

The Apostle Paul and the “Curse of the Law” – Part 1

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Recorded on November 22, 2025

As I'm sure most of you are aware, today in what you might refer to as the “professing Christian world”, there's a popular belief that when Jesus Christ came to earth and lived out His physical life on earth and then died for the sins of mankind to atone for all of us, that another thing that Christ accomplished was He abolished the law of God. It's oftentimes said that He “nailed the law to the cross”. And how that is typically interpreted is that today obeying the law is not a requirement for New Covenant Christians. They don't have to obey all the commandments that God laid out in the Bible. That's not really a requirement for New Covenant Christians. All they have to do is just accept Christ as their personal Savior and profess their belief that Christ is who He says He was. They just need to show love to their fellow man -- just basically be a “nice person”. And if they do those two things, then they'll be rewarded with eternal life and make it into the Kingdom of God.

Now, the way that this particular belief is typically arrived at and backed up or justified is based upon interpretations of some of the statements made by the Apostle Paul in the epistles that he wrote that are recorded in the Bible for us. However, if you take these particular interpretations and the conclusions that people arrive at based upon these interpretations, and then you compare them with Christ's own direct statements that He made in the Gospel accounts during His ministry on earth, you'll find substantial contradictions. Because Christ directly states during His earthly ministry that people should not think that He came to do away with God's law. That if you think that's the case, you're totally off base and you have it all confused. In fact, He directly states if you want to enter into eternal life and make it in the Kingdom of God, one of the requirements is keeping the commandments.

So, you can see this interpretation that's, again, a very popular belief today that's arrived at from interpretations of Paul's writings has direct contradictions with Christ's own statements. So, what we're going to do today is start a sermon series examining some of these statements by the Apostle Paul and looking at how we should understand these statements. Because obviously if Paul is a true Apostle, he can't be making statements directly contradicting Christ's own statements. So there has to be an explanation for what Paul meant by these statements that is in agreement with the things that Christ Himself said rather than in direct contradiction. So, if you'd like a title for this sermon, it's:

The Apostle Paul and the “Curse of the Law” - Part 1

Because, as I mentioned, it's going to take a few sermons to go through all of these details. We won't get all of this accomplished in one sermon. But just to introduce the subject, let's turn over to Galatians 3. We'll see here just a few statements that Paul made and again also look at how they're typically interpreted to come to this conclusion

that God's law has been abolished, and it just doesn't apply to New Covenant Christians today. This is in Galatians 3, and we'll start reading in verse 10.

Gal 3:10 *"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.' 11) But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'the just shall live by faith.' 12) Yet the law is not of faith, but 'the man who does them shall live by them.' 13) Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'), 14) that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."* (NKJV)

Now, we are going to specifically look deeper into these particular verses next time in part 2. But just notice here that Paul mentions a "curse" associated with the law. Now, what we're going to see when we look into this in more detail is Paul is not saying the law itself is a curse. He's saying there's a curse associated with the law. But the popular interpretation of this is typically that God's law -- that law was just a curse. It was just this harsh, bad thing for mankind. And Christ came and did everyone a favor, and He abolished it and He "nailed it to the cross". This concept that He "nailed it to the cross" comes from a statement that Paul makes in the book of Colossians. So, if you'll turn over to the book of Colossians, we'll see the statement he makes that's typically interpreted to mean this. It's Colossians 2 in verse 11.

Col 2:11 *"In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12) buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13) And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14) having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."* (NKJV)

He's obviously saying here that Christ nailed something to the cross, and we'll come back to this later today to see exactly what he's referring to there. But again, typically the way that this is interpreted is you take these two statements that we just read here associating the law of God with a curse. And then say, well, Christ nailed all this to the cross and you think, well, Christ just nailed the law to the cross and the law just doesn't apply anymore.

Well, the problem with this interpretation is it directly contradicts Christ's own statements on the subject. To see that, turn over to Matthew 5. This is the account of the Sermon on the Mount, which is the first sermon we have recorded in the Bible during Christ's physical ministry. Notice here He addresses specifically this concept that He came to do

away with the law. And He explicitly tells us that we're totally off base if we think that He came to destroy the law. This is in verse 17.

Matt 5:17 *"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18) For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. 19) Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20) For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."* (NKJV)

Notice also that Christ directly states here that the commandments and obeying them are directly relevant to the Kingdom of God. So that tells us this whole idea that He just abolished them and they're just not relevant for New Covenant Christians is a flawed idea. But see oftentimes people twist verse 17 here and they say, "Christ, He fulfilled the law," and what they mean when they say that is, "He fulfilled it, so it no longer applies to you". In other words, basically He has "loosened something that was previously bound". That is basically the logic of what they're putting across here.

But now let's notice here, because Christ said, "Do not think I came to destroy the law". Now let's look a little deeper into the meaning of the Greek word here that's translated as "destroy," and we'll see it directly contradicts this idea that now the law no longer applies. Because the Greek word here that's translated as "destroy" in English is transliterated into English as "kataluo". It's Strong's # 2647, and the definition I'm going to give to you for this comes from The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament by Spiros Zodhiates. He defines this word as:

"to loose. To loose or unloose what was before bound or fastened...To refresh oneself, to lodge or be a guest....It properly refers to travelers loosening their own burdens or those of their animals when they stayed at a house on a journey....To dissolve, demolish, destroy, or throw down...."

Because see, the whole idea that Christ "fulfilled" the law so you don't have to keep it anymore would be "loosening something that was previously bound". Christ directly says if that's what you think He was doing you got it totally wrong and you're completely confused. Because that's NOT what He did. That's not what you should think.

So, obviously we have a problem if we take these conclusions that are the popular interpretations of Paul -- and we're going to see these interpretations are not what Paul actually said. They're just incorrect interpretations of his words. If we compare that to Christ's own statements, they don't match. Again, people oftentimes say that Christ "fulfilled the law" and that that did away with it. Well, let's just notice what it actually means to "fulfill". Because it actually means He fully obeyed God's law.

But let's just look at the Greek word here. The Greek word here is transliterated into English as "pleroo". It's Strong's # 4137, and again this definition comes from Zodhiates. He defines it as:

"To make full...Particularly, to fill a vessel or hollow place;....Figuratively, to fill, supply abundantly with something, impart richly, imbue with,To fulfill, perform fully..."

See, what Christ was saying was He came to "perform fully" the law. Because just think about it. Christ had to live a life without any sin so that He could be the sacrifice for all of mankind. Now we won't take the time to turn to 1 John 3 verse 4, but if you read that it defines sin as the transgression of God's law. So obviously if Christ has to atone for our sins and we need His sacrifice today as New Covenant Christians, well, you have to have a law for there to be such a thing as sin -- for us to need His sacrifice to atone for it. The logic doesn't work if we don't have a law involved.

But let's notice also over in Matthew 19. Because, again, this idea that today as New Covenant Christians we don't have to keep the commandments. That we just have to accept Christ as our Savior and just be a "nice person". Just show love to our fellow man, and that's all that's required. What did Christ say was required for receiving eternal life? Because we're going to see here Christ was directly asked that question in Matthew 19. We'll start reading in verse 16.

Matt 19:16 *"Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" (NKJV)*

Now pay attention to the question. He's not asking, "What should I do to be a good, observant Jew under the Old Covenant rules?" That's not the question. The question is what do I need to do to obtain eternal life? Well, eternal life is what's offered under the terms of the New Covenant. So, this person is asking to be a New Covenant Christian and to gain eternal life, what am I supposed to do? What's required of me? Let's notice how Christ answers the question in verse 17.

"17) So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." 18) He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 19) 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' " 20) The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?" 21) Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." 22) But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." (NKJV)

Now oftentimes in my experience I see people do some mental gymnastics around these verses here. Because this guy asks Christ "which commandments"? And Christ

starts obviously listing out several of the commandments directly out of Exodus 20. If you read Exodus 20, you will see that God thunders the commandments at Mount Sinai and He gives them ten basic commandments. Of course, He adds other rules as well when Moses goes up on the mountain to get all the other terms. But there were ten basic rules He lays out. People go, "Well, Christ didn't specifically say the Sabbath here, so you can forget about that one." The one commandment that specifically says to "remember". "You can forget that one because Christ didn't specifically state that one again." Well, just think that through. He also didn't say, "You shall have no other gods before Me". He also didn't specifically say, "You shall not bow down to graven images and worship idols". He didn't specifically say that either. So, can New Covenant Christians bow down to Buddha now and worship other false gods and bow before graven images? Is that okay because Christ didn't specifically mention that? Obviously not! Let's keep reading here. Let's pick up in verse 23.

"23) Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24) And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." (NKJV)

See what He's indicating here is -- He says to this rich man, "Give up your riches. You say you keep all the other commandments. Well, give that up for me." And the guy walks away unhappy because he's not willing to cross that line. What's happening here is he's basically violating the first and second commandments. He's making an idol out of his riches and he's holding that up above his obedience to God. He's kind of made a god out of his riches and made an idol out of it. See what Christ is saying is this is a deal breaker because you're breaking the first two commandments. It's obvious what Christ meant when He started listing the commandments. He was telling him the Ten Commandments applied to New Covenant Christians. That is what He was saying.

As I mentioned before, if you take these interpretations of Paul -- of some of the statements that Paul made -- and people come to the conclusion that the Law and the Prophets just don't really apply anymore. What Christ Himself says is, "Don't think that's the case. If you think that, you're totally off base and you have it confused." Well, let's notice that Paul directly says that he agrees with Christ. He believes in obeying the Law and the Prophets as well. So, let's turn over to Acts 24. We'll see here an account in Acts 24 where Paul is basically being accused of being a troublemaker and a heretic. As we're going to see here as we read through this, he's being accused of things he didn't actually say, and he didn't actually do. Not a whole lot has changed in 2,000 years. Because today people twist Paul's words and accuse him of saying things he didn't actually say. If you read through verses 1 through 9, you'll see that Paul's basically being accused of being a troublemaker and a heretic and he's defending himself from these allegations. But let's just pick up here in verse 10.

Acts 24:10 *"Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: "Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself, 11) because you may*

ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. 12) And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city. 13) Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me. 14) But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.” (NKJV)

Notice Paul is not saying, "My mission I've been given is to tell everybody that the Law and the Prophets are just irrelevant. You can just ignore those now. You just need to be a "nice person", and that's all that's required." No, that's not what he says. He's saying, "I believe everything in the Law and the Prophets. Just like Christ said." Christ said, "I'm not doing away with the Law of the Prophets." Paul is here saying, "Yeah, I'm right in line with Christ here. I agree with Him."

So, you can see obviously Paul must be misunderstood and taken out of context. This is why people come to these conclusions and attribute things to Paul that, according to him, he didn't say. And see that is exactly the problem. In fact, the Apostle Peter warned us that this would take place. Turn over to 2 Peter 3. The Apostle Peter basically gives us what I'd like to call the "warning label" when it comes to Paul's epistles. Because obviously Paul wrote the majority of the New Testament. More than any other single writer that we have recorded in the New Testament today.

But you'll oftentimes find that what people do is they basically formulate their whole view of New Covenant Christianity by starting off with some of the statements that Paul made. And we're about to see here that Peter directly tells us that Paul recorded some things that are "hard to understand". Things that at first glance can be totally misunderstood if we don't dig deeper. And see what oftentimes people do is they formulate their concept of New Covenant Christianity starting with these difficult statements that Paul made and then they turn around and try to twist Christ and Peter and John and all the other New Testament writers. They try to twist and interpret them to match their ideas of Paul. That's why they come away with so many contradictions. But let's notice here the warning that Peter gives us. This is 2 Peter 3, and we'll start reading in verse 14.

2 Peter 3:14 *"Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; 15) and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 16) as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.” (NKJV)*

See, Peter here gives us the key to understanding why people who approach Paul's writings like this not only misunderstand Paul but misunderstand the whole New Testament. They misinterpret the whole picture of New Covenant Christianity and what's required of New Covenant Christians. Because again what they do is they start

off looking at Paul's statements, which Peter warns us here he wrote the things more "difficult to understand". Then they misinterpret those statements and then try to twist the rest of the Bible to match it and then come away with very skewed ideas.

Just to share with you a personal example related to this. When I was a teenager growing up in the Church of God. As many of you who have heard my sermons know, I grew up in the Church of God from birth. But probably somewhere in my teenage years, I forget exactly what year this took place. I was probably early to mid-teenage years. I was struggling with a difficult scripture question. It doesn't really matter for our purposes today what the exact question was. But there was an issue that I was scratching my head over and didn't quite know how to solve. So, I go to an Elder in our congregation. He worked a lot with the youth group that I was a part of. And I was asking him for some help. How do I understand this particular issue?

And more than just answering the specific question that I had that day, he taught me a very valuable lesson I think is very relevant to the subject that we're talking about today. He looked at me and he said, "James, when you look at something like this, you always have to keep in mind that the Bible doesn't contradict itself. So, what you always want to do when you look at scriptures that are more difficult to understand. That you're scratching your head wondering 'How do I make sense of this?' Realize that there's always one thing you can count on. Whatever those scriptures are saying, they're not going to contradict the more simple, straightforward, easy-to-understand scriptures. Because the Bible doesn't contradict itself. So, you always start with that. You start with the simple straightforward, easy-to-understand scriptures. And then when you look at the more difficult subjects that are head-scratchers and harder to figure out, you assume right off the bat that whatever they're saying they're not going to contradict the easy, straightforward, simple-to-understand scriptures. That'll keep you going in the right direction."

Well, see what very often happens in popular Christianity today is people start with the more difficult statements that Paul made, and they come to their conclusions of what they think he is saying. They start with the difficult things and then they're already off track. And then they try to interpret all the rest of the Bible. All the other writers that are much more straightforward and easier to understand. And they try to twist them to match what they think Paul was saying. As Peter says, what happens is they wind up twisting all of the scriptures to their own destruction. Because it leads them off into left field and not getting a correct picture of what the Bible is talking about.

To use another popular physical example in our lives today, you've probably seen this throughout your lifetime. It typically happens during an election year. And what I'm referring to is during election years whenever you turn on your TV or go on the internet and you're looking at YouTube or other things of that nature, oftentimes a lot of political ads are coming at you. One particular candidate is trying to tell you why you don't want to vote for his opponent. "You don't want to vote for that other guy because that other guy, he's an awful person. And let me show you why he's an awful person." Then they'll play a short video clip or a sound bite of the other individual talking. They say, "Well

look what he said. He's an awful guy. You wouldn't want to vote for him." And sometimes when they play a clip like that, it might be a very accurate representation of what that person said about a particular subject. But there's also a decent amount of the time where what they're playing to you and trying to lead you to believe that this other individual said is not really an accurate representation of what that person said.

Because what they've done is they've taken a sound-bite clip of this person, but they've cut it out of the context in which it was actually said. And sometimes they go even farther than that. They basically present it to you as if it was said in a totally different context than what it actually was. And then you come away with a very skewed idea of what this person (this particular opposing candidate that their addressing) of what that individual actually said, and what they really think about the subject that's being presented.

What we're going to see here as we go through this series is oftentimes that's what happens with the Apostle Paul. They'll take statements that he made, and again it's similar to watching a political ad where you see the individual. Well, you know it's the person they're talking about because you see them on the screen and you hear them talking, and that's their voice. You see them saying these words. But again, because they cut out the context and they framed it in a way that wasn't what that person was trying to say, you come away with a very skewed version of what they were really saying. If not the exact opposite of what the person was trying to say. And see this oftentimes happens with the Apostle Paul.

To give you an example of that, turn over to the book of Colossians. Because the book of Colossians gives us a very good example of this very concept. Because see in the book of Colossians -- we're not going to take the time to read through the whole book, but the book is only about four chapters. But if you read through this book, it's obvious as you read through it that Paul wrote this letter addressing some specific problems that were troubling the Church at Colossae. And if you look deeper into the subject -- what scholars have to say about this and such -- you'll see a lot of debate about what they refer to as the "Colossian controversy" or the debate over what the "Colossian heresy" was. And what they're referring to there is it's obvious from the way that Paul writes this that there were issues of heresy and there were people that were troubling the congregation in Colossae. But Paul never specifically comes out and identifies who the "bad guys" are. In other words, he doesn't name specific individuals that were stirring up this trouble. And he doesn't really identify a particular source or a particular group or anything as to who it is.

So, this has resulted in debating back and forth as to exactly who is the set of "bad guys" you might say that are causing the issues that Paul is addressing. However, one of the theories that really skews the interpretation of the book of Colossians is the belief that the primary issue that Paul was addressing here was these hardline "old timers" that are just hanging on to all these Old Covenant laws and rules. And they don't realize that you can just ignore all of that. And now you just accept Christ as your savior and just be a "nice person". And those hardliners, well, they're causing trouble for the people

that know that now all you need to do is accept Christ and just be a loving, “nice person”. And that's the source of the problem. Well, if you frame it like that, you can understand how you would interpret Paul's comments in that direction.

But just to show you how that framing is oftentimes placed on this subject. If you have a New King James translation of the Bible, like I do, you're probably familiar with the fact that the New King James -- one of the things that I honestly like about it and why I use it is oftentimes they'll break down a chapter with subheadings. It just breaks down different subjects. Now, those subheadings are just a translator choice. That's not part of the inspired record of the Bible. These are just things that they put in there trying to be helpful. However, if you look at the subheading that they put in between verses 10 and 11 of Colossians 2, it states “Not Legalism but Christ”. You see, what they're doing is they're framing what's being addressed in chapter 2 here in the context of what I just explained. It's the idea that these hardline old timers are still hanging on to these Old Covenant rules. And they're causing trouble for the people that know that they can ignore all of this. That's how they're framing it. But let's keep in mind here that that's not inspired words that Paul put in there.

Let's just look specifically at what Paul stated and what he identifies as the problem. And then look at all the other indicators or clues he gives us to identify the problem. What I want you to see here is it all points in a different direction. But to start off with here, let's look at verse 8. Because this is probably the most helpful verse when it comes to identifying the problem here.

Col 2:8 *“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”* (NKJV)

Notice here, he starts off framing this as “philosophy” is the problem. Now, let's dig a little deeper into that. Let me give you the definition for the Greek word that's translated here as “philosophy” in English. The Greek word is transliterated into English as “philosophia”. It's Strong's # 5385. And again, this definition comes from Zodhiates. The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament. And he defines it as:

“Love of wisdom, philosophy, which came to mean the doctrine or tenets of the heathen or Gentile philosophers....The modern definition of the word must not be read into its use in the Bible. Philosophy, as the study of reality, knowledge, and values, is a profitable and biblically supported endeavor. However, this is not the meaning of the word in Scripture. There it carries a negative connotation and refers to quasi-religious doctrines and speculations...all of which are irreconcilable with the Christian faith.”

Notice here from Paul's own words. The primary problem, it's not hardline Christians that are hanging on to those Old Covenant rules. We're talking about pagan philosophies from the world outside of the Church is what he's talking about. The reason I mention that is, if we just jump down to verse 16 and read the rest of the chapter here,

we'll see a number of things that Paul states about this philosophy that's troubling them. Now in verses 16 and 17, you'll see here that he does make reference to the Sabbath and the Holy Days. But we're going to see here in a few minutes, there's a translation error in this particular sentence. And it really skews what he's actually trying to say here. But at this point, just take note of the fact that that brief reference to the Sabbath and the Holy Days is the only thing in this list that we're going to read through that in any way points to rules and laws of the Old Testament. There's nothing else here that we can connect with that. But again, let's pick up here in verse 16.

Col 2:16 *"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 17) which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."* (NKJV)

Now, as I mentioned, we're going to come back to this here in a few minutes and see that there's a translation error in verse 17 that really gives us a skewed idea of what he's actually saying here. But again, that sentence there and the references to the Sabbath, new moons and the festivals, the annual Holy Days. This is the only thing that we can connect with the Old Covenant laws. So, let's continue reading.

"18) Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, 19) and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God. 20) Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— 21) "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," 22) which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? 23) These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh." (NKJV)

Now notice after verse 17, nothing that we read there, none of the rest of this has any connection with Old Covenant laws. Worship of angels and this neglect of the body and these regulations of "don't touch, don't taste, don't handle". None of this has anything to do with laws in the Old Covenant. We can't make any connections there. So, the only connection that we can try to make with Old Covenant laws and rules is again the references to the Sabbath and Holy Days.

But now let's look back at those two verses there and let's notice that there's a translation error in verse 17. And this is what causes all the confusion and totally skews what he's talking about here. Now pick up again in verse 16.

Col 2:16 *"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 17) which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."* (NKJV)

Now I'm reading from a New King James translation here and you can see that the way this is worded, what it appears like he's saying is he's comparing the Sabbath and the Holy Days to Christ. It sounds like he's making a contrast between them. And so, the way that's typically interpreted is people go, "Well, the Sabbath and the Holy Days, they were just a "shadow" that pointed to Christ and now you have the real thing. You have Christ. So, you can ignore the Sabbath and the Holy Days." Well, then they say, "Okay, well, people were being judged as a result of this. Well, this must be those old time hardliners that just don't want to give up the Sabbath and the Holy Days and they're judging the people that understand that they can ignore them." And that's how the whole subject is framed. But now let's notice here, the latter part of verse 17.

"17)...but the substance is of Christ." (NKJV)

Now "the substance is of Christ". You have five words there. Now, if you look at this in Greek, there's just two words. It's the word "soma", which is normally translated as "body" in English. And then you have "Christos", which is the Greek word for Christ. In fact, in my New King James here, right next to "substance", there's a little number 1 there. And if you look in the margin it says "literally body". They're acknowledging that the Greek word there is normally translated as "body" not "substance". Now, just think about that. Body Christ -- the body of Christ. There are maybe one or two references where that's literally referring to Christ's body as an individual. But the phrase "body of Christ" is normally not a statement that refers to Christ as an individual. It's a figurative reference to the Church, to the collective body of believers. Those who've been converted and received the Holy Spirit and have truly accepted Christ as their savior and are living a life of obedience to Him. That's who it's referring to here.

And just to see that, keep your finger here in Colossians because we're going to come right back, but just turn over to 1 Corinthians 12. What I want you to see is a couple of examples where the Bible uses the same two Greek words together (soma and Christos), but it's not translated the way that we just read it there in Colossians. This is in 1 Corinthians 12. We'll start reading in verse 27.

1 Cor 12:27 *"Now you are the body of Christ,..." (NKJV)*

That's "soma Christos".

"...and members individually. 28) And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues." (NKJV)

Now you can see here, when you read through verse 28, it's very obvious when he says "body of Christ" what he's referring to. He's referring to the Church. It's a figurative reference. But also take note of the fact of how he listed out the leadership offices that God has established to direct and teach and guide this collective body. Because that's going to become relevant here in a second as well. So, now turn over to Ephesians 4. We'll see another similar reference in verse 11.

Eph 4:11 *“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12) for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...”* (NKJV)

The “soma Christos”. And notice here, again, it's very obvious from the way that this is framed that “body of Christ” is not referring to Christ as an individual. It's a figurative reference to the Church is what it's referring to. But again, notice also how it listed the leadership. Those that were established as teachers and guiders for this collective body, because that's going to become relevant here in a second as well. So, now let's turn back over to Colossians 2 and unpack what this sentence is actually saying here. Let's start back again in verse 16.

Col 2:16 *“So let no one judge you...”* (NKJV)

Notice it starts off referring to someone that's judging them. Remember how Paul framed this issue in verse 8. Pagan philosophy was the problem. This is the pagan philosophers who were judging them. And we're going to see it's contrasting them with the “body of Christ” is what we're going to see here. But just continue reading.

“...in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 17) which are a shadow of things to come, but...” (NKJV)

And again, if we just translated this consistent with how “soma Christos” is normally translated, we'd have “but the body of Christ”. See, it's not contrasting the Sabbath and the Holy Days with Christ as an individual saying, “Well, you don't need the Sabbath and the Holy Days because they were just a shadow that pointed to Christ.” That's not what he's saying at all. He's contrasting the pagan philosophers that they were allowing to judge them. As he says later in this chapter, “You're submitting yourselves to these regulations that these philosophers are putting upon you.” Well, they were also judging the people in regards to how they were approaching the Sabbath and the Holy Days. And he's saying, “Ignore those pagan philosophers. You should be looking to the “body of Christ”. To the Church and the leadership of the Church. That's who you should be looking to in matters pertaining to the Holy Days.”

The statement about a “shadow” is oftentimes misunderstood as well. Because again, if you frame the issue as I said -- the way it's typically translated in English here, where it makes it sound like he's contrasting the Sabbath and the Holy Days with Christ. Well, then you say, “Well, these are a shadow. They were just a shadow that pointed to Christ and now Christ has come and you can forget the Sabbath and the Holy Days.” That's the typical interpretation of that. But notice that that's not the contrast being made here.

Also notice how the sentence is laid out here, “which are a shadow of things to come”. It's not that they were a shadow that just pointed to Christ and now you have Christ and you don't need the Sabbath and the Holy Days anymore. No, it's, they “are a shadow” because it's referring to foreshadowing. In other words, what he's trying to say here is the Holy Days reveal to us the plan of God. They basically lay out the major steps in the

plan of salvation for mankind. In fact, particularly when it comes to the fall Holy Days, which picture how God's going to work with the rest of mankind who will be called after the return of Christ. They literally foreshadow future events.

And just to see a quick example of this, turn over to John 7. We'll see an announcement here that Christ made on the Eighth Day. Now, if you look at the Holy Days laid out in Leviticus 23, in the fall you have the Feast of Tabernacles and it's a seven day festival. Well, the Eighth Day is a one day festival, but it's day eight of the sequence. That's why it's referred to as "last day". If you're counting from one to eight, number eight is obviously the "last" one. And if you'll just start reading here in verse 37, you'll see what I'm referring to here.

John 7:37 *"On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. 38) He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' 39) But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."* (NKJV)

See, Christ here is making this announcement, and He specifically chooses the Eighth Day to do it. Because what He's indicating here is the Eighth Day foreshadows -- it points forward to the time in the future when the Holy Spirit is going to be made available to all mankind. To all those who are not called as Firstfruits and had their opportunity for salvation prior to the return of Christ. Well, this is going to happen in the future. And the Eighth Day is what pictures that. See, that's the whole point of the Holy Days. Again, they foreshadow. They lay out for us the major steps of the plan of salvation.

If you're not familiar with the meaning of all the Holy Days, if you look on my website -- it's SearchingTheScriptures.org. If you're watching this on YouTube, just look right below this video. There will be a link you can just click on. It will take you straight there. But the reason I mentioned it is because I have a whole series of study papers that explain the meaning of all of God's Holy Days, starting with Passover all the way through the Eighth Day. It explains it all in detail.

But just to tie this back into what we read there in verse 16 and 17 of Colossians 2, what that sentence is actually saying is it's not a contrast between the Sabbath and the Holy Days and Christ as an individual. It's a contrast between the pagan philosophers that the Church at Colossae were allowing themselves to be judged by. As Paul said, "You're submitting yourselves to their regulations and the issues that they're pushing upon you, you should ignore them," and it's contrasting those people with the leadership of the Church of God. And he's pointing out here, "The reason you should ignore these philosophers -- the Holy Days, they foreshadow. They teach you the plan of salvation for mankind. Well, these pagan philosophers don't know anything about that. You should ignore them. They're clueless about what this means. You should be looking to the Church of God and to the leadership of the Church for direction in these matters."

And see, the reason I mention all of this, Paul has made a number of statements that are oftentimes misinterpreted to do away with the law of God. Well, if you bring up the subject of the Holy Days, one of the first things people will typically do if they've bought into these misinterpretations of Paul's statements is they immediately turn to Colossians 2 and say, "See, we don't have to keep the Holy Days. Just don't judge. Just "be nice" and we can ignore the Sabbath and the Holy Days." Well, that's the exact opposite of what Paul was saying.

Because if we look at Paul's own statements in some of his other letters, he's directly teaching people to keep the Holy Days. And to see that, turn over to 1 Corinthians 5. We'll notice here a couple of examples in his first letter to the Corinthians where he's obviously teaching the Church in Corinth to keep the Holy Days and teaching them the spiritual meaning of the Holy Days. And this is in 1 Corinthians 5. Now we're going to skip over the first couple of verses of this chapter, but just to summarize what this is addressing, one of the problems that Paul was addressing in this letter was there was a guy attending the congregation there in Corinth who was actively involved in an adulterous relationship with his stepmother and the congregation knew about it. In fact, they were proud of themselves for how "tolerant" they were.

You oftentimes see that attitude today in people who are "open-minded" and "accepting". And they're not just being accepting of people having personal faults. They're "accepting" of just blatant debauchery and sin. Well, that's what was happening here. This guy was involved in this behavior, and the rest of the congregation were taking this approach of, "We should just be "loving" and "accepting" and welcoming of him." and Paul said, "No, this is completely unacceptable. This guy is involved in debauchery that Gentiles typically don't accept. You should disfellowship this guy and keep him out of the congregation until he's willing to repent."

But after making statements about this, we pick up here in verse 6. And let's just notice how Paul ties this whole situation into keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is one of the Holy Days laid out in Leviticus 23. This is starting in verse 6.

1 Cor 5:6 *"Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7) Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. 8) Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."* (NKJV)

Notice his comment, "Therefore, let us keep the feast." He's not telling them all those Holy Days in Leviticus 23 were just shadows that pointed to Christ, and you can ignore those. You just need to be a "nice person". That's not what he's saying. He said, "Therefore, let us keep the feast." We need to be observing it, but we also need to be appreciating the deeper spiritual meaning of it. And what I'm getting at here is if you read through Exodus 13, to Old Covenant Israel their understanding of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was it was just a memorial remembering that God freed them from

slavery in Egypt and this was their journey out of slavery. Well, he's basically making an analogy here that Egypt is like a type of sin and leaven is like a type of sin. So, he's saying what we're doing here, keeping this festival is a picture of repentance. It's about repentance and putting away sin and choosing to follow righteousness in your life.

Because as I mentioned before, the Holy Days foreshadow the plan of God. They lay out the major steps in God's plan of salvation for mankind. But you can see here, Paul is directly teaching this to a Gentile congregation. So, obviously Paul is not taking the viewpoint that all of this has been done away with, and we can ignore it. No, this is consistent with what he said in Acts 24. He believes all things in the Law and the Prophets. But just turn over to 1 Corinthians 11, and we'll see another example where Paul is talking about how he taught the Church in Corinth to keep the New Covenant Passover. This is in 1 Corinthians 11, verse 23.

1 Cor 11:23 *“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24) and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” 25) In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” 26) For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes. 27) Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28) But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29) For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. 30) For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.” (NKJV)*

Notice here, he starts off directly quoting Christ's own words in the Gospels when He's instituting the New Covenant Passover. Because if you read through those accounts, Christ is referring to “eating the Passover” with them. Because a Passover by definition is a sacrifice. The bread and the wine symbolically represent Christ. Christ is our Passover, as Paul stated in chapter 5. So, he's basically teaching them to keep the New Covenant Passover. Because the Holy Days have spiritual meanings for the Church.

Oftentimes, in ancient Israel there were physical meanings for the Holy Days in their journey to the Promised Land, and they were tied to that. Well, for the New Covenant Church, they have deeper spiritual meanings. So, they are not abolished at all. And as you can see here, Paul is teaching them to continue keeping this. He's saying, "You need to be doing this with a proper attitude. With proper reverence and understanding of what all of this is about and with proper respect for it. If you're not doing that, you're bringing judgment upon yourself." That is what he's saying. All of this paints a picture quite the exact opposite of the idea that Paul was just telling everybody they can ignore the Holy Days because they're just empty shadows. No, Paul taught the exact opposite.

It's just like Peter said, Paul wrote some things "hard to understand" that people twist to their own destruction. And that's what happens here. Because again, if you take the perspective that we can just ignore the Holy Days because they're all done away with. The Holy Days are the teaching tool we have for understanding how the plan of salvation for mankind plays out. And of course, if you ignore those days and don't keep them and don't study them, you are not going to understand the meanings they are intended to teach us.

And again, one of the points that Peter made in saying that as well is oftentimes these are individuals that are just "untaught". And that's not an insult to anybody. It's not saying that they did something bad. Tying back to the analogy I used earlier, I talked about political ads where they take something out of context. You see the individual on the video and hear their voice. But you're given a very skewed, false idea of what the person said. Well, there are lots of people who will watch an ad like that and just believe what's presented to them. They don't look any further. They don't research the issue to see if that person really said that. Or if that is really their position on that subject or if they have been misled.

Well, there are lots of people today that follow popular Christianity. They've just been misled. They weren't trying to do anything bad or evil. They just heard people present this. They read Paul's words in the Bible and didn't realize that the way it was framed and presented to them was a totally skewed version of what Paul was really saying. They're like the person who watched the political ad going, "Well, I know the guy said it. I saw him on the video. I saw his face. I heard his voice. I know that's him." Yeah, but what he was really saying and what you were told he meant weren't exactly the same thing. And see, that's what's happened with the Apostle Paul, and that's the key that we have to understand in looking at some of these statements.

As I mentioned before, oftentimes when people think that the commandments have been done away with, they oftentimes specifically focus on the weekly Sabbath. They take the fourth commandment -- the one that specifically says remember -- and they say, "Well, you can forget that one." Let's notice that Paul's regular behavior was keeping the Sabbath. He wasn't against that either. Let's turn over to Acts 17 and we'll start reading here in verse 1. Let's just notice here that it tells us Paul's regular behavior was keeping the weekly Sabbath. And this is not just his behavior before he was called. This is his regular habit while he's an Apostle representing Christ and preaching New Covenant Christianity. He was keeping the weekly Sabbath. This is Acts 17 in verse 1.

Acts 17:1 *"Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2) Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3) explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.' 4) And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas."* (NKJV)

Notice, here's Paul functioning as an Apostle, preaching Christ, and what is he doing? He's keeping the Sabbath. And it tells us that that's his regular behavior. Now, I won't take the time to go through all the numerous examples you can find in the book of Acts about this. But notice here it says this was his normal behavior. That's because if you do a study on this and go through the book of Acts, you'll find numerous examples of Paul keeping the Sabbath. He's preaching the gospel on the Sabbath. Because Paul obeyed the fourth commandment. As he said, "I believe all things in the Law and the Prophets." The weekly Sabbath, it's one of the commandments. It's part of the ten that Christ Himself said, "If you want to make it into eternal life, obey the commandments." Well, Paul and Christ agreed with each other.

So now let's turn back over to Colossians 2 and let's now look at this a little deeper to see what exactly was it that Christ "nailed to the cross". Because we know from what we read earlier, Christ obviously nailed something to the cross because Paul directly told us that. But let's dig a little deeper to make sure we understand what that is. Because again, if we conclude that He abolished God's law and nailed it to the cross, well, that's going to directly contradict Christ's own statements. So, obviously there has to be an interpretation of this that's going to bring about Christ and Paul being in agreement with one another. Because if they're not and we had to reject one, it would have to be Paul that we would have to reject, wouldn't it?

Now, again, I'm not suggesting that they were in contradiction with each other. I'm just demonstrating the logic that Christ is a God being who came to earth to be the savior of mankind. And He said He's not doing away with the law. So again, if Paul were saying that He did away with the law, we'd have a problem. So, let's look at this a little more deeply here. Let's pick up here in Colossians 2 in verse 13.

Col 2:13 *"And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses," (NKJV)*

Now, notice that this is in the context of forgiving your sins and bringing life. Bringing us from being dead to being alive. And he's referring to this spiritually. We're going to see here that this is really about atoning for our sins and enabling the opportunity for eternal life. But then just keep reading in verse 14.

"14) having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." (NKJV)

Well, see, the key here is understanding what does it mean by the "handwriting of requirements"? Now, in my New King James, right next to "handwriting of requirements", there's a little 1. If you look down in the margin it says, "certificate of debt". In other words, a "certificate of debt" is what it's referring to. In fact, if you read

verse 14 from the New International Version, it matches what I just read here from the margin of the New King James.

“14) having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.” (NIV)

See, it's “the charge of legal indebtedness” that he's referring to nailing to the cross. It's not God's law in general. Again, that would contradict Christ's own statements. So, what does he mean by “the charge of our legal indebtedness”? Well, it's a concept that Paul himself refers to as “the wages of sin”. It's the natural indebtedness that comes as a natural result of sin. Turn over to Romans 6, and we'll see what this is referring to. This is Romans 6 and verse 23.

Rom 6:23 *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (NKJV)*

See, sin requires the death penalty. And see, that's why Christ had to die for us to enable eternal life. Because the death penalty automatically is attached to sin. Well, we've all sinned. Every human being that's ever lived has fallen short of the glory of God and sinned. Regardless of how righteous we've attempted to live in our lives, all of us have slipped up and sinned. So, we all deserve the death penalty. What he's saying is that indebtedness to the death penalty, that's what Christ nailed to the cross. He took that away, enabling us to have life. Basically, it's tying verse 14 right into verse 13, where it talks about Him wiping out our trespasses. In other words, atoning for our sins.

You see, if we look at interpreting his words like that, let's notice that this directly matches what Christ taught, rather than contradicting it. So, turn over to Matthew 26. This is Matthew 26 and verse 26. This is basically the account where Christ is instituting the New Covenant Passover. Just like what Paul was teaching in 1 Corinthians 11 for the Church in Corinth to continue doing.

Matt 26:26 *“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” 27) Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. 28) For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” (NKJV)*

So, He's saying that His death, actually dying and facing the death penalty for mankind, atoned for the sins of mankind. So, when He was nailed to the cross and then He died as a result, what He figuratively nailed to the cross was the death penalty. The indebtedness that we all have as a result of having sinned. And see, this opened up the opportunity for life. Just as Colossians 2 was saying there. Just turn over to John 3 and we'll see once again, this matches Christ's own teachings and His own statements rather than directly contradicting it. This is John 3 and verse 16.

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17) For God*

did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” (NKJV)

See, His death atoned for the sins of mankind. Taking away our indebtedness to the death penalty and then enabling the opportunity for life. To have eternal life. Again, what did Christ Himself say? If you want to receive eternal life, what do you have to do? Keep the commandments. See, Christ didn't say that He nailed the law to the cross and it's all taken away and now you can just ignore it and just be a “nice person”. That's the exact opposite of what Christ taught.

As I've mentioned throughout this sermon, this popular idea that God's law has been done away with, and that now New Covenant Christians are not required to obey and to follow God's law comes from misinterpretations of statements made by the Apostle Paul. Now we've only scratched the surface of some of this today. As I mentioned, this is going to be more than one sermon. Which is why I called this sermon part 1. Well, next time in part 2, we're going to look specifically at what Paul meant by the “curse of the law”. Because as we saw when we started today, Paul does make that statement in Galatians 3. But we're going to look more deeply into that subject to realize what did he actually mean by that? So, for now we'll end at this point, and I'll just say tune in next time for part 2 and we'll look at what Paul actually meant when he referred to the “curse of the law”.