and respect that.

But Yeshua is where we find righteousness. Yeshua is where we find an invitation into God's kingdom. Yeshua is where we find forgiveness, a special treasure, a new spirit. Yeshua is where we find a new life that starts now and surpasses death into eternity. The Sabbath, the commandments, the Torah—they're not done away with. As if it could be. But there has been an evolution that the prophets talk about happening. Just like [Jeremiah 31](#) says will happen. From a written code to a heartbeat. That is what produces a kingdom of priests that mediate heaven on earth.

Paul had a message of life, and he was very adamant when he encountered someone who would hold up some scissors and proclaim to the nations that they need to get snipped in order to experience the goodness and blessing of God. What? And his argument—oh, he's just an apologist—makes me uncomfortable with how savvy he gets. Like in [Romans 2](#) or [Galatians 5](#), when he gets upset about people wanting to be circumcised.

Abraham's Example and Paul's Boldness

And he's like, well, you guys can. He gets bold. It's like, did Paul just say that? But his main argument is what? Like Abraham did? Like Abraham did. When we read in our Bibles that

Abraham didn't have the Torah but believed and kept the Torah. He believed and was counted to him as righteousness. Or like Moses, the guy who had the Torah, but scripture says he did not believe and he died alone in a mountain. That's Paul's argument. Which are you talking about? [Romans 2](#). I have the argument here. We have time, sure. I want you to experience the boldness of Paul.

So in [Romans 2](#) here, I believe it's [Romans 3](#) where he's pushing against the nations and Gentiles. [Romans 2](#) is where he's writing against his Jewish brethren that are pushing back and being like, all these nations coming in, the Torah is only for us. Why are they keeping Torah? No, if they're going to keep Torah, they need to have these identity markers just like we are.

And here's what Paul says. He says in verse 17, "Now you, if you call yourself a Jew, if you rely on the law and boast in God, if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the Torah, if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of little children, because you have the Torah, which is the embodiment of knowledge and truth."

He gives us some props. It's good. It is. It is. "You then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should commit adultery, do you commit adultery? Do you abhor idols? Do you rob temples? You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written, God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

So Paul is reflecting on the story of the Hebrew Bible of their day. He's reflecting on the story and like, you guys know that you're teaching that everyone else needs to be perfect in all of this and you're breaking it. Oh, how do I know? Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Judges. That's what he's doing here. Oh, it's so savage. It gets better.

Circumcision Only Works If You Keep It All

Here's his argument. This is like what David would do in apologetics class. Circumcision is great if you're keeping the rest. If you are perfect in every way in this checklist that you claim you keep. But if you don't check off one of these things, if you break one of these, it just counts for nothing. It's as if it didn't happen. "So then, if those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they are circumcised? Did you get it? What? The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the Torah will condemn you, who even though you have the written code and circumcision are a lawbreaker. A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew

who is one inwardly. The circumcision is circumcision of the, he's playing off the same theme, by the, not by the written codes, checklists that you haven't kept from the beginning. Such a person's praise is not from other people but from God."

Man, so Paul is in the face of the Jewish community that is declaring, no, no, if you want to enter into life that lasts for eternity, be Jewish, ritually. And Paul retells the whole story of the Old Testament. Do you keep the Torah, all of it? Because the Old Testament is literally a story about how you never kept it. See, you're circumcised, but you break areas of Torah. So you might as well not even be circumcised because it's not counting according to your logic. Man, it makes me uncomfortable trying to reconcile all of that. But this was his passion. This was Paul's passion. What happens when a Gentile who is not circumcised keeps the Torah? If you break the Torah and your circumcision is worthless, then a Gentile that is not circumcised but keeps the law is more righteous than you.

You can imagine that there was like silence. That's not exactly... But he has a... And that's the thing. You can have a problem with Paul. You can have a problem with his boldness and blatant in-your-face approach to what he's passionate about. That's fine, but that's what it says.

The Essence of Faith, Not Works

The essence of the Torah follows a commitment of Yeshua. It does not prompt it. It does not prompt it. "[Galatians 3:10](#), for all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, for it is written, cursed be anyone, everyone who does not abide by all things written in this book of the law and do them. It's [Jeremiah 11:3](#). So he starts spit firing aspects of the story of Israel. Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law. For the righteous shall live by faith. [Habakkuk 2:4](#). But the law is not of faith. Rather, the one who does them shall live by them. [Leviticus 18:5](#). Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, which is [Deuteronomy 28](#), specifically verse 64, the separation of God through our disobedience, by becoming a curse for us, for it's also written, Cursed is everyone who hangs in a tree. [Deuteronomy 21:23](#). So that in Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles. So that we might receive the promised spirit through faith."

So Paul's making the point here. He's making the point that Abraham was deemed righteous apart from being circumcised. And he's going to argue that the Gentiles too can experience the righteousness and blessing of God apart from first getting circumcised or even keeping Shabbat or even not eating certain things. Yeah, God can show that level of grace. He is fully capable.

No, we do not exploit God's blessings through obedience, through marking off a checklist. That's literally what the book of Job is about.

"Verse 15. To give a human example, he goes on. Brothers, even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say to and to offsprings, referring to many, but referring to one."

Okay, stop. So Paul's in savage mode. I mean, that's all I can say. So he's arguing with his Jewish brethren. And he's saying, the blessing and the promise is supposed to come to Abraham's seed, right? Or who does the Jewish community that he's arguing with think is Abraham's seed? Well, that's us. We're Abraham's seed. And he says this. He says it doesn't say to offsprings, multiple, plural. No. No. "It does not say, and to his offsprings, referring to many, but referring to one, and your offspring, who is Christ."

Put yourself there. I would want to hide behind something, the audacity of this Pharisee. Telling other Pharisees, no, you're not understanding. The blessing is going to come through the seed, and that's Christ.

Abraham's Promise and the Law

"Verse 17, this is what I mean. The Torah, which came 430 years after Abraham, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. For if the inheritance comes by the Torah, it no longer comes by promise. But God gave it to Abraham by a promise. Why then the law? It was added because of the transgression."

So remember the last few weeks we were talking about the flow and the narrative of the Torah and the different narrative shifts and how those zip files, we call it, these clusters of commandments are added throughout the story in the wilderness, specifically at times when Israel failed and transgressed. You have the Ten Commandments, and you have the covenant code, then you have the golden calf incident, right? And Moses renews the covenant, and then remember Aaron, the priesthood, was instigating the whole golden calf thing, so that's when the priestly code drops, and you have this zip file of all the priestly commands, right? You have priesthood being inaugurated in [Leviticus 9](#) and 10. They mess it all up. You have [Leviticus 17](#) where Israel's caught going and worshipping calves so then the holiness code is unzipped and how to act holy and be set apart. Stop doing that. It's a response to the disobedience. And that's how the Torah works. I mean, that's how it flows. It was added because of the transgressions. That's what I believe this is speaking about.

"Until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made. And it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. Now, an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one. Is the law then contrary to the promises of God?"

He gives this challenge. Certainly not. "For if the law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law."

Okay, so you ready for Paul's argument here? The law is good. It is a blessing, but it condemns everything that is infected by sin. Therefore, the problem, it enslaves us. It enslaved Israel. Because we, they, have been infected by sin. And that's Israel's story.

The Law as Guardian Until Christ Came

"Verse 22. But the scripture imprisoned everything under sin. Here we go. So that the promise by faith in Yeshua Messiah, Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then the law was our guardian, tried to keep us in line until Christ came in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that the faith has come, we're no longer under and pressed down by this guardian. For in Christ Jesus, you are all sons of God through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is no male or female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise."

The Foundation of Faith

Again, wrapping up with this—like, oh my God. The only way that we get included as Abraham's seed is because Yeshua is the seed that provides the blessing, and in him is how we have access to that blessing. You should sit back and say, Paul, I see what you did there. And again, what is his lens? What is Paul's vision for the world that all would know the goodness of God and the blessing of God? I hope you saw it. The problem with the Torah is our flesh. It's our heart. It's us. It's always been that. It's only through, according to the scriptures, through allegiance, faith in the Messiah, that that is addressed.

And Paul is dealing with this attitude of self-righteousness that says that he's looking at these people coming in who aren't keeping Torah perfectly, but they're judging other people because they're not keeping it perfectly in their eyes. You see how Paul's setting this up and folding it back on? Man, can you imagine being someone like that? No, we yield to our King, Yeshua, and he's the judge. And we find our faith rooted in him, what he has done, not the Torah that

condemns us because of the sin in our lives. Torah does not cleanse us from sin, Yeshua does. It's the message of Paul.

Paul had a big issue with people telling other people that they could not be the children of God unless they kept Torah as perfectly as they wanted them to. Paul had a huge issue with this, especially when they didn't even keep it perfectly themselves. It's hypocrisy. No, to be a child of God, you are invited to receive a new heart, a new heart that beats Yeshua through it. Then and only then is the Torah perfected when it is manifest through you because of Yeshua. That's [Romans 8.3](#). That is the point that Paul makes here.

Christians and the Character of Jesus

And so the big question is, the big question is, are Christians supposed to keep Torah? Christians do keep Torah. Yeah, Christians, that's the point. The believer in Yeshua is supposed to be someone who lives out the character of Yeshua. And that includes the wisdom and the essence and the intention of what the Torah was given to do. Again, the Sermon on the Mount is a sermon of what it truly means according to Yeshua to keep Torah. It's what it is. This is what Torah is supposed to look like when you're not in opposition to it because of your sin.

I have a few Christians here that I want to show you. Here we go. Here's one. Her name is Teresa from Calcutta. She was born in North Macedonia under the Ottoman Empire a long time ago. She moved to Ireland and then to India where she lived out the rest of her life. She founded the Missionaries of Charities, this organization, a congregation that ended up having over 4,500 nuns stationed in 133 countries. Their primary outreach—prompted by their faith in this Messiah that Paul preached—was to manage homes for people who were dying of HIV and AIDS, leprosy, and tuberculosis. It also ran soup kitchens, dispensaries, mobile clinics, children's and family counseling programs, as well as orphanages and schools. Now, the members that joined this congregation took vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, and they also took a fourth vow that said that they live to wholeheartedly give free service to the poorest of the poor. That's what her legacy was.

And of course, her journey was not without immense criticism, specifically from atheists. She was very pro-life to the point where it upset many people. All the same, she kept Torah. She kept Torah like Yeshua said Torah should be kept. Yeah, yeah, she did.

Standing Against Wickedness

This guy, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. There's a German pastor that taught that it was in Christ that the world would be reconciled to God. He believed that two elements became the pillars of our faith. One was the implementation of justice and the acceptance of divine suffering. Not that God is going to make you suffer, but that our walk in this world as ambassadors of the kingdom of God would face us with suffering. He believed that it was the calling of all Christians to carry the cross of Christ and to bring the burden of the kingdom of God into the non-believing world. To not stand by and do nothing in the face of injustice and wickedness. Because that's what the heart of the Torah is. And he was outspoken against the Nazi regime when it began to rise up around him. He was very outspoken and against the euthanasia programs and the murder of innocents. Ended up being linked to an attempt to overthrow Hitler and was hung 21 days before Hitler committed suicide. This was a Christian that kept Torah like Yeshua—would not stand for wickedness to gain an inch because he knows of a king. He knows of a king, of a kingdom, and it's his job as an ambassador to stand against it.

But these guys, Jim Elliott, Nate St. Ed, Macaulay, Peter Fleming, and Roger Uterin, five missionaries that moved to Ecuador to share the good news of God's kingdom, leaving their jobs and homes, uprooting their families to move to a foreign land, to learn a new language, all in hopes that the Prince of Peace would be introduced to the tribes that were there that only knew violence. And you guys know the story: Operation Akka. They landed to meet this primitive tribe in the jungle, and they were speared to death upon landing. And even though they had guns with them, they did not shoot at the people killing them. Martyrs for the sake of the gospel.

But that's not the part that gets me. What really gets me is this wonderful woman. It's a story of what happened just a few months later when the widow of Jim Elliot, the widow of the man that was speared, went and flew back to that very spot in the jungle where her husband was speared. And she went into the camp and she sat among the people. And she sat next to the men that threw the spears and shared with them the message of forgiveness and mercy and the grace and the blessing of being a child of God and Yeshua, unleashing the kingdom of God in that village that was forever impacted. She got to know the men that murdered her husband, and she got to know them as brothers in Christ because they gave their lives to the Prince of Peace and put down their spears forever. That is a Christian that kept Torah like Yeshua. More than me. This is what the power of the Spirit of God in a new heart looks like when it keeps and beats the commandments of God. This is the power of God overtaking the world that Paul envisioned.

The True Scope of Torah

Guys, I believe Sabbath and not eating certain things that the Bible says not to and memorializing the beauty of the feast days—I think they're absolutely edifying to the believer. Absolutely. I think they're important, and I do believe that they're a way of showing honor to God. Absolutely. But those three things? That's nowhere near the fullness of the Torah that Yeshua was presenting to the world. Sure, I think they were in there. But the mission of Yeshua was not to get the world just to stop eating some things. It was to actually change the world and do something, actually. Paul's issue was when we take one of these things and make it the foundation of our faith instead of our allegiance and faith in Yeshua. And that makes some people upset. It does. Because sometimes we like the fact that we can, sometimes we find our identity in how well we can tie a tzitzit. And sometimes we're happy with that. And if that's you today, you're missing out. You're missing out. You're missing out on being someone who is sent into the world to show what the Torah of Yeshua actually looks and feels like.

And I can only hope this topic that many men way smarter than me have struggled with for years now—I can only hope that I gave this topic an ounce of dedication in the presentation today. The topic of navigating Paul's letters, his intent, his message of the scope of law is like carving a chicken while everyone's sitting there watching. And maybe, maybe I've left a mess of bits scattered around today, but my only hope, my only hope is that you take away one thing: Your faith and your life should orbit the glory of King Yeshua. That is what you orbit around.

We find value in some of the things of Torah, like tzitzit, Sabbath, kosher. Great value, important value. But the moment that those things become barriers in our minds for people to experience the love that is eternal—guys, if you're known more about how well you keep Shabbat than for your love and mercy and grace and forgiveness in the name of Yeshua, you are who Paul is talking about. The Torah of Yeshua changes the world. They will know you by your love. Are you a world changer? Are you willing to be? This was, I believe, Paul's stance. This was his point.

From Brokenness to Redemption

I haven't even—even having understanding, man, that doesn't unlock the mystery of some of the stuff that Paul says. I'm not going to say that I have all this understanding, and I don't trust anyone who says they do. But Paul viewed Yeshua as the climax of the story of the Bible—one that starts with a broken heart that breaks commandments and fails to represent God's kingdom, to one that beats a new rhythm of life: grace, forgiveness, mercy, love. And

sometimes, sometimes as people, we don't like that because accepting a new heart means sacrifice. It means surgery. Surgery hurts. Living out a life following Yeshua is hard.

Sometimes it's just easier to think you're doing good by not eating some pig, right? Wearing some string. Sometimes it's just easier to settle for a checklist. Paul is intent on disrupting that false motivation in the life of a believer. So please stand as we end services the way that we entered in through worship. And guys, I don't know where you're at today. The world that Yeshua entered into was something he thought should change. Sometimes there's more to the scope of our religious lifestyle than what we put on.

Sometimes there's a bigger step that we need to take. Sometimes there's a bigger love that needs to follow through the things that we do and surround ourselves with. And maybe there's an area in your life that you know where you're lacking in that, and you know there's a move that needs to happen. I don't know. But I hope that you would no longer look at Paul's messages as intimidating, like I did for a very long time, that you would no longer look at his messages as confusing or perplexing. It was a long time I was scared to read Paul's letters because, oh no, I don't understand.

Don't Be Scared to Dive In

I know keeping Sabbath is important. It is. It's very much so. It reminds us of Yeshua. Don't be scared to dive into Paul's letters. He's a man on a mission, and his vision has already taken hold. We're living that out. Don't be scared to live that out.

Father, Mold Our Hearts

Alvino Mocciano, our father, our king, father, I thank you for this time together. Father, I ask that you would continue molding our hearts to beat as hearts of flesh and not cold stones, like Ezekiel said. That the spirit that you promised would take hold of every motivation and every thought, Father, everything that we do, everything that we speak. Father, that we would not build up barriers to the kingdom, but that we would follow the type of Torah that Yeshua taught. And we know that this cannot be done with just us, Father, so we ask that spirit that you promised to give us would erupt so that Yeshua can manifest the law through us, as Paul said. The type of Torah that [Jeremiah 31](#) describes, the type of Torah that [Ezekiel 36](#) describes, the type of Torah that changes the world and not just condemns us to death. We thank you, Father, for our King Yeshua. We thank you for his teaching. We thank you for what the Apostle Paul calls the law of Christ. In Yeshua's name we pray. Amen.

We have a prayer team on either side of the room. If you need prayer today for anything in your life, if you would want someone to just encourage you or to stand with you as you go before the Father, take advantage of that. That's what it's here for.

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