

A New Look into

The Book of GALATIANS!

Why does the apostle Paul seem to condemn the "LAW" of God in Galatians and yet calls it "holy, just and good" in Romans? Was Paul a schizoid personality? What was his REAL stand concerning the LAWS of God and the "works of the law"? What is the "curse" of the Law? Is Law contrary to "faith"? What was the "added Law"? Why, and to what, was it "added"? Just what is all the uproar and confusion all about in the book of Galatians, anyway? How can we truly understand Paul's seemingly inconsistent and contradictory statements about the "works" or "deeds" of God's Law?

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Are we saved by "faith"? Or by "works of the law"? Although they do not realize it, when Christians today read the book of Galatians, and the apostle Paul's comments about "faith" and "the works of the law," they tend to think about this controversy in the light of Martin Luther's fight against medieval Catholic dogma and the doctrine of penance and earning salvation by physical "works" or acts of penance. Luther, on the other hand, was influenced by the early Catholic theologian Augustine who taught that by "works of the law" Paul meant the legalistic striving to earn God's salvation by self-righteous deeds of good conduct. By contrast, Augustine taught that "faith" is the passive attitude by which one simply receives the divine gift of salvation, knowing that it cannot ever be "earned."

Today, throughout the Protestant world, Augustine's definition of "faith" versus "works of the law" has become universally accepted, and assumed by virtually everyone to be the subject that the apostle Paul was talking and writing about. Augustine's interpretation has been assumed to have been that of Paul! But is this really so?

Is faith in Christ contrary to the Law of God? Are Law and faith mutually incompatible and exclusionary? Does faith and belief in Christ take the place of "works" or "deeds of the law"? Does faith work in opposition to Law, and does Law oppose faith? Let's understand this!

Carrying the Augustinian theory a step further, Joseph Tkach of the Worldwide Church of God claims that it is even a false belief for a Christian to think that they are "*qualifying* for God's Kingdom." According to Tkach:

"Are you, now, qualifying for eternal life in the kingdom of God? The Bible says you are not! I hope you are not surprised. But the truth is that you are not qualifying to receive eternal life. Not one of us is qualifying to be in the kingdom of God -- and we never will!"

What does Tkach mean by this provocative, challenging statement? Notice his own explanation:

"Eternal life, which makes entrance into the kingdom of God possible, is a gift -- and as a gift it is free. You do not and cannot earn it. You cannot qualify for it. It is God's gift to you -- something you can never achieve, earn or in any way whatsoever qualify for" (Plain Truth, "Personal," p.1, August 1991).

Long-time members of the Worldwide Church of God will recognize immediately the subtle change in doctrine from the years in which Herbert W. Armstrong was leader of the Church. Herbert Armstrong never equated the word "qualify" with the word "earn," as Joseph Tkach does. Herbert Armstrong consistently said that only the "OVERCOMERS" would inherit eternal life -- he taught that although eternal life is a free gift, there are definite "conditions" attached to it -- it will not be given to just anybody. Armstrong made it plain that good works are REQUIRED for salvation, although good works themselves will not save a single soul!

Jesus Christ Himself said that if we desire eternal life, then we must "keep the commandments" (Matt.19:25). He also made it very plain that only those Christians who overcome the pulls of the flesh, and conquer sin, will be in the kingdom of God (see Rev.2:7, 17, 26-27; 3:5, 21). In fact, Jesus declared, "He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and ALL LIARS -- their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death" (Rev.21:7-8).

Spiritual "Doublespeak" to Confuse the Unwary

One of the tricks Satan the devil has up his sleeve to deceit innocent and unsuspecting, gullible and naive Christians is "word manipulation." That is, he subtly changes the definitions of words without telling you what he is doing. Then his arguments appear very persuasive and natural and irresistible. For example, the word "qualify." On what authority does Joseph Tkach equate this word with "earn"? On what basis can he dogmatically state that we cannot "qualify" for salvation? Who gave him (or Satan, for that matter), the authority to CHANGE the definition of words in the English language? Such changes obscure the truth and obfuscate

the Scriptures and confuse the mind. Soon one doesn't know what they believe -- they begin reasoning around in circles, prattling pet phrases without any understanding. They recite by rote Scripture verses without any sense or meaning or understanding.

It is by this simple means that Satan has confused millions into believing that the apostle Paul taught the "Law of God" is done away with -- abolished -- terminated -- and that we are saved (receive eternal life) through "faith" alone, apart from and without any so-called "works of the law."

Did Christ Abolish the LAW?

Let's be honest, now! If the "Law" of God is indeed inessential for salvation -- in fact, if observing it constitutes a "CURSE" as some people put it -- how could that be true since Jesus the Messiah Himself said unequivocally, "Do not think that I have come to ABOLISH THE LAW or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." He went on, "I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (Matt.5:17-18).

If we are saved by "faith alone," as Martin Luther put it, or we cannot "qualify" for salvation, as Joseph Tkach puts it, then why did Paul, who also wrote so much about the importance of "faith," also write, "For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who OBEY THE LAW who will be declared righteous" (Rom.2:13)? In fact, God only gives His Holy Spirit to those who OBEY Him (Acts 5:32). However, all the obedience in the world couldn't save us, after we are converted, since prior to conversion we were all sinners in the sight of God, and worthy of death (Rom.3:9-20). This includes both Jews, who had the Law of God revealed to them, and Gentiles, who didn't know or understand the Law (Rom.3:23). Therefore, ALL must accept "in faith" the sacrifice of Christ for their sins, in order to be forgiven and reconciled to God. All are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood" (Rom.3:24-25).

Only the blood of Christ can bring us forgiveness of our past sins, or even atone for future sins we may commit, when we repent of them and ask God's forgiveness (not some priest or minister's forgiveness -- our sins are between us and God, and are properly not the business of priests or ministers so they can exercise "authority" over us, black mail us, or use their knowledge of our past to frighten or intimidate us into conforming to their desires and commands!). In this vein, the apostle John wrote, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

Nevertheless, after we are converted, and accept Christ as our Savior, God expects us to obey His spiritual Law -- all the points of His Law, as amplified by Christ in Matthew 5-7 -- the entire "Law" of God which regulates our moral and ethical conduct -- the Ten Commandments, and their further elucidation in the Book of the Law, or the "Torah." Sin is the transgression of this Law (I John 3:4). Willful and deliberate sin, after we receive Christ and His forgiveness, would constitute turning our back on Christ and committing the

unpardonable sin, for which there is no forgiveness but only the fearful expectation of fiery judgment in the sulphurous lake of fire (Heb.6:4-6; 10:26-31).

Once we accept the sacrifice of Christ on behalf of our sins, God's Law does not miraculously dissolve into nothingness, and disappear; it remains in total effect, just as the eternal laws of chemistry, physics and Nature do. Homosexuality is just as much a loathsome, detestable sin today, in God's sight, as it was in the days of Moses, and the time of Abraham when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for going after "strange flesh" (Gen.19; II Pet.2:6; Jude 7).

Law and Faith Not Contrary to Each Other

Rather, true Christians take upon themselves the obligation and desire to OBEY ALL God's commandments which relate to their lives, spiritually. That is why Paul writes, "Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? NOT AT ALL! Rather, we UPHOLD THE LAW" (Rom.3:31).

God's commandments are "holy, righteous and good" (Rom.7:12). They show us just what "sin" really is (Rom.7:7; I John 3:4). How would we know that "coveting" was wrong, unless God told us, "Do not covet"? How would we know it is wrong to fashion images of God or Jesus or the saints, and worship before them, unless God had said, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image . . ." (Exo.20:4)? Would we really understand the seriousness of Sabbath breaking unless God had said, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy" (Exo.20:8)? Would we really consider it important to honor our father and mother if God had not commanded us to do so (Exo.20:12)? God's commandments forbid us to murder, commit adultery, steal, give false testimony or tell lies (Exo.20:13-16). Breaking any of these commandments constitutes SIN! And in the sight of God, "the wages of sin is DEATH" (Rom.6:23).

If you see a supposed "Christian" minister or believer stealing, telling lies about himself or his background, committing ADULTERY (which seems to be all too common among the ministry, during these "last days"!), or other heinous sins, do you think that such a person is a real "Christian"? Don't their actions prove just the opposite? The Word of God clearly says that true Christians will be OBEYING God's laws, and living by "EVERY WORD OF GOD" (Matt.4:4; Luke 4:4)!

"The PERFECT LAW"

The apostle James, the brother of Christ, made it about as plain as a person could make it. He proclaimed, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the PERFECT LAW that gives freedom [God's true

Law, which guarantees everybody's freedom from slavery and bondage!], and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but DOING it -- he will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:22-25).

Isn't this plain speaking? But James goes even further. He wrote: "If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. For whoever keeps the WHOLE LAW and yet *stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking ALL of it*. For he who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not murder.' If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become A LAWBREAKER. Speak and act as those who are going to be JUDGED by the law that gives freedom" (James 2:8-12).

Clearly, God's Law is eternal. David the prophet and king of Israel wrote in the Psalms, "The works of his hands are verity and judgment; *all his commandments are sure*. They stand fast FOR EVER AND EVER, and are done in truth and uprightness" (Psalm 111:7-8).

Any who come to you and claim that "God's Law is done away with," or "You can't qualify for salvation," is merely repeating that age-old lie of Satan the devil when he told Eve in the Garden of Eden, in effect, "You don't have to 'qualify' for salvation by eating the fruit of the tree of life. Salvation is a free gift. No 'works' are involved at all. Just eat the fruit of *this* nice-looking tree of knowledge of good and evil. It will make you wise like God, and you will easily and quickly become as God is. See how simple it is? Here, have a taste of this delicious, beautiful, delectable fruit!" But the tree he manipulated and seduced Eve to eat of was the tree of the "knowledge [i.e., "experience"] of good *and evil*" -- a mixture of good and evil, good mixed with lethal poison -- in other words, the tree of DEATH!

And Eve fell for his sucker line of super-salesmanship -- she listened to the snake -- just like generations of mankind have done ever since!

Clearly, observing the eternal, spiritual Laws of God are required for salvation. That is why Paul exhorts us, "Continue to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil.2:12). That is why Peter wrote, "Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election SURE. For if you DO these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Pet.1:10-11). This is why Paul himself wrote, "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? RUN in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who compete in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be *disqualified* for the prize" (I Cor.9:24-27).

Do you see the point? If you can become "*disqualified*" for the prize of eternal life, then obviously -- Joseph Tkach to the contrary notwithstanding -- to get the prize YOU MUST "QUALIFY"!!! In other words, my friends -- you are either QUALIFYING, or you are DISQUALIFYING! Which is it in your case? Joseph Tkach has already told us that he isn't

"qualifying." That means he's disqualifying. *What about you?*

Faith and Works -- the Galatians' Enigma

Paul begins his epistle to the Galatians by getting straight to the point. After the introduction, he exclaims, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel" (Gal.1:6). Paul declared that some people were throwing the Galatians into confusion, "trying to pervert the gospel of Christ" (verse 7).

Paul then recounts his own personal history, showing how zealous he had been as a Pharisee, zealous for the law, and Jewish traditions, before his conversion (Gal.1:11-14). Later, after Paul began his ministry, problems arose because of false brethren of the Pharisaical persuasion who "had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves" (Gal.2:4). What were these Pharisaical brethren trying to do? They were teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcized, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). This brought them into sharp dispute with Paul and Barnabus (v.2). They went to to Jerusalem to settle the dispute at the headquarters Church. These legalists told the assembly, "The Gentiles must be circumcized and required to obey the law of Moses" (v.5).

After much discussion, Peter stood up and pointed out how God had given the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles, making no distinction between them and Jews, even though they had not been circumcized (Acts 15:6-9). Peter declared, "Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a YOKE that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear?" (v.10).

What was this "yoke" Peter was talking about? What did the Pharisees mean when they said new Gentile believers had to be circumcized and keep the law of Moses to be saved? Isn't that the very same problem Paul was encountering among the Galatians?

Of course it was! That's why Paul goes into the history of this same Jerusalem conference in Galatians 2! In other words, these false brethren were saying that Gentiles had to **BECOME PRACTICING JEWS** -- that is, they had to **CONVERT TO JUDAISM!**

Later, when Peter visited the Gentile church at Antioch, but refused to eat with Gentiles when certain brethren came from Jerusalem (Gal.2:12), Paul rebuked him, saying, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to *follow Jewish customs?*" (Gal.2:13-14). These Jewish customs included the Jewish traditions and policies not to eat with Gentiles (who were considered "unclean").

The whole dispute in the book of Galatians, then, was over whether Gentiles had to become Jews, outwardly as well as inwardly, by obeying all the laws and traditions of the Jewish community! Did they have to embrace Judaism as well as accept Christ as Savior! Paul found this whole idea repugnant and ridiculous -- bringing people into bondage and slavery. With this background in mind, then, let's go through the statements of Paul in the

book of Galatians.

Paul declares, "We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law [becoming "Jews"], because by observing the law no one will be justified" (Gal.2:15-16).

No, law keeping *itself* does not justify us from our past sins -- only the blood of Christ can do that! No amount of future law keeping of itself will pay the penalty for our past transgressions of God's law!

The only way that "death penalty" can be removed from us is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ (Rom.6:23). Paul goes on to explain, "I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law [circumcision and all the commandments of Judaism], Christ died for nothing" (Gal.2:21).

The very idea that we can be saved, or receive salvation, by becoming "Jews" through circumcision and performing rituals was an outrage to Paul. He exclaimed to the Galatians, "You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? . . . Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?" (Gal.3:1-5).

Paul went on, "All who rely on observing the law [for salvation, leaving Christ out] are under the curse, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.' Clearly no one is justified [made right, previous sins forgiven] before God by the law [only the blood of Christ can atone for sin -- not the law itself], because, 'The righteous will live by faith.' The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, 'The man who does these things [circumcision, and the whole bit, by becoming converts to Judaism] will live in them.' Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law [the "curse of the law" is the death penalty which comes through breaking the law] by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree' " (Gal.3:10-14).

How clear it should be -- when Paul is talking about the "Law" in the epistle to the Galatians, he is referring to the "whole enchilada" as it were -- the entire Old Covenant -- and the prospect of Gentiles converting to JUDAISM, becoming circumcized, along with all the ceremonies, rituals, and the Jewish halakkah -- the various Pharisaic [and Rabbinic, in later times] additions added TO the law, as a "fence," to preserve Judaism through the ages. As Christians, we do not come under the Old Covenant, and Jewish halakkah [Rabbinic interpretations and decisions] added to the Law -- rather, we are under the New Covenant through Christ Jesus!

The Law and the Promise

Paul goes on, "Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say, 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed,' meaning one person, who is Christ. What I mean is this: The Law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise" (Gal.3:15-18).

In other words, let's understand this. God made promises to Abraham (Gen.12:1-4; 13:14-17; 17:1-8). These original promises were made 25 years before He made the covenant of circumcision with Abraham and his physical descendants (Gen.17:10-14). These promises constituted the original covenant God made with Abraham, and did not include circumcision.

Later, God added the covenant of circumcision as a sign between Himself and Abraham's physical descendants. Later still, God tested Abraham's faith, commanding him to sacrifice his son Isaac on an altar (Gen.22:1-7). However, when Abraham proved obedient to God, God provided the lamb for the burnt offering -- a type of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who died for our sins (Gen.22:8, 13). Abraham called the name of that place of testing, "God Will Provide" (v.14). After this, God reiterated and confirmed the promises he had made to Abraham (Gen.22:15-18). These promises had been conditional upon Abraham's obedience (versed 18), and his faith which led him to obey, despite outward circumstances.

*True Faith AND "Works" Go Together --
The "Works of Faith" OBEY the Spiritual LAW*

The apostle James explains this fully. He writes, "You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,' and he was called God's friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone" (James 2:20-24).

How clear! There are "WORKS OF FAITH," and those works involve OBEDIENCE TO THE LAWS OF GOD! God Himself said so. He told Isaac, that through his offspring [primarily referring to Christ] all nations on earth would be blessed -- why? -- "because Abraham OBEYED me and kept my requirements, my COMMANDS, my decrees and my LAWS" (Gen.26:5). How plain it should be that God's eternal, spiritual LAW existed long before Moses and Mount Sinai! Even Abraham obeyed it, and he lived 430 years before the giving of the Old Covenant at Mount Sinai.

Faith and obedience to the laws of God go together, hand-in-glove. They are not opposed to each other, or contrary the one to the other. However, faith is contrary to trying to gain salvation by entering into the Old Covenant and becoming a Jewish proselyte to Judaism! That

is the issue Paul is addressing here in the book of Galatians! It is not the issue of Laws versus Faith, but Faith versus the OLD COVENANT!

Notice!

There Is NO CONTEST Between "Law and Faith"

Paul explains, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, THE LAW, *which was four hundred and thirty years after*, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law [keeping the added law of ceremonies and rituals and earthly sacrifices], it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise" (Galatians 3:16-18).

How plain! The only "law" that was "added" at Mt. Sinai was the ritualistic law of animal sacrifices, and washings, the ceremonial law involving the Levitical Priesthood!

Paul continues: "What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was ADDED because of transgressions UNTIL THE SEED to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator" (Gal.3:19). This "added law," often referred to as the "Law of Moses," referred to the entire Old Covenant, and all the laws which Israel was commanded to observe to be the nation and people of God. *It included the rituals and sacrifices, and ALL the laws God gave to Moses, as well as the covenant of circumcision!* The earlier laws were repeated at Sinai, the spiritual laws and statutes of God; but added to them were the NEW laws which related to the Levitical priesthood and its work!

Why did God give this Law to Israel? "BECAUSE OF TRANSGRESSIONS" (v.19). Transgressions of what? There is only one thing that can be transgressed -- that is LAW! In other words, God's spiritual Law was in effect from the beginning. This includes the Ten Commandments, statutes and judgments (see Gen.26:5), which Abraham obeyed.

But while in slavery in Egypt, Israel had forgotten that Law, and had forgotten God's Ways. Even when they came out of Egypt, they had to be REMINDED of which day was the weekly Sabbath (Exodus 16). Even when God revealed this day to them, we read that some Israelites insisted on gathering manna on the Sabbath day, which God had forbidden. Notice: "Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the LORD said unto Moses, *How long refuse ye to keep MY COMMANDMENTS AND MY LAWS?*" (Exodus 16:26-28).

Because Israel had forgotten, and disobeyed God's spiritual laws, at Mount Sinai, God ADDED to that original law -- which itself included the Passover and Day of Unleavened Bread (see Exodus 12:14-19), which had been given to Israel while they were still in Egypt, months earlier. What "Law" did He "add"? He added the whole Levitical Priesthood, as a way to deal with transgressions of the spiritual law -- with its sacrifices and rituals! For the time

being, this Levitical Priesthood, and its system of rituals and purification of the earthly sanctuary and temple, was added as a temporary "schoolmaster" to POINT the WAY to Christ, and the Heavenly Sanctuary and Temple, of which it was merely an earthly TYPE!

Paul writes, "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, TILL THE SEED SHOULD COME [CHRIST] to whom the promise was made" (Gal.4:19). That is, because Israel had been transgressing that original Law, God added the terms of the Old Covenant to bring Israel into the complete knowledge of His laws and statutes, and even provided a sacrificial system which symbolized the blood of the Lamb of God which would be shed for the sins of the world.

Paul goes on, "Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? ABSOLUTELY NOT! For if a law had been given that could [of itself] impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe" (Gal.3:21-22). "Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to LEAD US TO CHRIST that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law [the Old Covenant and all its rituals and sacrifices]" (Gal.3:23-25).

Are you following along, so far? Do you see what Paul is talking about up to this point? Just remember, as we go through the book of Galatians, that Paul is combating the teachings of these erring, false Pharisaical brethren who were teaching that Gentiles had to be circumcized and keep the whole Old Covenant -- that is, become converts to Judaism -- in order to be saved!

Paul's Digression

After discussing these issues of faith versus the entirety of the Old Covenant, including circumcision, sacrifices and ritual aspects of the Law, and all its ramifications, Paul digresses for a moment, and talks about the background of the Gentile Galatians. He says, "Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God -- or rather are known by God -- how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you" (Gal.4:8-11).

What is Paul talking about here? What are these special "days and months and seasons and years"? Contrary to Catholic and Protestant assumptions, these cannot refer to the weekly Sabbath or the annual holy days of God! The weekly Sabbath was established at Creation, not at Mount Sinai (Gen.2:1-2). At Sinai God did not give a NEW commandment to observe the Sabbath, but rather said, "*Remember* the Sabbath . . ." This commandment had been in effect from the time of Creation. Jesus said the sabbath was created for ALL mankind (Mark 2:27-28). The prophet Isaiah foretold, "From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, ALL MANKIND will come and bow down before me" (Isa.66:23).

These observances which Paul condemned could not refer to the annual holy days of God, which He established to be observed forever! God gave Israel His Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread holy days BEFORE ISRAEL EVEN LEFT EGYPT! They became part of the Old Covenant, as did all the previous laws of God. But they did not end with it, any more than the laws against murder, adultery, stealing, idolatry, or Sabbath-breaking, did!

Notice! God commanded His people to observe the Passover forever (Exodus 12:14). The Feast of Unleavened Bread was also ordained forever (Exo.12:17-20). Both alien and native-born were commanded to observe it by putting leaven out of their homes (verse 20) -- anyone who refused was to be "cut off" from the community. *These laws were given long before Israel ever appeared before God at Mount Sinai!*

In Leviticus 23 all the holy days of God are enumerated. Each one of them is clearly commanded to be observed "for ever" (Lev.23:4-14; 15-21; 23-32; 33-36, 39-42). These were not "Israel's" feasts; they are "the LORD's appointed feasts" (verse 4). They belong to GOD, not to men. And God commands that His people observe them faithfully -- including Christians under the New Covenant! Jesus Himself observed them, setting us an example (see Luke 2:41-42; 22:15; John 7:2-10; I Pet.2:21). The early Church at Jerusalem observed them (Acts 12:3). Even Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, observed them (Acts 18:21; 20:6, 16), and commanded Gentiles to do so (I Cor.5:7-8). In the Millennial reign of Christ, the whole world will observe the Festival of Tabernacles (Zech.14:16-19).

Rather, these added burdens which the Galatians were allowing Judaizers to impose on them were numerous fast days and commemorations of Judaism -- various strict "legalistic" halakkah (religious "decisions" made by Pharisees and later Rabbinical courts) which diverged from the Laws of the written Torah. The Jews over time came to celebrate a number of special holidays and fast days and anniversaries in addition to the holy days of God. In addition, they "fenced" the Laws of God with strict halachic interpretations of what was permissible on the Sabbath day, washings, separate dishes for meat and dairy products, and a host of rituals. Some of the Temple rituals were later incorporated into each Family's home worship, after the Temple was destroyed, to bring the Jewish families in mind of the laws of God. Some were added by the Pharisees even during Temple times, as a further inducement to "holiness" -- and became a terrible BURDEN on the people. The Pharisees even fasted two days every week in their quest for righteousness (Luke 18:10-12). In Zechariah, we read about some of these other days which the Jews had begun celebrating, in addition to God's plain commandments. "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'The fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months will become joyful and glad occasions and happy festivals for Judah' " (Zech.8:19).

God never intended His spiritual Church, including newly converted Gentiles, to come under a yoke of bondage by converting to Pharisaic Judaism, and celebrating all these additional laws, halakkah, rules and restrictions, days, months, seasons and anniversaries. Such multiple-fastings and observances and strict halakkich Judaism only leads to self-righteousness and have no benefit or power in making one truly righteous before God (see Isaiah 58).

Paul said of his brethren among the Pharisees, "For I bear them record that they have a

zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their OWN righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the END [Greek, "goal," "purpose," "result"] of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom.10:2-4). Christ used the same word when He said to Pilate, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into this world" (John 18:37). Peter used the word when he wrote, "Receiving the END of your FAITH [i.e., purpose, goal, result of our faith], even the salvation of your souls" (I Pet.1:9). The Greek word is *telos* and means, "to set out for a definite point or goal," "the point aimed at as a limit, i.e. (by impl.) the conclusion of an act or state, termination [lit., fig. or indef.], result [immediate, ultimate, or prophetic], purpose" (Strong's Concordance, #5056).

That is, the Law points to Christ, who is its fulfillment, embodiment -- it's fullness. He was (and is) the LIVING LAW -- THE LIVING TORAH, OR REVELATION OF GOD THE FATHER! Christ is the Logos of God (John 1:1-3), a Greek word meaning "Word" of God. The Hebrew equivalent of "Logos" is the word *Dabar*, meaning "Word," but also translated "Commandment." The "Ten Commandments" are called the "Words," or *dabarim*, in Hebrew. Thus Christ is the PERFECTION OF THE LAW -- and while He was a human being, He was the Word, Logos, or Law -- or Torah -- of God *MADE FLESH* (John 1:14).

Does this mean Christ terminated, abolished, and ENDED the "Law"? Not at all! He came to BRING IT TO ITS FULLNESS of beauty and glory -- to MAGNIFY IT, and make it honorable (Isaiah 42:21). He said, "Think NOT that I am come to DESTROY [Greek, *kataluo*, meaning "to loosen down (disintegrate), demolish, halt" -- destroy, dissolve, come to nought, overthrow, throw down"] the LAW, or the prophets [He didn't abolish any of the Old Testament prophecies, either -- they are written for OUR DAY, TODAY!]: I am not come to destroy, but to FULFILL" (Matt.5:17). The word "fulfill" here is the Greek *pleroo* and means "make replete, cram (a net), level up (a hollow)," also "satisfy, execute (an office), verify" -- and "make full, complete, fully preach, perfect" (Strong's # 4137).

How could Christ do away with the Law when He was the embodiment of the Law -- the Law or Logos in human form? To abolish or destroy the Law of God would have been tantamount to committing spiritual harikari -- SUICIDE! Or, in His case, it would have been committing the act of Deicide or Theocide -- God putting Himself to DEATH! -- destroying Himself -- for all eternity! He is the LIVING TORAH of God! Therefore, there is no way He could abolish the Torah -- for it is Himself, His character, in written form!

Jesus went on, to His disciples, "For verily I say unto you, *Till heaven and earth pass*, one jot or one tittle shall in NO WISE PASS FROM THE LAW, till all be fulfilled" (Matt.5:18). Not the smallest dot or dagesh, or mark shall pass from God's Law till the WHOLE UNIVERSE is extinguished and disappears from existence!!!

How plain! But in saying these things, Christ was referring to the Laws of God -- the Torah, the Revelation of the Old Testament. He was not referring to any additions to that law by "men" who circumvented the laws of God by their own human "traditions of the elders" (Matt.15:1-9), and "commandments of MEN," i.e., Jewish halakkah which sometimes added to

or even contradicted the plain and simple words of Torah (see also Deut.4:1-2).

Jesus thundered at the Pharisees -- and I suspect He would thunder at many Jewish rabbis and proponents of modern Judaism, today, as well -- "Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, The people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit IN VAIN do they worship me, teaching for doctrines THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN [human halakkah]. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the TRADITION OF MEN [such as the long beards, sidecurls, top hats, and black dress of Orthodox Jews, or even the insistence of wearing the kippa -- all traditions of men, and not commanded anywhere in Scripture!], as the washing of pots and cups: and *many other such like things ye do*" (Mark 7:6-8). To many people, including religious leaders, their traditions are more important than the LAW of God! (Mark 7:9).

What Was the "Yoke of Bondage"?

These elements added by the Pharisees to the laws of God which were incorporated into Judaism, made the Jewish religion "a YOKE upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear" (Acts 15:10). Jesus said of them, "For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them upon men's shoulders . . . But all their works they do to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and ENLARGE the borders of their garments" (Matt.23:4-5).

All the ritualisms of Judaism and the man-made do's and don'ts, and halakkah, which made the religion a system of bondage and chains, was included when Paul said to the Galatians: "Stand fast therefore in the LIBERTY wherewith Christ hath made us free, and *be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage*" (Gal.5:1). Adult Christians, he added, do not need to go through the ritual of "circumcision" (verse 2).

It is obvious that the brethren in Galatia were being victimized and enticed by false brethren from among the sect of the Pharisees to return completely to the Jewish rituals and teachings of Judaism -- to be brought back under the "law" and to put themselves under the bondage of Judaism with its halakkah and traditions of men. This Paul strenuously objected to (Acts 15; Gal.2:1-5).

Paul condemns the "weak and beggarly elements" of human traditions -- whether Jewish or Gentile in origin (Gal.4:8-9). He said it was not necessary for them to observe "days, months, times and years" of human traditions -- whether Gentile or Jewish customs -- which were not part of God's Torah (Gal.4:10). This would include Christmas, Easter, Halloween, various "Christian/pagan holidays" -- but also various Jewish days which they have added to the Torah -- such as the Fast of Tisha B'Av, and various other holidays of the Jewish calendar.

In other words, Paul is saying, *you do not have to become a religious Jew and practice Judaism to be saved!* Both Jews AND Gentile religions have gone astray. As Paul says, "What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved BOTH JEWS AND GENTILES, that they are under SIN: As it is written, There is none righteous, no,

not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are ALL gone out of the way, they are TOGETHER become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom.3:9-11).

The Two Covenants

Paul picks up this theme again in chapter 4, verse 21. He asks the foolish Galatians, "Tell me, you who want to be under the law [the entire Old Covenant], are you not aware of what the law says? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise.

"These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent TWO COVENANTS. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written: 'Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.'

"Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. But what does the Scripture say? 'Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son.' Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the SLAVE WOMAN [those under the Old Covenant], but of the free woman [we are under the NEW COVENANT!]" (Gal.4:24-31).

Isn't this plain and clear? Have you ever understood this before? God Almighty has certainly revealed NEW TRUTH about the true background and understanding of the mysteries and enigmas and troubling, puzzling Scriptures of the book of Galatians! MILLIONS have been confused by the devil, and jerked around by his ministers, and mistakenly assume that this book does away with the LAWS of God! Nothing could be further from the truth! Rather, this book clearly distinguishes between the OLD FLESHLY COVENANT and the NEW SPIRITUAL COVENANT!

As Christians, we are not under the Old Covenant, with circumcision, and the whole ritualistic and halakkic system of laws that comprised Judaism -- rather, we are under the New Covenant!

Paul exclaims, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a *yoke of slavery*. Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised, that he is obligated to obey the whole law" (Gal.5:1-3). In other words, Paul is asking, Can circumcision save you? Are you saved by becoming a Jew outwardly, in the flesh? Can keeping all the laws of Moses save you? Are you going to be saved by accepting Judaism, and Rabbinic halakkah?

The answer? OF COURSE NOT! Circumcision is not necessary for salvation. You do not have to come under the authority of the Old Covenant to be saved. You do not have to become a physical "Jew," and convert to Judaism, to be saved. Not at all!

Paul goes on, "You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus *neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value*. The only thing that counts is FAITH expressing itself through love" (Gal.5:4-6).

And what is this "love"? Paul is not talking about a mere human emotion here. The Scriptures themselves define what "love" is. It is not a mere human sentiment. Rather, "This is love for God: TO OBEY HIS COMMANDS. And his commands are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3-4). In other words, love OBSERVES the commandments of God!

As Paul wrote, "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not covet,' and whatever other commandment there may be, are SUMMED UP in this one rule: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom.13:8-10).

These Judaizing brethren, however, were not merely saying that Gentiles had to obey the Ten Commandments, and the laws of God which define sin. Rather, they were saying that Gentiles had to convert to Judaism, be circumcised, and observe ALL the laws of Moses -- every single element of the Old Covenant, as well as Jewish religious authority and halakkah, traditions of men and the "whole works"! They seemingly did not realize that there was a NEW COVENANT!

These false teachers infuriated Paul. They sought to bring God's people into sore bondage and a system of virtual slavery. Christ was merely a figurehead to them -- it was the tenets of JUDAISM which they attempted to foster and promote! -- including things which Christ Himself had condemned and blazed out against in wrath (Matt.23).

The heresy of these false teachers was so subtle and compelling to naive and innocent young Christians, that Paul's anger surged against such wickedness and foolishness. He stormed, "The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be. Brothers, if I am still preaching *circumcision*, *why am I still being persecuted?* In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and *EMASCULATE THEMSELVES!*" (Gal.5:10-12).

If we live by the Spirit of God, Paul goes on, we will not gratify the desires of the sinful flesh. Furthermore, "If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law" (Gal.5:18). This means two things: First, if we are led by God's Spirit, we obey the Law, and therefore are not "under the penalty" of the Law. Secondly, If we are led by God's Spirit, we are not under the

obligation to observe all the ritualistic and halakkic requirements of the Old Covenant, including circumcision of adult converts.

Isn't that plain and straightforward? Isn't that clear?

The whole issue in the book of Galatians isn't some sort of mythical contest between "law" versus "grace," or "works of law" versus "faith"! Rather, the issue here is BONDAGE to the Old Covenant, including physical rituals and sacrifices, and circumcision, and Jewish halakkah and Rabbinicism, versus FREEDOM in Christ from these things through the NEW COVENANT! But of course, the New Covenant does not abolish or do away with the Torah itself, or the true oral laws, based on the Torah!

The real issue is the New Covenant, with God's Law, versus the Old Covenant, with all the sacrifices, rituals, Rabbinic decrees called "halakkah," and strict "legalism." It is not even a question of Law versus "No Law" -- that would be "Law Versus CHAOS"!

The Two Covenants

Paul makes this plain in the book of Hebrews. He writes, "For this reason Christ is the mediator of a NEW COVENANT, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance -- now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant" (Heb.9:15).

Doesn't it seem ridiculous that a Christian should think that he has to come back under the first covenant? Of course it does! That is what Paul is so powerfully telling the Galatians. They don't have to become involved in Rabbinical and Jewish halakkah, traditions of men, and the rituals and "fences" they tried to build around the Law, making it a burdensome yoke.

Paul goes on in the book of Hebrews, contrasting the two covenants. He writes, "The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man.

"Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: 'See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.' But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as *the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one*, and it is founded on better promises.

"For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. *But God found fault with the people* [not the Law!] and said: 'The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my

covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. *I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts*, I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.' By calling this covenant 'NEW,' he has made the first one OBSOLETE; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear" (Heb.8:1-13).

Notice carefully! Does the New Covenant do away with the laws of God? GOD FORBID! Rather, under the New Covenant the LAWS of God are no longer merely written in tablets of stone; now they are written and inscribed upon the tablets of our hearts and our minds! They are put within our very being, and "internalized." They are no longer merely external laws; they are INTERNAL -- they become part of our very soul, mind, and CHARACTER!

In other words, even as Jesus Christ is the living embodiment of the Law, the Perfection of the Law in action, so *Christ is being FORMED IN US (Gal.4:19)*, which means that we, too, as Christians, are to become LIVING EMBODIMENTS OF GOD'S LAW -- the perfection of the Torah, like Christ Himself! This is our Goal -- our Purpose -- our Aim -- our Destiny!!!

God is forming His perfect Torah IN us through His Holy Spirit! (Acts 5:32; Rom.8:1-10).

How clear the truth is! As Christians, we are under the New Covenant. God has written His laws into our minds and hearts by His Holy Spirit. For us to try to go back under the "Old Covenant" would be tantamount to a rejection of Christ and the New Covenant! It would be confusion and folly -- putting a physical, fleshly covenant which God made with ancient Israel through Moses, above the new spiritual covenant God makes with us through Christ, our Mediator, High Priest and coming King!

The "real issue" in Galatians, then, is not "faith versus works," or "law versus grace," at all! The real issue is simply the Old Covenant and Jewish tradition and halakkah versus the New Covenant! It is Mount Sinai (the earthly, with fleshly obedience) versus the New (heavenly) Jerusalem! It is physical circumcision and "works" versus spiritual circumcision of the heart and spiritual works! Paul put the matter clearly when he wrote to the Romans: "A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is *one inwardly*; and circumcision is *circumcision of the heart*, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God" (Rom.2:28-29).

The Conclusion of the Matter

Paul concludes his letter to the Galatians, saying, "Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh. May I

never boast except in the cross [stake] of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation" (Gal.6:12-15).

We become a "new creation" (Eph.4:22-24) by receiving God's Holy Spirit, through which Christ is formed in us, spiritually (Gal.4:19). Coming under the yoke of bondage of the Old Covenant thwarts and frustrates God's purpose in giving us true freedom and liberty in Christ!

The real issue, then, is not the laws and commandments of God, which were ordained forever and ever. The real issue in the book of Galatians is whether we are under the physical Old Covenant, symbolized by Hagar and Mount Sinai, or whether we are under the New Covenant, symbolized by the Heavenly Jerusalem which is above. Paul was not a schizophrenic who one time praised God's laws and supposedly another time cursed them! The truth is, Paul is perfectly consistent in his teaching about the Law. What he spoke against was the twisting, perverting, and wrongful distorting of God's Law, making it a veritable "yoke of bondage" which no one was ever able to keep!

How plain and clear the truth of God is -- and how wonderful it is to comprehend and understand it! Thank God for the TRUTH about His divine Law and its relationship to the true Christian -- and thank Him for His New Covenant in Christ!