

The Covenants, Grace, And Law (Part 28)

Galatians (E)

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We are winding down on what is arguably the most difficult of the epistles that Paul wrote. I believe that it is made difficult, at least partly, by the misunderstanding of some of its terminology and the way that Paul uses it. I do not think that Paul's use of it was much different from how it was used by other people in his time and by the other apostles, but we are a far cry from the 1st century—19 centuries later.

Some of the terms that Paul used we use from a different perspective than he used them. So we are looking at things in a different light, and we are apt to reach conclusions that are out of harmony with God's overall purpose, and out of harmony with what Paul intended when he was writing those things.

At least part of the solution is to understand the terminology as Paul used it. In Galatians 5, we find a couple more of these terms that are misleading; and, if we are not careful, we are going to be coming up with conclusions that are out of harmony with what Paul intended. I think that a very large part of why what we might consider to be "the Christian world" has been misled by this terminology, and of course by their carnal natures as well.

Galatians 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

This verse is going to require considerable explanation. I think it is primarily because of mankind's enmity against God's law. You know it says in Romans 8:7, "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

Think of Galatians 5:1 in its context. It is a direct continuation of what Paul was writing in chapter 4. At the end of Galatians 4, was the Sarah/Hagar allegory. The point to what he was writing is that there is a choice—we have a choice—between bondage and liberty.

Always remember (and do not ever let this get far from your mind whenever you are reading through the book of Galatians) that the overall subject of the entire epistle is **justification**. It is *not* sanctification. It is justification. It is *not* glorification. It is justification. They are terms that mean different things in the purpose that God is

working out.

Protestantism would have us believe that the "yoke of bondage" of Galatians 5:1 is God's law. They may not directly call it that. They may call it **legalism**. They define legalism as the belief that one is obligated to obey the law in order to have salvation; and—this is important—at the same time, they attach that definition to a loose and carelessly defined definition of salvation as being justification. Let me turn that around. To them, when you are justified, you are saved. To them, it is one and the same thing. So they connect this "law as being bondage" to this doctrine that "justification is salvation".

But *justification* is clearing of guilt. Or, another definition, it is the removal of condemnation that comes upon us because of sin. Or, I used that illustration from the use of a computer. If you want the edges of what you are typing to be "justified", it means aligned. And if your paragraphs are "justified", they are justified to the edge of the paper. That is, they are in alignment with the edge of the paper. So justification means to be aligned with something. In this case, it is God's law. It is God's standard.

We might also define justification as a legal act of God by which He imputes righteousness—that is, the righteousness of Christ—to us. It is **not** something we have by nature. It is **not** something we have because we have kept the law of God. Rather, He imputes it. He accounts it to us, by His grace, on the basis of our faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

When you are reading through the book of Galatians, always remember that the subject is **justification**. One of the things that makes Galatians a little bit difficult for us is that, though Paul is following the same subject all the way through here, he keeps coming at it from slightly different angles. Because we are unfamiliar with the terminology, we get confused—not realizing that he is still on the same subject, but he is just approaching it from a different perspective.

It is Paul's hope that, as he writes it, if he does not catch somebody's mind and bring it into agreement with what he is writing from one perspective, then he can do it from another; and if not there, then he can do it from another. He uses about five or six different perspectives, but he always comes up with the same conclusion: *We are justified by the grace of God as a result of our faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.*

Paul uses terminology like "law" or "the law;" and, if a person is not careful, they begin to get the idea that we do not have to obey law. But that is not Paul's point at all. The point is that we are not *justified* by keeping law. We are justified by grace through faith.

Justification does carry with it a measure of **deliverance**; because, once justified, we are delivered from guilt. We are delivered from the bondage to sin and death. So there is some deliverance there. But there is an easy way by which we can check ourselves on this, as to whether justification really is salvation. All you have to do is think about God's experience with Israel.

When He released them from bondage, they were justified. They were brought out of their slavery. They were now free. But it was a long time, and a long way, and a whole generation died before they were delivered into their inheritance—forty years and one whole generation later.

A whole generation perished, which ought to teach us something about justification. Justification and salvation are **not** the same thing. That analogy shows that so clearly. Justification is deliverance into liberty, but that is not the end of the process. There is more to come. So the analogy teaches us that the deliverance given through justification is **not** the end of God's dealings with us. Complete *deliverance* will not come—that is, *salvation* into our inheritance—until our pilgrimage is finished, until God is satisfied that we are prepared for His Kingdom.

Does that not, then, imply that we, like that first generation of Israelites, might perish along the way? You see, that possibility is there. Does it not say, in Hebrews 6:4-6, that, if somebody falls away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance? This idea that they have about "once saved, always saved" is on very, very shaky ground.

There is no reason why we should fall away. It is not God's will that we fall away. If we live by faith, He has shown us in His Word that He will continually supply us everything that we need along the way. (And, incidentally, that is the Old Testament's teaching on why we keep the Feast of Tabernacles.) Despite the fact that we are on a pilgrimage, and despite the fact that we are in a weakened condition because we are on this pilgrimage, God supplies all of our need along the way. We live in temporary dwellings. We are not in our homeland. We are on our way there.

But, brethren, **justification** and **salvation** are not one and the same thing. If you understand "once saved, always saved" in the right way; then it is true. But we will not be saved until we are in the Kingdom. Then we will be delivered. And, once we are there, we are always there. We will be eternal.

This Protestant concept of justification, which they attach to the "once saved, always saved" doctrine, has inherent within it that God is not trying to do anything with us between the time of our acceptance of Christ and becoming glorified. That is, that He is

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not really preparing us for anything. So, even though they may see sections in the Bible about "God is the Potter, and we are the clay," they tend to downplay those things as being really secondary and unimportant. But actually **justification** is just the beginning; and the end—**glorification**—does not come until God is satisfied that we are fully prepared to occupy what He is preparing us for.

Remember that Jesus said, "I go and prepare a place for you." He meant that on an individual basis. God is working with us on an individual basis; and He will prepare us, if we allow Him to do so. Please do **not** allow yourself to ever forget that justification and salvation are **not** one and the same thing. But justification is absolutely essential to the whole process that God is working out.

Acts 15:10 [Peter says:] Now therefore why tempt you God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

You remember what it said in Galatians 5:1. Paul mentioned this term "yoke of bondage." There is a powerful tendency of Protestant commentators to attach Galatians 5:1 to Acts 15:10. In fact, in my Bible it has that notation in the margin. Right beside the words "yoke of bondage" is a small "b." I look in the margin, and it says Acts 15:10.

But I wonder if you noticed the difference between Acts 15:10 and Galatians 5:1? There is a big difference between the two. The one says *yoke of bondage* while the other says *yoke*. Is God's law a yoke of bondage? If it is, it then sets up a contradiction within the Scriptures; and that is impossible. Your Savior and mine said that the Scripture cannot be broken.

The Old Covenant indeed was a yoke. There is no doubt about that. But, brethren, judged by the way that the Bible uses the term **yoke**, any agreement at any time is a yoke. [We need to] understand this.

Most of us have had the experience of buying something on time. You enter into a contract, a covenant, an agreement with a lender (usually a bank or a finance company) to purchase this thing that you want to buy. You put so much money down; and then the bank comes up with the remainder, which is paid to the seller. Then you sign on the dotted line. You have entered into a covenant; and, in so doing, you have put a yoke on your shoulders because now you are obligated to pay the loan.

The Old Covenant was a yoke, because when anybody signed on the dotted line, they

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were agreeing to do what that covenant said. They were obligated to be responsible for obeying its commands.

If you are under the impression that the New Covenant imposes no yoke—if you think that—then you are under a false impression. The New Covenant is heavy in many, many respects. Jesus Himself said that "the way" is narrow and difficult, and few there be that find it. In some respects, the New Covenant is more difficult by far than the Old Covenant.

Those people [living under the Old Covenant] were not required to keep the law in its spirit. The law said, "You shall not kill." The law did not say, "You shall not hate." But under the New Covenant, it also says you shall not even hate. The law says under the Old Covenant, "You shall not commit adultery." The law under the New Covenant says, "You shall not only not commit adultery, but you shall not even lust after that other person." That is far heavier in those kinds of respects than the Old Covenant was.

That the Old Covenant was difficult for human nature is beyond argument, but a yoke of bondage it was not! The Protestants would have you believe that God took the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage only to put them into the legal bondage of the Old Covenant. There are so many contradictions. They were **free!** They were not in bondage any longer. The law is not bondage. So that is a conclusion that is at odds with Scripture.

Matthew 11:28-30 [Christ says:] "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

Is this contradictory to Matthew 7 where He says "the way" is narrow and difficult? No, it is not. Despite the fact that the New Covenant is heavy in that regards (as it places much more emphasis on obedience, to the *n*th degree, than the Old Covenant did), still—because we have help from other areas: such as God's Spirit, access to the Father, and all the good things that come from the New Covenant—"the way" is far lighter than the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant could provide no justification, no forgiveness, no Holy Spirit, no eternal life; and that is pretty heavy.

By comparison, the yoke that Jesus is going to put upon us, if we agree to the New Covenant, is very light. And, in case you are wondering, the word "yoke" here in Matthew 11:29-30 is exactly the same word that is in Galatians 5:1. As you can see, here in Matthew 11 Jesus uses it in a very positive sense. Therefore, the concept of

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having a yoke put upon us is not wrong. There is nothing wrong with that.

There is nothing wrong with being *under obligation*—because that is all the word *yoke* means. It means to be responsible, to be under obligation. If a person has a yoke put upon him, it means that he has to meet certain requirements. Everybody has them, because everybody is responsible for meeting responsibilities. And, if you understand what God is working out, then you understand that much ***character is built*** through the meeting of one's obligations, by being a responsible person.

You then begin to understand that bearing a yoke plays a major role in God's preparation for His Kingdom. He wants people there who will meet their responsibilities—not somebody who is going to throw them off and run from them. He wants people who will overcome the difficulties and meet the responsibilities of whatever they are involved in. There is nothing wrong with being obligated. There is nothing wrong with having a yoke.

The problem, brethren, is in what the yoke consists of. Merely "having a burden" and "being in bondage" can be two vastly different things.

I John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous.

God's commandments are not a burden! I just happened to think of something. Right [by the words "His commandments are **not grievous**] in my Bible, I have a little "1." And over in the margin, it says, "are *not burdensome*." How about that contradiction? The Protestants say that the yoke of bondage of Galatians 5:1 is the law of God. That it is a burden too difficult to be borne. But God's own Word says that His commandments are **not** a burden. That is the way to life! That is the way to all the good things, not the bad ones.

In addition to this, James says:

James 2:12 So speak you, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

All you have to do is read the context, and you know that he is talking about the law of God—the Commandments.

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We can look in God's Word to find out what to Him is *a burden* in light of what we are reading here in Galatians 5:1. I want you to turn to one of them. Matthew 23 is where Jesus very severely excoriates the scribes and the Pharisees.

Matthew 23:1-4 Then spoke Jesus to the multitude, and to His disciples, saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not you after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."

We have come full circle here, and we are allowing the Bible itself to define what this *yoke of bondage* is. We have not gotten to the answer yet, but we are getting to it. What we see here is the Bible's testimony of what Jesus considered to be "a grievous burden" in His day. That burden that He spoke of continued right on—right through all of the apostles' time; and, in a sense, we kind of lose track of it at the end of the 1st century.

But that yoke of bondage that Jesus was talking about here was all of the extra baggage—the traditions of the fathers that the scribes and the Pharisees attached to the law of God. They attached them to the Old Covenant. That is what Jesus was complaining about. I cannot imagine Jesus calling His own law—the one that He gave in love, to lead and guide those people under the Old Covenant—"a burden" or "a yoke of bondage."

The Old Covenant—plus what the scribes and Pharisees added to it—went to make up *halakah*. Were you listening to any of the news reports on the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin? His murderer said that he got his authority for killing Rabin from *halakah*. He used that term. It is still in existence. That is kind of interesting.

Halakah was the Old Covenant plus what the scribes and Pharisees added to it. And, by Jesus' own testimony (Mark 7:7-9), the scribes and Pharisees had elevated *their own traditions*, which were **a burdensome yoke** that could not be borne, to the place where they exceeded God's law in authority.

We still have not finished with what this "yoke of bondage" here in Galatians 5:1 is. But so far, I think you can see ample testimony that is it not the law of God that is the yoke of bondage.

Galatians 5:2-3 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if you be circumcised,

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Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

Oh, no. We have trouble here. Lots of trouble! That is, Paul's use of the term **circumcision**. Paul himself said that he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. And he said that he was circumcised the eighth day. Was Paul obligated to do the whole law because he was circumcised?

If you want to take his words for exactly as they appear there on the page, then you would have to say that Paul was one, and in company, with the very people that he was telling were wrong. This is the same Paul who, after the Jerusalem conference there in Acts 15, went out and circumcised Timothy. Is Paul a hypocrite? Does he use words that are convenient whenever they happen to suit his cause, and then hypocritically turn around and deny it in his own life, and say, "Well, if you get circumcised, you have had it, buddy. You have to obey the whole Old Covenant"?

I think you can begin to see that Paul meant something by "circumcision" that you have to read between the lines here, and understand that he was not talking merely about the rite, the ritual, of circumcision. If we took exactly, literally, what Paul said—then every baby boy who has ever been born in the United States and Britain, who has been circumcised (even before he leaves the delivery room), is obligated to keep the whole Old Covenant.

I think you can see that something else is intended here. The answer is to get away from the focus of the ritual itself; and understand that Paul is not talking about merely having a piece of skin cut off a boy's body. Then get the focus on what circumcision represented to the way in which the apostles (and, I think, other people as well) used the term.

To the Israelites, **circumcision** was the sign that this person had entered into the Old Covenant and was thus obligated to keep the entire agreement—just like you enter into an agreement with the bank, and you become mortgaged. You sign on the dotted line. When you sign on the dotted line, you are agreeing to keep the whole agreement. That makes sense. You do not have the legal right to pick and choose terms after you have signed it. That is why Paul says, right in this book of Galatians, that once it is confirmed, no man disannuls; and you cannot add things to it.

So it was not a matter of saying, "I will get circumcised, but I will not be obligated to do this or to do that." But, when you sign on the dotted line through circumcision, (get this

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phrase) for the reasons these people were doing it, he then was obligated to the entire package.

When a baby boy is circumcised in a hospital, he is not obligating himself to keep the whole Old Covenant law. In this day and age, it is something that doctors in hospitals just almost routinely do. But there were reasons why these people were getting circumcised. What was the reason? Justification. Their reason for doing it made all the difference in the world.

The Old Covenant had no provision for justification. It could **not** deliver anyone from the bondage to sin. It could **not** deliver anyone from the wages of sin. *Circumcision*, brethren, adds absolutely nothing to the spirituality of a person. That is the point! Circumcision does not change the heart. Circumcision does not change the mind. It alters nothing. It cannot justify. It cannot save. And the reason is because God never intended that it do that. It was simply an outward sign that this person had agreed to the Old Covenant. But the Covenant had no provision for justification.

Instead, it was God's plan that in the fullness of time He would send a Savior, through whom we would be justified. A Savior whose death has the power—when it is believed in, and when a person has repented—to change a person's heart. *Circumcision of the heart* changes a person's mind. That is what releases the person from bondage to sin, and bondage to Satan. Justification comes by means of a living Savior who died for our sins.

So *circumcision* was used during the 1st century, primarily by the apostles, to mean the ritual itself that occurred to a boy when he was eight days old. It was also used to indicate the Jews as a family of people. And thirdly, it was a catch-all term by which they understood the Old Covenant and *halakah*. In this case, it also had elements of pagan Gnosticism—their ritualism added to the *halakah*.

Here [in Galatians 5] Paul uses the term "circumcision" to indicate the whole package. That is the point of the whole epistle. The Old Covenant, *halakah*, Gnostic ritualism—they cannot justify. So he calls the whole package "circumcision" because the people who entered into this package got circumcised.

Galatians 6:15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails any thing, nor uncircumcision...

The rite itself, the ritual, does not change a person's heart. It has no power to do so. But,

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[in the last part of the verse] the contrast is—what really avails something, what is really important is:

Galatians 6:15 ...but a new creature.

That is, a new creation—a person who is then born of God. Let us add a little bit more by going back to Deuteronomy 29. I want you to see additional aspects of the Old Covenant that show why it was deficient. It was deficient on purpose. God never intended that it do any more than bridge the gap between the Abrahamic Covenant and the New Covenant.

Deuteronomy 29:4 Yet the Lord has not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.

Now, God either intended that or He was awfully cruel. He never intended the Old Covenant to be a means of salvation. He never intended the Old Covenant even to be a means of justification. A guide it was. A bringer into mind, a remembrance of sin, it was. A leader to Christ it was. But it was not ever intended to bring salvation.

Deuteronomy 5:29 O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!

A changed heart comes only from the presence of God's Spirit, and there was no provision in the Old Covenant for receiving God's Spirit. You see, there is a sequence to salvation. It is a process. God calls. God leads to repentance. The person begins to have faith in God. The person begins to become aware of sin. The person repents of sin. Now they are in a position to receive the Holy Spirit. They get baptized. They have hands laid on them. They receive the Holy Spirit. They have begun **the process** that is going to lead to salvation. None of those provisions were part of the Old Covenant.

I Corinthians 7:18-19 Is any man called being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised. [Why? Because:] Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but [what is important, what is really something is] the keeping of the commandments of God.

Paul said that it is important to keep the commands of God? You had better believe it! You need to feed that back into Galatians 5. There is no contradiction in the Scriptures. When Paul is talking about what seems to be a doing away with the law in the book of Galatians, you had better rethink. There will be no contradiction, and I Corinthians 7:18-19 makes it very clear that it is *very important* for a person to keep the commands of God (but it is not important that he be circumcised).

One changes the heart, and the other one does not. The one builds character, the other one does not. The one brings the person into the image of God; the other one does not. There is nothing wrong with the rite of circumcision, but do **not** expect it to have any spiritual impact.

Acts 15:10 Now therefore why tempt you God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we are able to bear?

Peter did not specify what he considered the yoke to be that they were unable to bear. But the context is a very strong indication, and back in verse 5:

Acts 15:5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

In view of the fact that circumcision is mentioned there in verse 5, I think it is highly likely that Peter had in mind the whole package—*halakah*, at the very least. And it is very likely that he even had in mind elements of Gnosticism as well. I say that based on the authority of Acts 8, where Simon Magus is mentioned. And we know he was the one who instituted Gnostic practice into the thought of the early Christian church.

You do not hear much about Simon Magus any more, although we used to hear a great deal about him. Incidentally, there is a very great deal written about him. You can look him up in the encyclopedia. He was a very important 1st century personality. I think that we can probably say that he was the founder of what became the Catholic Church, and very many elements of Gnosticism are alive in the Catholic Church.

So I think it is highly likely that what Peter had in mind there was the whole package—the same thing that Paul had in mind in Galatians 5. Also, I want you to turn to I Peter.

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I Peter 1:18 Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation [conduct] received by tradition from your fathers.

Halakah was the Old Covenant plus the traditions of the fathers; and, in the case of the book of Galatians, elements of Gnosticism were added to it.

This confrontation that Paul had with those people there in Galatia was of no small concern to the church because the writings of Peter, and James, and especially John (which were written much later in the century) contained things that takes one right straight back to Gnostic concepts.

Galatians was likely written almost a decade earlier than other writings of Paul, like the prison epistles that were written in the early 60s A.D. And, of course, John's epistles were probably not written until the 90s A.D. And, as time moved on from this point here in the book of Galatians, Gnosticism became more and more **the enemy**. Judaism gradually slipped into the background, until eventually we find (in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th centuries) Catholicism—that is, Gnosticism—as completely, virtually predominant.

These people whose works we are reading here in the epistles had to deal with Gnosticism right to the end of their lives.

I want you to listen to this amplification of Galatians 2:21. This was taken from the Amplified Bible. Before I read it, I want you to remember the subject in the book of Galatians is justification.

Galatians 2:21 (AMP) [Therefore, I do not treat God's gracious gift as something of minor importance and defeat its very purpose]...

Now, what was God's gracious gift? Forgiveness of sin, and justification.

Galatians 2:21 (AMP) ...I do not set aside and invalidate and frustrate and nullify the grace (undeserved favor) of God. For if justification (righteousness, acquittal from guilt) comes through [observing the ritual of] the Law, then Christ (the Messiah) died groundlessly and to no purpose and in vain. [His death was then wholly superfluous.]

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Whoever translated that had a pretty good understanding of what was going on here. Those people, there in Galatia, were leaving **faith in Christ**, faith in His death and their relationship with Him, out of the loop through what Paul calls the yoke of bondage, or circumcision—depending upon the context.

I am going to give it to you now: The *yoke of bondage* is an approach to justification and salvation, or righteousness, that relies on a syncretism of Jewish ritualistic legalism and pagan practices while at the same time avoiding the sacrifice of Christ. Let me read that to you again. *The yoke of bondage is an approach to justification and salvation (or righteousness) that relies on a syncretism (a meshing) of Jewish ritualistic legalism and pagan practices (usually rites of purification) while at the same time avoiding the sacrifice of Christ.* I will add this to it: What it means is **what you believe and who you believe in is going to determine whether you are going to be justified.**

Why is this approach a yoke of bondage? It cannot free you. It cannot free anybody from the penalty of sin. It cannot free you from Satan. It does not provide forgiveness. It will not put one into a position where he can receive God's Holy Spirit. Paul is **not** writing to do away with the law! He is writing to clarify law-keeping's relationship and what a person believes through justification. If Paul were writing to do away with law, much of what he wrote later on in chapter 5 would not be there, as we shall see.

Galatians 5:4-6 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law [They were just ignoring Christ.]; you are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision avails any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which works by love.

Again, a contrast. What does avail a person is faith working through love. These three verses here are important because it introduces "Spirit" into the context, and the statement that "faith works through love." Faith **works**. Did you get that? Faith works through—meaning "by means of." In other words, if a person really has faith in the right thing and the right Person, they will produce what? Love!

What is the Bible definition of **love**? "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." That is beautiful! All we have to do is change the words, and what he is saying is that, **if** you really believe in the right things and if you believe in the right Person (that is faith), then it will produce the keeping of the commandments.

So the evidence of our faith is in whether or not we keep His commandments. The basis

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of love is commandment keeping. It is not the whole picture, because there is emotion. There is feeling tied to it. But we have to begin somewhere, and the bottom line is the keeping of the commandments.

Again, another statement that proves that Paul was **not** doing away with law keeping comes right from the context itself. The word "Spirit" is a reflection back on a subject that he dealt with earlier. The enemy—these Judaistic Gnostics—believed that their calling and election by God came because they had the law and they kept it. But what Paul is saying is "No. We are drawn to God by His Spirit." Is that not what Jesus said? Yes, that is what Jesus said. [John 6:44]

In addition to that, truth is revealed by God's Spirit. (I Corinthians 2.) And so our calling has nothing to do with our works. Remember Romans 9? "It is not to him who wills, or to him who runs, but of God who calls." So what Paul is saying in this part right here is, "No—we are in the position we are in because God, by His Spirit, has drawn us. God, by His Spirit, has revealed Himself and His Word and the purpose of life to us. Our calling and election is completely a work of grace." Again, our law keeping has nothing to it.

In addition to that, the word *Spirit* becomes important to his argument about ten verses later.

Galatians 5:13-18 For, brethren, you have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary the one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you would. But if you be led of the Spirit, you are not under the law.

You might recall that I have said a number of times earlier that both Jesus and Paul said that these people were not keeping God's commands. One of these is in Galatians 6:13. The other is in Matthew 15, and also in Mark 7—where Jesus said, "Full well you reject the commandments of God that you keep your own traditions."

In this section, he is clearly showing that their law keeping was in the area of ceremony, in the area of ritual, and that their belief was in reality nothing more than superstition.

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There cannot be a contradiction in Scripture. If Paul says, in the following chapters, that these people were not keeping the commandments, they were **not** keeping them.

Yet he admits that they were keeping laws. Therefore, the laws that they were keeping cannot be the commandments. It had to be something else. What they were keeping were the ritual laws. That is why the Amplified Bible said they were observing the ritual of the law.

The argument that Protestantism puts out begins to crumble until there is no argument that is left. They can keep on arguing, but anybody who has the Spirit of God, and has the truth, ought to be able to see this.

I only gave you part of the story there. Right in this context of six verses, Paul shows very positively that these people were not keeping the Ten Commandments. Do you know how he does it? By positively instructing them about what they should do and what they should not do.

What did he say they should not do? Bite and devour one another. What does he say that they should do? He says, "By love, serve one another." What is love? The bottom line, the basic foundation, is keeping the commandments. Faith works through keeping the commandments. He is telling them, "You have to keep the commandments." If you are going to show love, you have to keep the commandments. Then he reinforces it in verse 14 by quoting right out of Leviticus 19:18—right in the heart of the Old Covenant—and he says, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Then he says in verse 16, "Walk in the Spirit." Now he is going to reinforce this. I want you to think about this. What spirit is he talking about? Undoubtedly, he is talking about the same spirit he was about ten verses earlier, which is the Spirit of God—the Holy Spirit.

Is the Holy Spirit—which emanates from God, which God freely gives to His children (to those who have repented, to those who have been baptized, to those who are submitting to Him because He gives His Spirit to those who are obeying Him)—is His Spirit that comes from Him going to be in conflict with His own law, which also came out from Him? Is God confused? Is God contradictory? Not in the least. The Spirit of God will never disagree with the law of God, because God's mind is **not** divided. He is **not** schizophrenic. If there was ever a sound mind, it is His.

So when Paul says, "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill lust," at the very least he is saying, "You will not break the Tenth Commandment." But it is much wider than that.

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It is much broader because he says, "The flesh lusts against the Spirit. The flesh is opposed to the Spirit, and the Spirit the flesh. And these are contrary the one to the other. So you cannot do the things that you would." And of course "what we would" is what carnality would have us do. But what we should do is what the Spirit leads us to do. If the Spirit is leading us, and we are following its promptings, then we will not lust.

But it gets even clearer than that. You can understand then, and you should be able to see this, that the law keeping of these people was in the area of rituals. They were **not** keeping the Ten Commandments as a way of life. So Paul is instructing these people to keep the commandments.

Galatians 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

So, if a person is walking in the Spirit, he has no conflict with the law of God. Paul is using "flesh" as a synonym for *carnality*, or a synonym for *human nature*. The carnal mind is not subject to God's laws. What we see in verses 19-21 is what carnality—what human nature—works at producing. These are the **works** of the flesh.

It works at producing adultery. Have you ever seen a young man—as carnal as the day is long—on the prowl after a sweet young thing? Maybe standing on the corner, watching all the girls go by. Trying to get a date, trying to pick her up. He has one thing in mind: Conquering her and getting her in bed. And he has to work at it. He turns on all the charm to seduce her.

Do robbers work at producing robbery? Certainly they do. Some of them actually consider it to be somewhat legitimate. They work at it. I am not kidding you, because recently I heard of a pastor of a church who allowed himself to be convinced that gambling is legal according to God's law. The man worked at it. He is a gambler by profession. He takes advantage of other people and says that is lawful because he is working. He does not play at it. He is working.

The flesh **works** at producing these things. But the Spirit is contrary. They are at war with one another. If a person has the Spirit of God, he cannot just allow his human nature to dominate his way of life. He must make a choice as to which way he is going

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to be led—by the Spirit of God, or by the flesh.

You can see very plainly here that Paul says, if you are doing these things, you are following the works of the flesh; and that is **not** the law of God. He is not doing away with the law of God. That is the farthest thing from his mind. That is the last thing he would want these Christians to do. He says, if people do these things, they are **not** going to be in the Kingdom of God. Did Paul want people to be in the Kingdom of God? Of course he did! But people had to be guided and led by the Spirit of God, or they were not going to be.

Paul is saying then that the solution to sin and the struggle for salvation lies in the spiritual relationship between God and us. It lies in prayer. It lies in faith. It lies in study. It lies in meditation. It lies in coming to know God and to love God with all of our being; so that we find that He is so desirable we want to do everything in our power to please Him.

Do you know what pleases Him? What pleases Him is when we imitate Him and we live like He lives. This great Spiritual Being gives us elements of His mind so that we can live the way He lives. **God is love.** And the bottom line of love, the place from which it starts, is the keeping of the commandments.

Think about this. Paul says:

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

Let us start at the very beginning. What is love? Keeping the commandments. Does breaking the commandments bring joy? Are people happy when someone violates them in a rape? Violates them by breaking into their home and robbing from them? Does that bring them joy? Do they leap [for joy], "Hey, somebody has robbed me!" No. Joy comes when people keep the commandments—because there is peace. They do not have to worry that somebody has broken into their home, or that somebody is going to knock them over the head on the street.

Paul is so far away from telling people that the law of God is done away that you wonder how in the world people could come to that conclusion—except we understand that their carnality is doing it. They do **not** want to be subject to the law of God. Their carnal mind has overpowered them and enslaved them. They are in bondage to that carnal mind.

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Galatians 5:18 But if you be led of the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Verse 18 appears as a summary statement in light of all Paul wrote previous to this; and I think it needs a bit of defining. According to what Paul wrote earlier, to be "**under the law**" includes three areas:

1. The most obvious is the first one. It means to be under its penalty because we have sinned. Jesus died so that we can be freed from that penalty.
2. It means to be striving to achieve justification through law keeping. That is what the main body of this epistle covers.
3. And third is also covered but less thoroughly; and that is that one is trying to earn God's election and salvation by becoming a member of the Old Covenant. Chapter 5 covers that to just a very small extent.

This statement, then, has to be seen in light of all that has gone on before. Let me read you another quote. This is from *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* by Kenneth West, Volume 1, page 156. This is a typical Protestant statement regarding verse 18.

The exhortation therefore is to be led by the Spirit. The assurance is given those who do so that they will not be living their lives on the principle of legalism. The Spirit and the law are here contrasted, and are shown to be methods of living a Christian life that are diametrically opposed to one another. The law is not only no safeguard against the flesh, but rather provokes it to more sin. Therefore, the believer who would renounce the flesh must renounce the law also. Thus the flesh and the law are closely allied, whereas the flesh and the Spirit are diametrically opposed to one another.

All he has to do is reread what Paul wrote. What is contrasted is Spirit with flesh, and Spirit with those under the law—not the law *per se*. But you see that this man made no attempt to define what Paul meant by "under the law" as we find by Paul himself in the epistle. And there was no attempt to define what the author of the commentary meant by "legalism."

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We have already seen what Paul meant by "under the law." **Legalism** is to these people the belief that one is obligated to obey the law. The key word in that definition is the word "obligated." They hate it, and therefore law keeping is a burden. Law keeping to them is a yoke of bondage, despite the undeniable fact that God (through James) says it is a law of liberty.

Those of you who were at the Feast of Tabernacles there in San Antonio might remember the Bible Study I gave on the Sabbath before the Feast; and I think that this next sermon that I give will be somewhat along that order, so that there are very simple principles and an outline by which we can understand Colossians and Galatians and the arguments that were given there.

It will make it easier for us to have faith in the fact that God requires of us that we be under the obligation of keeping His commands. And it is **not** at all "bondage" in any sense of the word. Rather, it is a reflection of the very character of God and points the way that He wants us to live, so that we can be like Him and be prepared for His Kingdom.