

GOD'S LAWS versus GOD'S GRACE

A study and commentary by David R Hughes

Catholic and most Protestant churches teach that the laws of God were abolished or done away with when Jesus was crucified. This doctrine concludes that Christians are now under God's Grace and no longer under God's laws including the ceremonial and sacrificial laws, food laws, yearly feast laws and the Ten Commandments. That teaching is supported by several scriptures in the letters of Paul to the Church of God in Greece and Rome that he had founded which included both Jews and Gentiles or non-Jewish members, and in the Book of Acts which is believed to have been written by Luke. The truth regarding this doctrine appears to disagree with what is taught in the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

For example, in the book of Mark Jesus tells a rich man to keep the Commandments to inherit eternal life. Mark 10:17-19 NKJV ¹⁷ Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" ¹⁸ So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'" Also, in John 14:15 he quotes Jesus as having said ¹⁵ "If you love Me, keep My commandments" and in John 14:21 ²¹ He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

Even Paul himself wrote to the Church of God in Rome "Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good," (Romans 7:12). And concerning grace, he wrote: "Shall we continue in sin (transgression of the law, see 1 John 3:4) that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" (Romans 6:1-2). And finally in a vision of John in Revelation 12:17 Jesus reveals to him this event: "And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

Therefore, to follow in the steps of Jesus, it is extremely important to reconcile Paul's teaching with the four Gospels and the book of Revelation because there can only be one Gospel and one truth, although some teach there is one gospel for the Jews and another gospel for the Gentiles to explain the apparent contradictions. The question also arises of "Are we under Grace and not under the law" or "Are we under Grace for salvation and also need to keep the law of God for obedience?" It is necessary to have a good understanding of God's Grace and His Laws and what their respective purpose is to answer those questions. Therefore, I have studied, explored and analyzed these scriptures in an effort to determine if the doctrine that Christians are no longer under God's Law but now under God's Grace is correct and if not, what the intended meaning of the scriptures is. The study is separated into documents regarding the scriptures in question within each letter of Paul and the book of Acts where they are found. The context of those scriptures and my comments, explanations and conclusions are included in italics within each document.

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THE BOOK OF ACTS – CHAPTER 15 (Scriptures concerning God's Law and Grace)

Context:

Before going to the Jerusalem conference, in Acts 13 and 14 Paul and Barnabas had been preaching in Synagogues to Jews and Gentiles on Sabbath days in cities of Greece. They had encountered a Jewish sorcerer on Paphos who tried to stop them from bring the Word to Sergius Paulus, the proconsul there. They also faced opposition, persecution and a plan to stone them by both Gentiles and non-believing Jews, and they were driven out of several cities by Gentiles and Jews. All of these Greek cities were filled with pagan traditions and idols and had been for centuries. Despite all the opposition, they were having great success so that many Jews and Greeks believed.

While at the church in Antioch, Pisidia in Greece, men came from Judea teaching that the Gentiles must be circumcised and keep Jewish law for salvation. Paul and Barnabas disputed with them over this issue and determined to go up to Jerusalem to settle the matter with the apostles and elders. After much discussion with the apostles and elders, James declared how God had first visited the Gentiles, probably referring to Cornelius and his household in Acts 10, and verified with scripture that all the Gentiles called by His name would be included in the church. He then proposed to write a letter to the Gentiles telling them to abstain from the sins listed in verse 29 and the apostles and elders agreed.

ACTS 15 1-2 NKJV 15 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

² When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

ACTS 15: 6-11 NKJV ⁶ Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. ⁷ And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up *and* said to them: "Men *and* brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. ⁸ So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as *He did* to us, ⁹ and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? ¹¹ But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."

There is no indication in the bible that the God-fearing Jews were unable to bear or even considered that circumcision was a yoke on the neck of the disciples or their fathers. They had been keeping it faithfully for hundreds of years. There is also no indication that God-fearing Jews considered the Ten Commandments to be a yoke on their necks. The law was not an unbearable yoke on the neck of the God-fearing Jews but some Jews believed keeping the law was necessary to obtain salvation and that was an impossible task which is why God instituted the Sacrificial Laws to cover sins (transgressions of the law) until Jesus came to take away sins by repentance and faith in Him and His way. Peter was not saying that the law which is based on the Ten Commandments was not necessary to keep. He was probably speaking of the man-made laws and traditions which Jesus also rebuked the Pharisees for burdening the people with which they didn't keep themselves. Washing of hands and other traditions.

The laws of God are summed up in the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments were summed up by Jesus when He was questioned by the Pharisees about which is the great commandment in the law Matthew 22: 37-40 NKJV: ³⁷ **Jesus said to him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”** ³⁸ **This is the first and great commandment.** ³⁹ **And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’** ⁴⁰ **On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”**

In 1 John 5: 1-3 he explained: ¹ **Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.** ² **By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.** ³ **For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.**

The commandments are not burdensome if you believe Jesus is the Son of God and you love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and all your mind and choose to follow in Jesus’s footsteps.

- 1. It should not be burdensome to not have any Gods before Him.*
- 2. It should not be burdensome to make idols and bow down and worship them.*
- 3. It should not be burdensome to not misuse God’s name or to use it wrongfully.*
- 4. It should not be burdensome to rest and worship with Christians on the Seventh Day Sabbath.*
- 5. It should not be burdensome to honor your father and your mother.*
- 6. It should not be burdensome to not murder someone.*
- 7. It should not be burdensome to not commit adultery.*
- 8. It should not be burdensome to not steal.*
- 9. It should not be burdensome to not bear false witness against your neighbor.*
- 10. It should not be burdensome to not covet your neighbor’s possessions.*

ACTS 15:24-29 NKJV

²⁴ **Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, “You must be circumcised and keep the law”—to whom we gave no *such* commandment—** ²⁵ **it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,** ²⁶ **men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.** ²⁷ **We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth.** ²⁸ **For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:** ²⁹ **that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.**

Comments: The direction to abstain from things offered to idols in Acts 15: 29 comes from the Mosaic law in Leviticus 17:7-9. NKJV

⁷ **They shall no more offer their sacrifices to demons, after whom they have played the harlot. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations.** ⁸ **“Also you shall say to them: ‘Whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers (*Gentiles*) who dwell among you, who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice,** ⁹ **and does not bring it to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, to offer it to the LORD, that man shall be cut off from among his people.**

The direction to abstain from eating blood in Acts 15: 29 comes from the Mosaic law in Leviticus 17:10-12.

¹⁰ **'And whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers (Gentiles) who dwell among you, who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people. ¹¹ For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood *that* makes atonement for the soul.'** ¹² **Therefore I said to the children of Israel, 'No one among you shall eat blood, nor shall any stranger (Gentile) who dwells among you eat blood.'**

The direction to abstain from eating anything strangled in Acts 15: 29 is included in the Mosaic law in Leviticus 17:13-14.

¹³ **"Whatever man of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who hunts and catches any animal or bird that may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust; ¹⁴ for it is the life of all flesh. Its blood sustains its life. Therefore, I said to the children of Israel, 'You shall not eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off.'**

Many forms of sexual immorality were rampant in Gentile cities for hundreds of years and it was an acceptable part of their lifestyles, so it was necessary to warn them not to be involved in it. The direction to abstain from sexual immorality in Acts 15:29 although it is not in the Mosaic law, it is addressed in Numbers 25: 1-5 NIV where God lays down the law by making it clear to Israel that it was absolutely forbidden, when the men of Israel indulged in Harlotry with Moabite women. It is also one of the Ten Commandments law saying, "You shall not commit adultery".

²⁵ **While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, ² who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate the sacrificial meal and bowed down before these gods. ³ So Israel yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor. And the LORD's anger burned against them. ⁴ The LORD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of these people, kill them and expose them in broad daylight before the LORD, so that the LORD's fierce anger may turn away from Israel." ⁵ So Moses said to Israel's judges, "Each of you must put to death those of your people who have yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor."**

Therefore, James and the apostles were not saying Gentiles did not need to keep any of the Jewish law because all these restrictions are in Jewish law. Jews and Gentiles were meeting and worshipping together in Synagogues in the early church period. These Jewish laws would be considered the minimum of Jewish law to follow in cities filled with these pagan traditions in order to have united fellowship with and worship God in the Synagogues while the Gentile Christians already knew the Ten Commandments needed to be kept. There would be tremendous animosity and division in the church if the Jews were living by one standard of living and the Gentiles were living under another standard. There is only one Gospel of the Kingdom of God and Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians were to be united, each as a new person in Christ and all as one body united in Christ. From that point they would in time learn from teaching and fellowship in the Synagogues with mature Christians how God's laws and commandments were to be written in their hearts according to Jeremiah 33:31-34.

³¹ **Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: ³² Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: ³³ But this shall**

be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

UNDER THE LAW OR GRACE (From the book of Romans)

Romans 6:14 NIV For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

Grace is the gift of mercy and forgiveness from God that is undeserved and cannot be earned. Sin is the transgression of God's law. 1 John 3:4

⁴ Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. *and* Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. *To be under the law means one is under the penalty of transgressing the law, which is death. To be under Grace means that by faith in accepting God's sacrifice of Jesus Christ, one is undeservedly forgiven of all past sins and therefore, no longer under the law's death penalty. That person has died to sin and lives in righteousness through Jesus Christ who is now their Lord. Sin was their master but now Jesus is their Lord and Master.* Romans 8:2 "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." *If you take Romans 6:14 out of context and conclude it means that being under grace, we no longer need to obey God's laws and commandments, then you should seriously consider a few other verses in Romans and elsewhere to clarify Paul's meaning.*

Romans 7:11-12 NKJV ¹¹ For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed *me*. ¹² Therefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

Romans 6:15-18 NKJV ¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! ¹⁶ Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness? ¹⁷ But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. ¹⁸ And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Matthew 6:24 The Amplified Bible ²⁴ No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [money, possessions, fame, status, or whatever is valued more than the Lord]

Matthew 5:17-18 NRSV ¹⁷ 'Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. ¹⁸ For truly I

tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

Romans 3: 19 -20 NKJV ¹⁹Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. ²⁰Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

The Greek word “en” translated as “under” in Romans 3, verse 19 means in or inside. So, the law speaks to those (referring to the Jews) living or trying to live inside or within the law with its penalty of death, saying no one’s mouth (including Jews who think they are more righteous than Gentiles) can criticize another for being unrighteous because as the law speaks, it reveals that all people including Jews can become guilty (convicted by their conscience due to knowing the law and its penalty) and accountable for their sin (transgression of the Law with its penalty of death) before God. And because of that truth, no person can be made righteous and justified in God’s sight by just trying to live within the law because His law reveals to our human mind the sins, we all (Jews and Gentiles) have committed making us all guilty before God and subject to the law’s penalty of death.

Romans 3: 21-26 ²¹But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²²even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, ²⁶to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Re: Verse 21-22 Aside from God’s law, the righteousness of God is also revealed to all who believe through their faith in Jesus Christ as it was witnessed by the Law and the Prophets. Matthew 11:13 NKJV Jesus says “For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.” The yearly feasts and rituals commanded in God’s law pointed to Jesus Christ and His righteousness which was proven to mankind by His resurrection. Christ’s righteousness is God’s righteousness and Jesus would not have been raised

from the dead if He was not the unblemished (righteous without sin) Passover lamb of God.

Re: Verse 23-26 Everyone has sinned, so no one has come close to the glory of God except the sinless glorified Jesus Christ who God glorified. Since all have sinned, there is no difference between Jews or Gentiles regarding unrighteousness. We can only be justified or made righteous before God by accepting in faith, the gift of undeserved and unearned forgiveness for past sins through the ransom Jesus Christ paid by freely offering Himself to be crucified and die in our place for our sins as set forth and depicted in God's law (particularly Passover and Day of Atonement). By freely offering this Grace to us, God showed mankind His righteousness and by refraining from enforcing the penalty for sin, God passed over past sins to demonstrate His righteousness at that time and even now, showing that He is just, and He justifies those who have faith in Jesus for our redemption from sin and death.

Romans 10:4 NKJV ⁴For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Starting in chapter 9 and continuing in chapter 10:1 Paul is expressing his concern for Israel, in this case the Jews who were rejecting Jesus as the Messiah. He explains in detail how they had great zeal for God but lacked knowledge of His righteousness, so they were trying to establish their own righteousness by keeping God's law and commandments. But keeping the whole law was not possible for mankind in our fallen condition, thus animal sacrifice was instituted by God to temporarily cover sins (transgressions of the law) until Christ came and fulfilled the sacrificial laws. Christ is the end of the old Jewish system of mistakenly believing that outwardly keeping the law justified them and made them righteous to God. The end purpose or goal of the law was to reveal and produce in mankind the mind of Christ and therefore the mind of God. For a similar use of the phrase "the end of" to mean completion or fulfillment of see 1 Peter 1:7-9 ⁷*that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,* ⁸*whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,* ⁹*receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls."* *Peter is obviously not saying our salvation has ended, is done away with, or is abolished. He is*

saying that salvation is the goal or fulfillment of our having faith in Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 10:16 NKJV “¹⁶This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; ¹⁷And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” (a reference to Jeremiah 31: 31-33) *The law did not go away even for believers when Christ was crucified.* Matthew 5:17-20 NRSVCE Jesus said “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

The righteousness of the Pharisees as Paul explained was by keeping the letter of the law but ignoring the spirit of the law which Jesus kept and taught. So, in their pride and ignorance of God’s righteousness they condemned Jesus as unrighteous revealing their hypocrisy and they remained under the law and its penalty of death.

Romans 3: 27-31 ²⁷Where is boasting then? *(concerning righteousness or being justified by God)* It is excluded. *(Our boasting is not valid)* By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. *(What principle of law invalidates our right to boast? Not works but faith.)* ²⁸Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. *(Justification by faith is separate from deeds of the law but the law is still valid)* ²⁹Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, ³⁰since *there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. (God is God of both Jews and Gentiles and there is only one Justification for both: By and through faith. The Jews would be justified by accepting Jesus as their Messiah by the faith they already had in the One true and just God and the Gentiles would be justified by believing in Jesus through their newfound faith in the One true and just God after rejecting all their man-made gods.)* ³¹Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law. *(Being justified by God through faith only, we do not invalidate or do away with the law. Instead, we institute the law (apart*

from faith) in our hearts as part of our Christian belief or doctrine, but not for justification that absolves us from our sins. Just as prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31-33)

Romans 14: 1-2 NKJV Receive one who is weak in the faith, *but* not to disputes over doubtful things. ²For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats *only* vegetables.

We should not assume Paul is talking about Jewish food laws when he doesn't specifically say those words because in the Gentile world he could be speaking of food sacrificed or offered to idols which is a different issue. We must consider the context of the scripture to obtain the correct meaning when the author does not explain in detail. This scripture does not do away with God's clean and unclean food laws.

A person who is weak in the faith might be a newly converted Christian or one who is not yet well founded in Christian belief or doctrine. A Gentile who had been living a world of idolatrous practices all their life could find it difficult to completely remove those mental images, in this case eating meat offered to idols. Therefore, their conscience would make them feel guilty even though it was acceptable for Christians to eat clean meat offered to idols because idols are not gods. We can look at Paul's letter to the Corinthians who were dealing with the same issue of eating meat sacrificed to idols for more understanding.

1 Corinthians 8:4 KJV ⁴As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

1 Corinthians 8:7 KJV ⁷Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

1 Corinthians 10:25-27 NKJV ²⁵ Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake; ²⁶ for "the earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness." ²⁷ If any of those who do not believe invites you *to dinner*, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake. ²⁸ But if anyone says to you, "This was offered to idols," do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake; for "the earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness."

The one who is weak may eat only vegetables because sacrificing meat to idols was so prevalent in the pagan world, they couldn't be sure if meat offered to them at someone's home or bought at the market was made unclean by being sacrificed to an idol. So, to be safe they would have to stop eating meat all together. Paul contrasts that vegetarian person with one who eats all things which in the context of this chapter's subject would mean eating meat (even if sacrificed to an idol) and also vegetables. The contrast obviously is not eating all things including unclean foods as opposed to Jews eating clean meats only, as some people mistakenly assume and teach. Romans 14: 2 plainly contrasts eating all things opposed to eating only vegetables. This scripture does not prove that the 1st century Christian Church of God did not observe the Biblical food laws. The term "eating all things" used by Paul most likely was intended to mean all clean meats even if they were sacrificed to an idol, because some "things" are poisonous to humans or detrimental to the body in some way. Hence, some of the "weak" Gentile Christians' concern was about eating food being made unclean if it had been sacrificed to an idol. The ultimate message in Romans 14, verse 1 & 2 is we are not to judge or look down on anyone because they only eat clean meat, or they don't eat meat at all.

Romans 14: 3-4 ³Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. ⁴Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

In Romans 14, verses 3 & 4 Paul moves on to another issue regarding eating. He makes the contrast between one who eats as opposed to one who does not eat. Since meat is not mentioned here, the only action Paul can be referring to is fasting as opposed to not fasting. We are not to judge those who are fasting or not fasting because Jesus is the Master of each Christian, and everyone will stand or fall before Him, and He will make us to stand.

Romans 14: 5-6 ⁵One person esteems *one* day above another; another esteems every day *alike*. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶He who observes the day, observes *it* to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe *it*. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.

The subject of chapter 14 of Romans is eating food. Paul does not suddenly change the subject in these two isolated verses to Sabbath days as some people believe and teach. The last part of verse 6 proves that. Some translations such as NIV, NLT and NET substituted the word “above” in verse 5 with “more sacred than” or “more holy than” suggesting Paul changed the subject to Jewish holy days instead of eating food. But the subject continues to be about eating food all the way to the end of the chapter. These two verses refer to fasting days (he who does not eat) or feasting days (he who eats) and since the days chosen for them are “doubtful” or not crucial regarding righteousness, everyone can fast or feast on the day or days best suited for themselves. Some Jews fasted on certain days of each week and some fasted twice a week. In Luke 18:12 Jesus told a parable about a Pharisee who prayed at the temple proclaiming he fasted twice a week when stating his righteous deeds to God. In their “The Proper Day for Fasting” article, Ligonier Ministries states “With regard to the Pharisees, first-century Jews regarded fasting as a mark of general piety, not just repentance, and the Pharisees were known for fasting on Mondays and Thursdays.”

More scriptures in Romans pertaining to Law and Grace

Romans 2 12-16 Sinners without law die without law & sinner with law judged by law.

Romans 5: 12-21 Sin through Adam and justification through Christ

Romans 7: 7-12 Is law sin? The Law is holy and just.

Romans 8:1-12 The mind governed by the flesh is death. 14 Sons of God are led by the spirit

Romans 13: 8-10 Love is the fulfillment of the law.

Romans 15: 5-7 Unity in the church to the glory of God. Also 16:17-18

Romans 16 Unity and personal connections among Christians and warns about divisiveness and false teachers.

Was God's Law Abolished – Galatians

Context:

To understand Paul's letter to the Galatians, we must consider the spiritual condition of the church there, the pagan environment of Galatia the church was in the midst of and had come out of, and the misunderstanding some of the Jews in the church had regarding God's grace and the ultimate purpose of God's laws.

When Paul wrote to the Galatians, they were in turmoil and confusion because of different doctrines working their way into the church of God. Jews had come from Judea trying to convince Gentile members of the church to receive circumcision and keep the Jewish laws to be saved. (Galatians 5: 2-3) Recall that Jesus had condemned the Jewish Scribes and Pharisees for all their traditions which they taught as doctrine while rejecting the commandment of God. (see Mark 7: 5- 9 below) God's commandments delivered through Moses were never intended for salvation from the penalty of sin which is death. Its purpose was to reveal sin and teach how to live righteously toward God and our neighbors until Messiah came take away sins once and for all. John 1:29 NKJV

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! And Romans 7 NKJV ⁷ What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." *The animal sacrifices also did not save them from sin's penalty of death, for obedience to the sacrificial laws only covered their sins temporarily until the Messiah would come and be the ultimate sacrifice once and for all. These Jews were trying to bring in their corrupted form of Judaism into the church doctrine. Since they believed only Jews were God's chosen people and were saved by keeping the Jewish laws and God's commandments, they were telling the Gentiles that they needed to live and believe like them to be saved, so they believed the Gentiles could only have salvation by keeping the law even though the Jews themselves were not able to keep the whole law.*

Mark 7 NKJV ⁵ Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?" ⁶ He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from Me. ⁷ And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' ⁸ For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do." ⁹ He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition."

Galatians 3 NKJV ¹ O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? ² This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? ⁴ Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed *it was* in vain? ¹⁹ What purpose then *does* the law *serve*? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed (*Jesus Christ*) should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. ²⁰ Now a mediator does not *mediate* for one *only*, but God is one. ²¹ Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness (*or justification by God - drh*) would have been by the law. ²² But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. ²³ But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the law was our tutor (*spiritual guide & guardian from our sinful nature -*

drh) **to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.** ²⁵ **But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.**

Converted Christians who have repented and turned away from sin are no longer under the law requiring death for sinners because by having faith in God's word after hearing the Gospel, we believed that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God who took our place for that death requirement, we repented and turned away from our sins which the law (the commandments) revealed in us, and we sincerely asked for and have been given God's gift of undeserved forgiveness (God's Grace) and are now led by God's Holy Spirit which according to scripture we receive at baptism by the touching of hands and prayer by a Christian minister with God's spirit. The Holy Spirit then guides us and leads us to understanding God's truth, living righteously, and His plan of Salvation for mankind. - drh

In addition to Jews trying to impose Jewish laws on members of the church, there were also Gentile members who were reverting back to paganism and some even accepting pagan traditions into the church. Some Gentiles in the church would certainly be confused and befuddled by all the different doctrines being pushed on the members, especially circumcision, so they found comfort by returning to the old pagan traditions they had known and lived with all their lives before Paul brought the truth of salvation through Christ to them. drh

Galations 4 NKJV ⁸ **But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods.** *(Paul is speaking to the Greek Gentiles pointing out how they worshiped pagan gods and idols before they came to Christ. He is not speaking about the Jewish members because they had been brought up knowing God and not serving idols.-drh)* ⁹ **But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?** ¹⁰ **You observe days and months and seasons and years.**

Pagans observed all of these times such as the day of Sunday for the sun god, Monday for the moon, Thursday for the Norse god Thor etc., and months of the year such as January for Janus the Roman god of beginnings and endings, February for a Roman purification festival called februa, which literally means "month of cleansing", March is named after Mars, the Roman god of war because the weather was mild enough to begin waging war, July and August were observed as emperor god worship for Julius and Augustus Ceasar, etc. The pagan seasonal cycle, also known as the Wheel of the Year, is based on ancient seasonal and celestial events. And finally the yearly observance of Yule is a key part of the life cycle of the 'Child of Promise', conceived in Ostara and born in the winter solstice as the 'Sun Child' who will defeat the powers of darkness in the coming spring, ushering in nature's triumphant return.- drh) (Therefore, out of concern for the Gentiles in the church returning to pagan traditions, Paul said to them in verse 11): ¹¹ **I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.**

Galations 5 NKJV ¹ **Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.** *(Paul is telling the Gentiles that they should hold fast to the doctrine that faith in Christ's sacrifice alone justified them to God, not the law, including circumcision. God's forgiveness of their sins made them free from the **yoke of bondage to sin and death** which they had turned away from when converted. Paul is certainly not saying they are free from*

obeying God's law and His commandments. Disobedience to the Ten Commandments would obviously lead to our peril. See Romans 7: 7 & 12 below and 1 Corinthians 6: 9 below - drh) ² Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. ³ And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. *(If you believe you must be circumcised to be justified by God then you must keep the whole law to be justified which in reality is not possible for us while in flesh bodies. Only Jesus was able to do that. drh)* ⁴ You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt* to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. ⁵ For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.

Romans 7 NKJV ⁷ What shall we say then? *Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." (God's commandments reveal to us what sin is, what God's character is and how to live a life that is pleasing to Him. To be under the law means you are still living in sin therefore you are in bondage to sin and subject to the penalty of sin which is death. To be under Grace means you have repented of what you know from the commandments to be sin, sincerely asked God for forgiveness and turned away from it in your life. drh)*

Romans 7:12 NKJV ¹² Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

MORE SCRIPTURES CLARIFYING SIN, THE LAW AND GRACE

1 John 3: 4-10 KJV ⁴ Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. ⁵ And ye know that he *(Jesus)* was manifested to take away our sins; and in him *(Jesus)* is no sin. ⁶ Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. ⁷ Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. ⁸ He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his *(God's)* seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. *(The Amplified Bible translates vs. 9 as "No one who is born of God [deliberately, knowingly, and habitually] practices sin.")* ¹⁰ In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

Romans 6: 23 NKJV For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Hebrews 10: 26-31 NKJV ²⁶ For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. *(of God)* ²⁸ Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on *the testimony of* two or three witnesses. ²⁹ Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

1 John 1: 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Matthew 22 NKJV ³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵ Then one of them, a lawyer, asked *Him a question*, testing Him, and saying, ³⁶ "Teacher, which *is* the great commandment in the law?" ³⁷ Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is *the* first and great commandment. ³⁹ And *the* second *is* like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." *(The first four of the Ten Commandments show us how to love God and the last six show us how to love our neighbor.)*

1 Corinthians 6: 9-10 ⁹ Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit *(receive the promise of everlasting life at the first resurrection – drh)* the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

Was God's Law Abolished by Jesus Christ's sacrifice?

Ephesians 2: 14- 19 KJV

¹⁴ For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; ¹⁵ Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; ¹⁶ And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: ¹⁷ And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. ¹⁹ Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

Comments:

We should always consider the context in which difficult to understand scriptures are written to help get the correct meaning of the writer. The book of Ephesians is the collection of letters from Paul sent to the Christian church of God in Ephesus for instruction and guidance. The port city of Ephesus in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) was an important large commercial, cultural and pagan religious center with a population of about 250 to 300 thousand in the first century AD. It was established around 1000 BC as an ancient Greek city and was annexed by the Romans in 133 BC. There had been a Jewish community in Ephesus for over three hundred years when Paul the Apostle visited Ephesus around 53 AD. The church of God in Ephesus included Jews and Gentiles and had difficulties in unifying themselves and keeping separate from the surrounding pagan culture. Gentiles often required Jews to live in separate areas because of their differences. Through the years animosity or enmity developed between the two peoples, so laws and rules were made among each group regarding the other group. Such as Jews did not allow their sons and daughters to marry or associate with Gentiles. If one of them did marry a Gentile, they were considered to have married a dog. Jews would not eat anything touched by a Gentile and Jews referred to Gentiles as the uncircumcised. This term was meant to be derogatory such as the way David called Goliath "you uncircumcised Philistine". The Gentiles also had much animosity toward the Jews. The Jews were allowed to observe the Sabbath by the Romans and were exempted from conscription to the Roman army because they wouldn't fight on their Sabbaths, but the Gentiles were not exempt. The Gentiles made many false accusations against the Jews such as having hatred of their fellow men, and some even believed the Jews sacrificed a Gentile to their god every year.

Some of these old prejudices, suspicions and animosities were creeping into the Church of God so Paul wrote this letter to bring peace, understanding and unity to all the members, both Jew and Gentile. Paul is not referring to God's law and commandments having been abolished because God's righteous law and His commandments do not cause enmity between people. The Greek word used for ordinance is dogma which means "a public decree". It is only used in the New Testament to mean laws imposed by men because of something that seems to be true to them, not laws from God. He is referring to the civil laws, rules and regulations created by Jews and Gentiles because of their differences and mistrust of each other due to the enmity between them. Christ's death in His flesh existence effectively abolished those civil laws (in public decrees) and rules causing enmity between Jews and Gentiles making them each a new man in Christ. Not being Jew or Gentile but both together being a new type of man in

Christ without hatred or prejudice toward each other or anyone else. Gentiles were now fellow citizens with Jews in Christ and all being of the household of God.

Also consider the following scriptures supporting the previous comments about the Ephesians. In Ephesians 1:15 Paul states: ¹⁵ For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, ¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. So, the church in Ephesus had a reputation early on of loving all God's people which included Jews and Gentiles. Then attitudes about their differences must have changed because in Revelation 2 Jesus commended them for their deeds and their perseverance but declared they no longer had that "first love".

Revelation 1: 3-5 NIV "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

³ You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name and have not grown weary.⁴ Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. ⁵ Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.

And Jesus Christ Himself said this about God's law and commandments in the sermon on the mount: Matthew 5:17-20 NIV ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, 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. ¹⁹ Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

*Furthermore, Romans 3:31 KJV states: **Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.***

*God's law and commandments are still valid today for instruction in God's righteousness and defining sin, and we need to keep them written in our hearts and be obedient to God. If we confess our sins to God and repent by turning away from our sins, we are free from God's penalty for sin which is death (the second death or eternal death) and we are then under God's grace (freely given undeserved forgiveness of sins). Romans 6:14 NIV **For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.***

Revelation 14:12 KJV "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus"

1 Timothy 4:1-16 NKJV

1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, **2** speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, **3** forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; **5** for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. **6** If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. **7** But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. **8** For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. **9** This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. **10** For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. **11** These things command and teach. **12** Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. **13** Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. **14** Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. **15** Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. **16** Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

Context:

Timothy, a young fellow-worker of Paul was serving as a Church leader in Ephesus when he wrote this Pastoral epistle to him that is 1 Timothy in the bible. Paul had left Timothy in Ephesus to oversee the church there which was stated in Paul's epistle, 1 Timothy 1:3. Paul warns Timothy about false doctrine coming into the church in Ephesus. The port city of Ephesus in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) was an important large commercial, cultural and pagan religious center with a population of about 250 to 300 thousand in the first century AD. It was established around 1000 BC as an ancient Greek city and was annexed by the Romans in 133 BC. There had been a Jewish community in Ephesus for over three hundred years when Paul the Apostle visited Ephesus around 53 AD. The church of God in Ephesus included Jews and Gentiles and had difficulties in unifying themselves and keeping separate from the surrounding pagan culture.

Comments:

1 Timothy 4:1-6 Paul warns Timothy here about deceiving spirits entering church members in the latter days who would teach doctrines of demons and speak lies while being hypocrites with consciences that would not accept any guilt. So, they were teaching false doctrines which they did not live by themselves. The first false doctrine mentioned is "forbidding to marry". This was an ancient pagan Babylonian doctrine that has been revived in Roman Catholic doctrine, forbidding priests to marry. In the world of today, as we approach the last days of this age, we have witnessed the negative and harmful results of that false doctrine. The second false doctrine mentioned is "commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received". Paul warned that in the last days this false doctrine would be taught, and it also did become Roman Catholic doctrine in the form of

abstaining from eating meat on Fridays. It is considered by Roman Catholic to be a sin to eat meat except for fish on Fridays. In the year 1966, the Roman Catholic bishops in the United States changed the doctrine to doing some type of penance on Friday. These scriptures do not indicate that God's food laws were abolished because no law of God was ever a doctrine of demons. They do refer to pagan traditions and commandments that would enter the church in the last days.

*Furthermore, Romans 3:31 KJV states: **Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.***

*God's law and commandments are still valid today for instruction in God's righteousness and defining sin, and we need to keep them written in our hearts and be obedient to God. If we confess our sins to God and repent by turning away from our sins, we are free from God's penalty for sin which is death (the second death or eternal death) and we are then under God's grace (freely given undeserved forgiveness of sins). Romans 6:14 NIV **For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.***

*Revelation 14:12 KJV **"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus"***