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## Paul's **Message** to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christians

"Christians of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: descendants of the house of Israel and converts from the nations, why have you departed from **your** earliest writings?"

"From the Didache, I read in Chapter 4, '**Do not in any way forsake the commandments of the Lord; but keep what you have received, neither adding thereto nor taking away therefrom.** In the church you shall acknowledge your transgressions, and you shall not come near for your prayer with an evil conscience. **This is the way of life.**'"

<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-roberts.html>

He cradled the Bible in his hands. "You have done a wonderful thing to take our letters and bind them with the writings of Moses and the Prophets, as they were intended."

"My brothers—" he hesitated, taking a deep breath and leaning back he released a long sigh. "I wrote many letters to you explaining how my own brothers abused the Law of God by adding hundreds of traditions of men, but you take away when you call the law obsolete! God forbid!"

"I read these words from your internet, 'The law is nailed to the cross.'"

"God forbid! My 21<sup>st</sup> century brothers, let me explain my letters again, but first, I ask 'What law was nailed to the cross? I wrote of seven laws, tell me which one?'"

- The Law of Sin (Romans 7:23-24)
- The Law of Sin and Death (Romans 8:2)
- The Law of the Spirit of Life (Romans 7:14)
- The Law of Faith (Romans 3:27-28)
- The Law of Righteousness (Romans 9:31)
- The Law of Christ (I Corinthians 9:21)
- The Law of God (Romans 7:22)."

"Why do you look confused like you do not have any answers? Your internet is full of words and at times speaks as teachers do—with pictures, so very impressive. Have you lost your way again?" He waited, watching them text, skype, twitter and email.

"My brothers!" He cried, silencing the keyboard chatter. "I see, you are all well dressed and when you speak, you demonstrate a schooled ability—all of you, from the least to the greatest." He

pointed moving in a circle, “And you all enjoy the full measure of Joseph’s birthright. Your schools display a great knowledge of architecture and engineering—buildings with miraculous lights hanging from ceilings that work on touch—amazing!”

He added, “You are truly blessed with riches: fine homes, metal horses that run fast—they too, obey the laws of your roads controlled by those boxes that move from red, yellow, and green—and road signs. A marvel and a wonder that you have laws that keep the wide-spread and very fast movement to and fro operating in safety. Clearly, you understand the benefits of laws. So, let me teach you again the Law of **your** God—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of **your** forefathers.”

“The story of Law goes back to Adam and Eve when they broke the Law of God and fell under the Law of Sin, which in turn led to the sentencing of their death under the Law of Sin and Death. Surely, you remember my letter to the Romans, “When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned” (Romans 5:12).”



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The people nodded; they understood.

“Moses was given the task to write down the Law of God. If you remember, it was first our God who wrote the law on the tablets of stone, but the people sinned building that golden calf. Moses became angry and threw the stone tablets to the ground, which resulted in him having to write them himself. We Israelites have always tended to test the best of God and man. We are very good at living under the Law of Sin and breaking the Law of God.”

The people nodded, cringing in agreement.

“Remember how it was in the wilderness. Moses detailed the Law of God in the statutes, judgments, and later, in the sacrificial system when it was added. Why do you frown like you have never heard this before?”

The people became restless, looking to each other as if to find answers.

“What is it that troubles you? Speak up!”

“The sacrificial system,” one replied. “It is abolished.”

“Jerusalem is the only legal place when sacrificing to God and where are the Levites? They only can serve in the temple.”

They people shrugged.

He gasped. "I am witnessing Hosea's prophecy. 'For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without King or prince, **without sacrifice or sacred stones**, without ephod or household gods'" (Hosea 3:4).

Paul began to echo his last words, "Without sacrifice or sacred stones—so patient is our God. Yes, I noticed—your land is not peppered with pagan sacred stones, but you are also without sacrifices. The sacrifices were designed to bring to your close attention, the suffering and loss of life due to sin—only an animal without defect could be sacrificed. It was a shadow that pointed to Yashuah's perfect sacrifice. He paid the penalty for our sins." Paul welled with tears, "What happened to the temple?"

The people replied in unison, "Destroyed in 70 A.D."

"We've been cursed! I will NOT say as you say, 'O My God!' You use God's name in vain."

He sighed. "You are living in the time of 'many days' prophesied by Hosea, where you will be without sacrifice and those wretched pagan sacred stones. God forbid those sacred stones be ever erected again!"

Suddenly, his voice deep and bold, he asked, "Are you telling me that you think Yashuah's perfect sacrifice replaced the sacrificial system?" He responded in the same breath, "God forbid!"

"My brothers, please read the prophecies written by Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah who **all** foretell of a new temple in Jerusalem and the re-establishment of sacrifices. While man remains physical after Yashuah Ha Mashiach's return, the teaching that brings an acute awareness of sin and the payment will be practised!"

Paul stood like a general, shaking his finger with a worn sorrowful scowl.

"I hope you understand. The sacrificial system during the 'many days' does not exist because the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, as you say, in 70 A.D. for that reason only, not because it was abolished. You may say, 'You have been freed.' I say, 'You have been cursed!'"

The people dropped their heads.

Paul whispered, "I don't wish to speak to you sharply. I am honored to teach you and gladdened by your return to our God. I had hoped that your great desire for the truth and gratitude for grace would make my people jealous, so that they would see their error in placing the works of the law over God's generous gift of grace."

The people nodded.

Paul grew suspicious. “Have you replaced obedience to the Law of God with the gift of grace?”

The people began to quarrel among each other.

“Ah—Let us reason!” Paul shouted.

The people stopped and repeated, “Reason, yes, let us reason.”

“Shall we start with the Law of God?”

The people nodded with approval.

“The Psalmist said that the Law of God is **truth** (Psalm 119:142) and “The law of the LORD is **perfect**, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple” (Psalm 19:7). What would be the purpose of God to abolish His perfect law?”

“It doesn’t make sense,” they hummed.

“I said to the Romans, ‘So then, the law is holy, and **the commandment is holy, righteous and good**’ (Romans 7:12). The problem is not with the law rather the people. We need God’s Holy Spirit in order to keep the spirit of the law—that produces the **fruit of the Spirit**: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. **Against such things there is no law** (Galatians 5:22-23). There is no law against living God’s Way.”

The people nodded in agreement.

“Let’s step this ‘law keeping’ process through. **The Law of God** are instructions that define sin. It tells us what is sin. The problem with the religious leaders of the Jews was that they superimposed their **oral traditions** over and within the commands of God. Remember what Yashuah said, ‘The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, **holding to the tradition of the elders...**’ and Yashuah said, ‘You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to **observe your own traditions!**’ (Mark 7:3, 9)”

“My 21<sup>st</sup> century brothers, I have noticed that some of you, too, wash your hands before you eat. Is this a continuation of the tradition of my Jewish elders?”

“We wash our hands often, more than just before we eat. These Jewish traditions are not the reason, rather, it is a health directive to prevent the spread of microscopic organisms that cause sickness and disease,” replied the elbowed spokesperson and the people nodded, smiling with confidence.

“Health directive—have you made more laws to be obeyed?” Paul asked.

The spokesperson answered, “It is a health directive; it is not mandatory, rather recommended. It is a good health practice. It is not a civil law that when broken results in a prosecution and

punishment, however, if this directive is broken, then that person may become sick or selfishly spread their germs to others for them to get sick.”

“A good health practice—optional and without prosecution, very good. So, you understand the difference between the Law of God, which when broken has a penalty and those traditions of men that are optional. You do well! As I said to the Romans, ‘Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgement **on disputable matters**. One man’s faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not’ and vice versa (Romans 14:1-4). On disputable matters, such as your health rules, there is no legal consequences because disputable matters are not part of the Law of God.”

The people began to grumble.

The tempo increased until Paul cried out, “Now, what troubles you? I thought we had established that there is no legal judgment on disputable matters!”

“I eat everything!” one cried out from within the crowd.

“I don’t!” another shouted.

“What could be the matter? What is disputable here is whether one person eats meat or another is a vegetarian. What could be the problem for you 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians?”

“We are speaking of the matter of clean and unclean meats,” a man in the crowd shouted. “Peter was told in Acts 10 by God to kill and eat from the large sheet from heaven that contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds.” (Acts 10:12)

Paul answered, “The Law of God is specific about clean and unclean meats and this is not an issue for Jews nor has it ever been or ever will be for practising Jews. It is not a disputable matter because it is written and bound in the Law of God.”



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Paul moved closer to the man and gently placed his hand on the man’s shoulder. “You do well to read the scriptures. So many days have passed, so much is forgotten—for good and for bad. My dear brother, when God told Peter to kill and eat of these animals, what did Peter say?”

“He refused because he has never eaten unclean meat before.”

“That is correct. ***It is an undisputable law.*** What was God ***really*** asking Peter to do?”

The man read Acts 10:28, "You know it is against our laws for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home like this or to associate with you. But God has shown me that ***I should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean.***"

Paul embraced the man and wept. “That is correct. And I am sorry that we have treated you, our brothers—our very brothers with disdain—as unclean. Yashuah’s death has made you clean, no longer divorced—you are a ‘virgin’ again, and I long for our re-unification under God’s Law. And now for the first time, you have discovered the disdain that we had for you, but please forgive us, we were trying through our own strength to keep from disobeying God’s law, but like a pendulum, we swung to the far right into detestable self-righteousness. How important it is to be humble and teachable.”

The people gathered around Paul, consoling him.

“Don’t mind, we are not angry,” the man said.

He looked at each of them with a warm smile and a sparkle of pride. “Are there other issues of the Law of God that trouble you?”

“Yes!” An elderly man pushed forward. “The Sabbath is the fourth of the ten commandments, but you wrote to the Romans, ‘One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike’ (Romans 14:5). How do you explain that statement?”

“Again, so much must have been forgotten. It was customary for Jews to fast twice a week: the second and fifth day of the week, dedicating those days to God. When you Christians came into the faith, you chose to fast on the fourth and the preparation day. I can see that 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians don’t choose to fast at all. You appear well fed. Fasting is not part of the Law of God, rather a tradition and possibly could be a suitable 21<sup>st</sup> century health directive. You understand I hope now, this was not talking about the Sabbath, but days of fasting that were considered sacred over ordinary days.” Paul scoured them a look of bitter disappointment.

“Included in my writings to the Romans was the matter of circumcision—I feel that it too, I must clarify.” Pressing into the frown lines that pained him, he asked, “Is circumcision a problem for you?”

The people nodded some big and demanding, others cautious and careful.



“When I was talking with James, remember—the Jewish leaders were trying to fault me, but I didn’t fear for my life. I was sent to you and I loved your passion to hear the writings of the law and the prophets. *I knew you would listen.* I did not want to allow the physical act of circumcision to be confused with being saved. The law we must keep—but keep it understanding that salvation is through grace not by works—or circumcision. You needed time to change. I was working with you in stages. I could not expect you to drop all of your pagan practices in one day and pick up an entirely new set the next. You’ve been far away for so long and now you desire to return to God. Who am I to add a burden too heavy for you to bear?”

Paul hesitated and with the gentility of a loving father, he added, “But that was nearly 2,000 years ago.”

The people began to fidget.

“Listen, circumcision indeed is of value **if you obey the law**, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. Right?”

The people agreed, nodding in unison.

“So, if a man who is uncircumcised and keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?”

Again, the people nodded.

“In fact, uncircumcised Gentiles who keep God’s law will condemn the Jews who are circumcised and possess God’s law because they are not properly keeping God’s laws.”

The people smiled. “Simple logic,” the spokesperson said.

“For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and **circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit**, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God” (Romans 2:25-29).

Some people now began to nod in agreement. Looking around, they brought the whole crowd into unison.

Paul added, “What value is there in being a Jew or in circumcision?” (Romans 3:1)

The people shrugged their shoulders.

Paul replied, “Much in every way!” (Romans 3:2)

The people pulled back and crossed their arms.

“My brothers, the Jews were entrusted with the Law of God—to preserve it, obey it, and teach it. This is a great honor! But God is not God to the Jews only! He is God to the Gentiles, too! He will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through the same faith. For by faith, we are saved, not by works. Having said that, do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, **we uphold the law**” (Romans 3:29-31).

Paul sighed and moved towards the people.

“All who come into the faith are the children of Abraham. Abraham obeyed God. He kept His commandments, statutes and laws (Genesis 26:5) and was **later circumcised for it was a sign like a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith.**”

The people frowned.

“This is really a simple point,” Paul continued, relentlessly working their logic.

“I don’t want to turn this discussion into a formal debate, as I had to do with my brothers, the Jews. They argued perpetually over the disputable and undisputable matters of the law. Distance and time have saved you from hearing their heated debates and twisted arguments. The simplicity of Christ is often torn apart from the wolves among us who work for the dark powers and authorities in high places.”

The people sighed.

“God said to Abraham,” Paul added, “this is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: **Every male among you shall be circumcised.** You are to undergo circumcision, and **it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you.** For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, **including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring. Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised.** My covenant in your flesh is to be an **everlasting covenant.** **Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant**” (Genesis 17:10-14).

The people took a deep breath like a chorus well practised.

“So, my brothers, keep the Law of God and do those things that were put in place as a sign by God to set them apart from the rest of the world who reject God. Keep the Sabbath day, it too, is a sign that you are God’s people. I hope that you keep it holy.”

“Now.” Paul pushed his hands together, squeezing his fingers against each other and pressing deep into the fleshy parts between the bones. The people watched his skin turn white.

“What troubles you, Paul,” the spokesperson asked.

“How is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? **You observe days and months and seasons and years.** I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain”



[misoillionarts.org](http://misoillionarts.org)



(Galatians 4:8-11).

“What could you be referring to?” the spokesperson asked.

“Those chocolate bunnies, strange eggs—you have returned to worshipping the goddess, Ishtar! And during the winter month, I see decorated trees, lights, gift-giving all under the name of Christ. What has become of you?”

The people’s eyes opened wide. Filled with confusion and fear, they whispered among themselves.



“Return to the LORD’s feast days, my brothers.” Paul held up the Bible that he had pressed against his chest. “The writings in this book that you have so carefully preserved gives me great joy that you have bound—look, a leather cover, pages lined with gold—no longer many scrolls—all together in **one** book. To you, I commend you for this! **Read it—ALL. Do it—ALL.** You are without excuse. You have that internet that speaks, resource books, libraries, transliterations—if only, my brothers of my day could see this! You have done well, but you are not finished. I say to you that unless you become as disciplined as the Jews in keeping the Law of God, you won’t have a place of honor in the kingdom of God. Yashuah did not come to make the Law of God obsolete, as some of you teach, rather he came to amplify it. Let me read it to you from **your** book, “Don’t ever think that I came to set aside Moses’ Teachings or the Prophets. **I didn’t come to set them aside but to make them come true**” (Matthew 5:17).

Paul dropped his head and whispered, “I am sorry. We, Jews, by all of the oral laws that we added—all “disputable matters”—have caused a stumbling block for you. I urge you to follow the simplicity of Christ:

- Keep the Law of God, willingly and carefully.
- Your works in the law will not bring salvation because our righteousness is but filthy rags compared to God. We still sin, even those who keep the letter of the law because without God’s Holy Spirit, we cannot understand the spirit of the law, which we need to keep as well.
- God, our Creator accepted Christ’s death as the penalty for our sins and generously gave us grace.
- Through faith in God, we accept grace.
- Through our love for God, we obey His Law and it is perfect. It brings peace and joy. It cares for people; it is kind, compassionate, long-suffering; it is LOVE.”

Paul smiled and opened his arms for an embrace. “How difficult is that to understand?”

*Compiled by Janette Andrejowich.*