

Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brethren:

Greetings from deep in the heart of the Texas. Brethren, we thank you for being a part of this great work. Remember, we are the called of God, a royal priesthood, the peculiar to this world, the very *elect of God—if we endure rebuke and chastening*.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent (Revelation 3:19).

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne (verse 21).

But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world (1 Corinthians 11:32).

Stand firm. We must all be proven.

Do Not Be Deceived

Brethren, there is so much deception in the world today. It is human nature to try and make the other person think he or she is getting the best, or the most, of every deal; and religion is certainly no exception. I heard a comment from Paul Harvey once, that if you want a watered-down version of the Bible just buy the latest translation, and how true it is.

I so much look forward to the future when the so-called great teachers of religion can no longer teach this world that the laws God gave Moses simply have no place in Christianity—that just "faith" in Christ is all one needs to be saved.

One would think—even without the Holy Spirit—those scholarly individuals, who have the ability to translate or paraphrase a Bible, could discern (here a little and there a little) that

the Apostle Paul was teaching against the necessity of circumcision and sacrificial laws, as well as all the burdensome traditions the Jewish priests had added.

Note Galatians 3:17–19, 24:

And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

Romans 6:14 is often used to prove that Paul was teaching that we are no longer under any law, but grace—faith is all one needs. This should read, "we are no longer under the penalty of the law, but under grace." Paul goes on to ask in verse 15, "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid."

How can one sin if there is no law to transgress? I heard a Sunday morning talk show host say to a young girl who was interested in religion, "I don't have to be good, I have Jesus; I am under grace; I don't need to be good." These few words planted deception in her young mind and opened the door for human nature to begin reasoning. Now most people would stop right there and never search the Scripture, because his statement makes it so easy to be saved—*just have faith in Jesus and love thy neighbor*.

Notice, as you read below the introduction to the book of Galatians from the *Good News Bible, Today's English Version*—how the writer sets the stage for the reader to begin believing that Paul was doing away with the law—preaching that the fundamental eternal laws given to Moses by the very hand of God, simply have no place in Christian living. In other words, just faith and faith alone.

As the good news about Jesus began to be preached and welcomed among people who were not Jews, the question arose as to whether a person must obey the law of Moses in order to be a true Christian. Paul had argued that this was not necessary—that in fact, the only sound basis for life in Christ was faith, by which all are put right with God. But among the churches of Galatia, a Roman province in Asia Minor, there had come people who opposed Paul and claimed that one must also observe the law of Moses in order to be right with God.

Paul's letter to the Galatians was written in order to bring back to true faith and practice those people who were being misled by this false teaching. Paul begins by defending his right to be called an apostle of Jesus Christ. He insists that his call to be an apostle came from God, not from any human authority, and that his mission was especially to the non-Jews. Then he develops the argument that it is by faith alone that people are put right with God. In the concluding chapters Paul shows that Christian conduct flows naturally from the love that results from faith in Christ.

We agree one must have faith, but does faith in Christ abolish God's laws? *Absolutely not!* Let us go a step or two further into Paul's letters to the churches and see if faith and faith alone is what Paul was teaching during his ministry. The book of Galatians can be confusing. For instance:

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified (Galatians 2:16).

Yes, our sins are forgiven us by the blood of Christ, that is, grace—undeserved pardon. The blood of Christ removes the *penalty* of the law from us, but never does away with the law.

Did Paul Teach and Keep God's Ten Commandments?

Paul goes on to say in Galatians 5:19–21:

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

Here Paul is listing numerous infractions of the commandments (or the law) which Christ taught him, and told him to go and teach others. Paul said breaking these commandments will keep us out of the Kingdom. Sounds like a contradiction to Galatians 2:16 above, does it not? We assure you, it is not. Paul is teaching us that it is not our good works that save us, it is the blood of Christ. If we have faith in Christ we will strive to walk even as He walked; and He broke none of the Father's commandments.

Paul said:

For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified (Romans 2:13).

And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses [the law, the statutes, and the judgments are found in Deuteronomy], and out of the prophets, from morning till evening (Acts 28:23).

The law is found in Exodus 20:1–17. Was Paul teaching and keeping these laws? Notice what Paul was teaching the Corinthians:

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9–10).

Keep in mind, "*sin is the transgression of the law*" (1 John 3:4).

This commentator states that love flows naturally if one has faith in Christ. But what must one do to exercise true faith in Christ? Let the Scriptures answer that:

If you love me, keep my commandments. . . . He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him (John 14:15, 21).

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love (John 15:10).

And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy [Spirit], whom God hath given to them that *OBEY* him (Acts 5:32) [emphasis mine].

The Apostle John in Revelation 24:14–15, seems to agree with Paul:

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

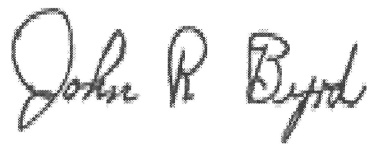
As you can see, I have used just a few of the most simple and easy-to-understand verses to point out the simplicity of Christ, which Paul and his colleagues were teaching. Most of you have read these verses so many times, you may even know them by heart. But, we know very well God has blinded this world from understanding that simplicity.

He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them (John 12:40).

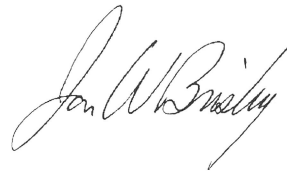
Even knowing the above, I cannot help but believe some, and perhaps most, of these intellectuals writing commentaries are being far less than honest.

Yes, brethren, I know you are also looking forward to that wonderful world tomorrow when we will no longer have to be concerned with such deception. Thank you for holding on to the faith once delivered.

Until next time, your servant,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John R. Byrd".

John R. Byrd

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jon W. Brisby".

Jon W. Brisby