

# ***Jesus ... Paul & The Law***

Correlation or Conflict ??

# Schedule

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**Wednesdays ... 9:30 - 11:00 AM**

*Jesus, Paul and the Law*

**19, 26 October**

**2, 9 November**

# Agenda

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**Paul's** writings on the Law

**Jesus'** teaching on the Law

A Case study

A modern rabbi looks at **Jesus'** views on  
the Law

# The Context

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When we speak of [Jesus ... Paul ... and the Law](#) ... it seems obvious that we are discussing a “Christian” issue ...

but in reality we are speaking about Jesus ... as a teacher ([rabbi](#)) ... and Paul, a self proclaimed [Pharisee](#) ...

and their thoughts on Late Second Temple Judaism’s view of the [Torah](#) ... the Law ... both written and oral.

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In this discussion ... there is a context ...

both from the point of view of Second Temple Judaism ...

and from the perspective of developing Christianity ...

# The Law

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“The Written Law is another name for the TORAH.

The Oral Law is a legal commentary on the Torah, explaining how its commandments are to be carried out.

Common sense suggests that some sort of oral tradition was always needed to accompany the Written Law, because the Torah alone, even with 613 commandments, is insufficient to guide Jewish life.”

Rabbi Joseph Telushkin

# The “Written” Oral Law

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After the Great Revolt (66-73 CE) and the Bar Kokhba Rebellion (132-135 CE) against Rome, so many Jewish scholars, teachers, and even students had perished that Rabbi Judah the Prince feared that the details and intricacies of the Law were about to be lost.

Rabbi Judah began the task of codifying the “Oral Law”, the *Mishna*, and completed the task ~200 CE.

Up until this time, the Oral Law and its interpretations had been just that, orally presented and argued. No one had codified, correlated, and written what had been taught and debated for centuries.

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This is important ... in context ... because at the time of Jesus ... and Paul ... the “Oral Law” was still being argued and debated ... orally.

# The Meaning of the Law

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- The Law and the Covenantal Relationship
  - God has chosen Israel ... and given the law.
  - The law implies both God's promise to maintain the "chosenness" and the requirements to obey.
  - God rewards obedience and punishes transgression.
  - The law provides for means of atonement, and atonement results in maintenance or re-establishment of the covenantal relationship.
  - All those who are maintained in the covenant by obedience, atonement and God's mercy belong to the group which will be saved.

*"My ordinances you shall observe and my statutes you shall keep, following them: I am the Lord your God. You shall keep my statutes and my ordinances; by doing so one shall live: I am the Lord."*

(Lev 18:4-5)

# The Meaning of Commandment

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Why commandments?

The rabbis of the Talmud believed that obligatory acts will be carried out with greater consistency and staying power than voluntary ones.

*“Greater is he who is commanded and carries out an act, than he who is not commanded, and carries it out.”* (Talmud)

A more complete response.

# The *mitzvot* ... a sample

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- To know that G-d exists. (Lev. 19:32)
- Not to give occasion to the simple-minded to stumble on the road. (Lev. 19:14)
- To leave the unreaped corner of the field or orchard for the poor. (Lev. 19:9)
- To hear the sound of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah. (Num. 29:1)
- Not to eat blood. (Lev. 7:26)
- Not to eat the fruit of a tree for three years from the time it was planted. (Lev. 19:23)
- To keep fire always burning on the altar of the burnt-offering. (Lev. 6:6)

# Paul

A Man with an Opinion  
Views on the Law

# Paul, the Man

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- Of Tarsus (Acts 22)
  - A Roman by birth. (Acts 22)
  - A Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin. (Rom 11, Philippians 3)
  - A tentmaker by trade. (Acts 18)
- His claim...
  - Educated by Gamaliel I, the elder (~ 20-50 CE) (Acts 22:3)
    - therefore, probably educated in Jerusalem.
  - A Hebrew (Philippians 3:5, 2 Corinthians 11:22) and a Pharisee (Acts 23:6, Acts 26:4-5)
- Therefore: Saul had a solid Jewish background in Tarsus and came to study the Law in Jerusalem in the 20s CE when he was in his 20s.

# Paul, Persecutor and Convert

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## Persecutor

- Paul begins by persecuting the Church. (Galatians 1:13, 1 Corinthians 15:9, Philippians 3:6)
- Persecutions are affirmed in Acts. (Acts, 8:3, 9:1-2, 22:3-5, 22:19, 26:9-11)

## “Conversion” ... Transformation.

- “Road to Damascus” conversion. (Acts 9, 22, 26)
- Paul “sees” the Lord Jesus. (1 Corinthians 9:1, 15:8)
  - but in none of the three conversion stories in Acts does Paul actually see Jesus.
- Paul does not really see his conversion as a “conversion,” but the true way to follow his Jewish beliefs.

# A Chronology

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- 30 CE Jesus' Crucifixion, Resurrection.
- 33 Paul converted.
- 37 Paul meets with Apostles in Jerusalem.
- 49 "Council of Jerusalem"
- 50 Earliest Pauline epistle ... 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians.
- 59 Paul sent to Rome under arrest.
- 64 Peter & Paul martyred in Rome.
- 66 Jewish revolt against Rome begins.
- 66-68 Gospel of Mark written.
- 70 Jerusalem/ Temple destroyed.
- 85 Gospel of Matthew written.
- 85-90 Luke/Acts written.
- 96 Gospel of John written.
- 102 John the Theologian dies ... end of Apostolic Age.

Epistles of Paul predate written gospels ... as we have them.

# Key Points

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- Paul ...
  - Did not walk with ... talk with ... or listen ... to Jesus.
  - Never read any of the Gospels ... as we have them today. (He was dead before they were written.)
  - Although he visited the church in Jerusalem numerous times ... and spoke to the “pillars of the church” ... Peter and James, the Lord’s brother ... there were conflicts ... differences in views.

*“For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but **I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.**” (Galatians 1:11-12)*

# Paul's Influence

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Of the 27 books of the New Testament, Paul has been “classically” credited with authoring as many as 14 ... but modern scripture scholarship ... and some very early writings ... questions this classical view.

## **By Paul**

1 Thessalonians

Galatians

Philippians

Philemon

1 Corinthians

2 Corinthians

Romans

## **Pauline**

2 Thessalonians

Colossians

Ephesians

## **Wrongly attributed**

Hebrews

## **Followers of Paul ?**

Titus

1 Timothy

2 Timothy

Paul's discussion of the Law occurs primarily in his letters to the Romans (76x) and Galatians (32x).

Controversy in Antioch

Council of Jerusalem

# Controversy in Antioch

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- Church in Antioch grows.
  - Church in Jerusalem sends Barnabas to check on the situation ... He rejoices in what he saw. (Acts 11:22)
  - Barnabas returns with Paul and spends one year in Antioch. (Acts 11:25)
  - Followers are first called Christians. (Acts 11:26)
- Individuals from Judea (Church in Jerusalem) come to Antioch.
  - “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses you cannot be saved.” (Acts 15:1)
  - Paul and Barnabas “debate” the visitors.
  - Paul and Barnabas travel to Jerusalem to discuss the issue with the “elders and apostles.”
- The issue: Does a Gentile have to become a Jew in order to become a Christian?

# Controversy in Antioch

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- According to Paul ...
  - “... when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because *he stood self-condemned*; for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles.  
*But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the *circumcision faction*.*  
*And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.”* (Galatians 2:11-13)

Paul implies that the “circumcision faction” was sent by ... and had the support of James ... the “brother of the Lord” and leader of the church in Jerusalem.

The Acts of the Apostles does not directly support this contention.

# A Dispute

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- This dispute was so serious that the leaders of the community gathered in Jerusalem.
- There is a discussion between Peter, James, Paul, Barnabas and others ... spoken of as the apostles and elders ... concerning what should be done. (Acts 15)
- James presided ...

The issue: Does a Gentile have to become a Jew in order to become a Christian?

# Council of Jerusalem

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- Paul and Barnabas meet with Peter and James ... the elders and apostles. (~37 CE)
  - Peter states that if the believers have faith, God makes no distinction between Jew and Gentile.
  - James makes the decision ... circumcision is not necessary for Gentiles who are coming into the Church.
  - Judas and Silas are sent from the Church in Jerusalem back to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas to deliver a letter from the Church in Jerusalem.

# A Dispute

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James speaks ...

- *“Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood.*

*Then the apostles and the elders, with the consent of the whole church, decided to choose men from among their members and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas.*

*For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials ... If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.”* (Acts 15)

# Paul & The Law

In his own words

# Paul & The Law

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Paul's writings on the Law remain controversial to this day.

Some say Paul was simply inconsistent in his views.

Others argue that Paul's views developed over time ... and that his letters reflect this development.

One should remember, however, that in Paul's two major writings on the Law, Romans and Galatians, the letters are being written under very different circumstances ... and for very different purposes.

It appears that in Galatia, conservative members of the "circumcision party" are trying to subvert Paul's earlier teaching. Paul writes to refute their teachings.

In the letter to the Romans, Paul is writing to a church he has never before visited. He writes the letter in anticipation of his arrival.

# Paul ... Under the Law

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The Law ... according to Paul ...

- *“If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.”* (Philippians 3:4-6)

After Paul’s “conversion” ... he sees the Law in a different way. The Law, in effect, becomes self condemning ... because no one could keep it perfectly.

*“For no human being will be justified in his sight by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.”* (Romans 3:20)

# Beware of Hypocrisy

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- *“But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast of your relation to God and know his will and determine what is best because you are instructed in the law, and if you are sure that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth,*

*you, then, that teach others, will you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You that forbid adultery, do you commit adultery? You that abhor idols, do you rob temples?*

*You that boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law?”* (Romans 2:17-23)

**An argument against hypocrisy.**

# Paul's Argument

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The Law brings a knowledge of sin ... sinfulness ... and a knowledge of failure.

- *“... if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’ ...*

*Apart from the law sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died, and the very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.*

***So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good.***” (Romans 7:7-12)

What about “natural law” ... Noahide commandments?

# Circumcision

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- *“Circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law; but if you break the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. So, if those who are uncircumcised keep the requirements of the law, will not their uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?*

*Then those who are physically uncircumcised but keep the law will condemn you that have the written code and circumcision but break the law.*

*For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. **Rather, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart - it is spiritual and not literal.** Such a person receives praise not from others but from God.” (Romans 2:25-29)*

**Circumcision doesn't make one righteous ... keeping the Law from the heart does.**

# End of Law ?

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- *“For no human being will be justified in his sight by deeds prescribed by the law ...”* (Romans 3:20)
- *“... now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we are slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.”* (Romans 7:6)
- *“**For Christ is the end of the law** so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.”* (Romans 10:4)
- *“... since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, **we uphold the law.**”* (Romans 3:30-31)

Is Paul internally consistent?

Did those to whom he wrote understand what he was trying to say?

# God ... Jesus ... Sin

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- *“But now, irrespective of law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.” (Romans 3:21-26)*

Substitutionary atonement

Propitiatory sacrifice

# Israel and the Law

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- *“... Israel, who did strive for the righteousness that is based on the law, did not succeed in fulfilling that law. Why not? Because they did not strive for it on the basis of faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling-stone ...”* (Romans 9:31-33)

“The Torah always speaks to the community and concerns itself with the formation of a social order worthy of God who called Israel into being.”

“We who try to obey the Torah and do the mitzvot believe that that is **how we carry out the covenant that joins us to God**: it is what the Torah tells us God wants us to do as our part of the covenanted relationship between us and God. **When I keep the commandments of the Torah, I serve God.**”

Rabbi Jacob Neusner

# Law As Revelation

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## The Torah pre-existed creation

- “... so did God look into the Torah when he was about to create the world.”
- “... the day of revelation is considered as the day on which earth was wedded to heaven. The barrier between them was removed by the fact that the Torah, the heavenly bride, the daughter of the Holy One, was wedded to Israel on that day.”

## Revelation is experiential

- “...to be fully understood it [Jewish theology] must be experienced emotionally; it must be felt as well as ‘known.’”

*(Rabbinic Theology, Solomon Schechter)*

# Paul ... concerning himself

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*“For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them.*

*To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law.*

*To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law) so that I might win those outside the law.*

*To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak.*

*I have become all things to all people, so that I might by any means save some.*

*I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.”*

*(1 Corinthians 9:19-23)*

# Paul ... a summary

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- “... as to righteousness under the law, blameless.” (Philippians 3:6)
- “... if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin.”  
“Apart from the law sin lies dead.”  
“So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good.”  
(Romans 7)
- “For no human being will be justified in his sight by deeds prescribed by the law ...” (Romans 3:20)
- “... since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.” (Romans 3:30-31)
- “**For Christ is the end of the law ...**” (Romans 10:4)

# Paul's Arguments

... to the Galatians

# Argument ... Galatians

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- “... we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be *justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law because no one will be justified by the works of the law.*” (Galatians 2:15-16)

But ... who said that one could be “justified” by works of the Law? This was **not** the **general understanding** of the Law in Second Temple Judaism.

One obeyed the Law because God commanded it ... as a part of the covenantal relationship that God had with his people.

Perhaps this was the argument of the conservative “circumcision party” ... made up of Pharisees who had become followers of Jesus.

# Argument ... Galatians

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- *“I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then **Christ died for nothing.**”* (Galatians 2:21)

... Paul's views on the Law are formed by his understanding of “justification” ... “atonement” ... not as his understanding of the Law as a Pharisee in Late Second Temple Judaism.

He literally “backs into” his views on the Law from his understanding of what Jesus did ...

... is his understanding valid ?

# Argument ... Galatians

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- *“For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law.’  
Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law ...”*  
(Galatians 3:10-11)
- *“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us - for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’ - in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles ...”* (Galatians 3:13-14)

So ...

The Law is a curse ... and this is not good.

Jesus became a curse ... and this is good.

# Argument ... Galatians

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Paul's argument seems to be ...

The Law can't save the Gentiles ... so how are they justified? ... Again ... an argument against those of the conservative party.

Paul stresses the negative aspects of the Law because the Gentile believers in Galatia were being told to accept circumcision ... and the Law.

# Argument ... Galatians

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- *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God - not the result of works, so that no one may boast.”* (Ephesians 2:8)

Paul’s argument can be summarized most easily using Galatians 2:21:

- *“If justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.”*

Paul’s starting point was that Christ had died; therefore, there must have been a need for his sacrificial death.

If there was a need for Christ’s death, then the Law must not have been sufficient for salvation.

# Freedom

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- *“For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another.*

*For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘**You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**’ If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.*

*Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want.*

*But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law.”*  
(Galatians 5:13-18)

# Something New ?

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“That which is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary (explanation); go and study it.”  
(Hillel the Elder from the Babylonian Talmud)

“The Sinaitic revelation contains no supernatural truths, it does prescribe [a way of life](#), the practice of which stands to benefit all mankind ... no other religion contained as many admonitions to lead believers toward [“justice, piety, obedience to law and state, human warmth \(humanity\).”](#) Moses Mendelssohn (1729 - 1786)

- The Bible is a “human document” with a single ... simple message: [“Love Your Neighbor.”](#) (Spinoza was greatly troubled by the way Scripture itself was worshipped, by the [reverence accorded to the words on the page rather than to the message they conveyed.](#))  
Baruch Spinoza (1632 - 1677)

# Expectation

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“But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith HaShem,

I will put My law in their inward parts, and **in their heart will I write it**; and I will be their G-d, and they shall be My people; and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying:

‘Know HaShem’; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith HaShem; for I will forgive their iniquity, and **their sin will I remember no more.**” (Jeremiah 31:33-34)

When the law is practiced from the hearts of the people ... then ...

- ... I will be their God ...
- ... every man a brother ...
- ... sins will be no more

# What is Faith ?

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“Now **faith is the assurance of things hoped for**, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval.

- By faith **Abel offered** to God a more acceptable **sacrifice** than Cain's.
- And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.
- By faith **Noah**, warned by God about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and **built an ark** to save his household;
- By faith **Abraham** obeyed when he was called to **set out for a place** that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going.
- By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old - and Sarah herself was barren - because he considered him faithful who had promised.

# What is Faith

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- By faith **Abraham**, when put to the test, **offered up** Isaac.
- By faith **Moses** was **hidden by his parents** for three months after his birth ...
- By faith **Moses**, when he was grown up, refused to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter, **choosing** rather **to share ill-treatment** with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.
- By faith he **kept the Passover** and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.
- By faith **the people passed through the Red Sea** as if it were dry land, but when the Egyptians attempted to do so they were drowned.
- By faith the **walls of Jericho fell** after they had been encircled for seven days.”  
Hebrews 11

**Is this just faith ... or actions that are performed because of faith ... and God's instructions (commandments) ??**

# Faith ? ... Works ?

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- *“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? **Can faith save you?**”*

*If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill’, and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? **So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.***

*But someone will say, ‘You have faith and I have works.’ Show me your faith without works, and **I by my works will show you my faith.***

*You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe - and shudder.*

*Do you want to be shown, you senseless person, that faith without works is barren?*

*Was not our ancestor **Abraham justified by works** when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and **faith was brought to completion by the works.***

*(James 2:14-22)*

# Faith ? ... Works ?

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Paul:

- *“For by grace you have been saved through faith ...”*
- *“... no one is justified before God by the law ...”*
- *“Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness.”*
- *“For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”*

Letter to the Hebrews:

- *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for ...”*
- *“By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac.”*

James:

- *“Show me your faith without works, and I by my works will show you my faith.”*
- *Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?*
- *“... faith was brought to completion by the works.”*

# Faith ? ... Works ?

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- *“By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac ...” (Hebrews 11:17)*
- *“Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?” (James 2:21)*

# Paul's Vision of the Church

## examples

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### **Moral failure:**

- Do not associate with anyone who bears the name of brother or sister who is sexually immoral or greedy, or is an idolater, reveler, drunkard or robber. Do not even eat with such a one.
  - You are to hand the man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. (1 Corinthians 5:4)
  - Excommunicated must be expelled although the promise of salvation still exists.
  - When there is true sorrow however, “forgive and console ... reaffirm your love.” (2 Corinthians 2:7-8)

# Paul's Vision of the Church

## examples

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### **Meat offered to idols:**

- The strong eat and the weak abstain.
- Don't insult other gods, God as the only God.
- All things are lawful, but not all things are beneficial. All things are lawful but not all things build up. (1 Corinthians 10:23)
- Never be a cause of scandal to Jews or Greeks or to the church of God. (1 Corinthians 10:32)

You can eat ... because there are no other gods ... and you are free ... but don't eat ... because it may cause scandal.

**Not to give occasion to the simple-minded to stumble on the road.**

# Summary

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- *“May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! As for those who will follow this rule - peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.”*  
(Galatians 6:14-16)
- *“... we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles ...”* (1 Corinthians 1:23)
- *“For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”* (1 Corinthians 2:2)

# Summary

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- *“If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

*But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.” (1 Corinthians 15:17-20)*

His message, however, is simple: accept the gift given to you by God himself through the cross of Christ by responding to the Church guided and energized by the Holy Spirit.

To Paul ... being a “Christian” is about accepting the post-passion ... post-resurrection ... glorification of Jesus.

Little of Jesus ministry ... before the passion ... is of enduring interest to Paul.

But what of Jesus’ three year ministry ... of preaching ... and teaching ... to anyone who would listen ... ?