

Yeshua MISHPACHAH

A NEWSLETTER TO THE FAMILY OF JESUS FROM RESTORATION MINISTRIES

The Hebraic family is not simply an individual or private matter. Rather, it is an institution in which the whole community has a stake. Thus, the Hebrew word "mishpachah," meaning family, not only refers to parents and children, but to the whole extended family worldwide in the body of "Yeshua"—our Jesus.

Dear Friends,

In 1970 Sue and I were youth directors in a congregation near San Diego, Cal. One of the teens came up with an idea to have the group raise some money to bring the Mexican kids who lived in the slums of Tijuana to Disney-land. It seemed like a good idea and we went about doing projects to raise funds.

Tortilla maker or Disneyland?

When we had amassed some funds, one kid's father asked if he could speak to the group about the purpose of our project:

"You kids think you're doing right by raising money to bring kids from Tijuana to Disneyland. How do you think they'll *really* feel about what you're doing? Yes, they may enjoy their visit, but when it's all over they'll *hate* you—because what you're really doing is showing them the *hopelessness of their own lives*."

You have access to Disneyland because you happened to be born in this country. Those kids know they *can't* go there whenever they want, and your taking them to Disneyland only makes them realize all the more what privileges they *don't* have. You'll finish your day at Disneyland thinking you've done a great thing and you'll even have pictures to prove it. But as the kids back in the slum remember that day, they'll only end up despising you because they'll know that *you're* the "haves" and *they're* the "have nots".

As the youth group talked, they realized that that father was right. He went on to recommend that we instead buy some tortilla-making machines and give them to the kids. That way they could earn their own money and help lift themselves out of their poverty. We all concluded that his idea was a better one, which proved correct.

Over the years the choice between Disneyland and the tortilla maker has come to represent for us the choices most Christians face. One—the Disneyland path—seems correct, feels good, and is the choice most people would make. The other path, the tortilla maker, offers little recognition but is the path God would have us choose. It's also the choice Jesus addresses when He says:

*"Go in through the **narrow gate**; for the gate that leads to destruction is wide and the road broad, and many travel it; but it is a **narrow gate** and a **hard road** that leads to life, and **only a few** find it"* (Matt. 7:13,14).

Have you ever asked yourself:

"What is the narrow road and the narrow gate?"

"Am I heading for the narrow gate on the narrow road?"

"How would I know if I were?"

Before we get to the Judgment Throne we better have answers to these questions!

Promoting Trust-grounded Obedience Among God's People

One way of describing Paul's ministry is that he promoted **trust-grounded obedience**. Paul's letters tell us how to get on the narrow road and stay there. It appears precariously narrow to those on the wide road. But those who understand what trust-grounded obedience means know that the *Holy Spirit* enables them to reach the narrow gate. In fact, I contend that Paul's letters can only be understood as God intended by those who are heading for the *narrow gate on the narrow road*—the way of **trust-grounded obedience**. In other words, the people heading for the narrow gate can clearly see the beauty of buying tortilla makers rather than taking people to Disneyland! One has long-lasting potential; the other, a momentary high.

For centuries people on the broad road have twisted Paul's writings. Peter was aware of the grumbling broad-road walkers who criticized Paul's words: "*Indeed, [Paul] speaks about these things in all his letters. They contain some things that are hard to understand, things which [people who do not understand God's Word] and the unstable distort to their own destruction, as they do other Scriptures*" (2Pet. 3:16).

But you might object, "Not me! I'm in a Bible-believing church!" or, "I follow the teaching of [a noted TV evangelist or esteemed writer or

noted conference speaker].² petuate anti-Semitism by nullifying the invaluable worth of the Older Testament for understanding God, His holiness, and His way of daily life for us. What immeasurable loss to us! When church leaders cursed the Jews for killing Jesus [and prayers cursing Jews were pronounced in some Christian circles until only recently], the curse of a false dichotomy between law and grace infected the whole body. As a result of the centuries of this perversion, today's church jargon for "law" means legalism, while "grace" means license to sin.

Don't make the mistake of hoping the wisdom and knowledge of others will keep you on the narrow path. *Personally* understanding the *Scriptures* and the *power of God* are the trust-grounded combination that will enable you to walk the narrow road. Unless you immerse yourself in His Word and yield your very being to His Spirit, you will invariably walk the broad road to destruction.

“Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures” (Rom. 1:1,2).

Paul begins his letter to the Romans by reminding the reader that he is Christ's servant sent forth to share the *true gospel*. Both this letter and the one to the Galatians have everything to do with the true gospel of the narrow road. Yet, to many misguided believers, the primary issue of Paul's letters to the Romans and to the Galatians is the supposed dichotomy between "the law" and grace. In fact, both letters deal with the true gospel and warn against the *legalistic perversion* of the broad road. The early followers of Jesus who were heading for the narrow gate never perceived any dichotomy between law and grace.

But we are impacted by this kind of thinking today because of the anti-Semitism that over the centuries has influenced the Church. Bible translations or teachings that falsely paint a picture that we must choose between keeping God's laws or living in grace per-

petuate anti-Semitism by nullifying the invaluable worth of the Older Testament for understanding God, His holiness, and His way of daily life for us. What immeasurable loss to us! When church leaders cursed the Jews for killing Jesus [and prayers cursing Jews were pronounced in some Christian circles until only recently], the curse of a false dichotomy between law and grace infected the whole body. As a result of the centuries of this perversion, today's church jargon for "law" means legalism, while "grace" means license to sin.

Apperception—The Way Back to the Hebraic Foundations

Let's apperceive what Paul is really addressing to the Romans and Galatians. [To *apperceive* is to return to the original framework of understanding that God gave the scripture author as he wrote. Only by apperceiving can you fully grasp the background and intent of particular verses and passages.]

Paul defines the foundational issues of walking the narrow road *in union* with Jesus the Messiah. Our Hebraic forefather, Abraham, shared in this *union with God*. What a tragic testimony that this union with God was forfeited by all but a remnant of Jewish people [see Rom. 11:5]. In the absence of union with God, many Jews practiced a legalistic perversion of Torah—*attempting to gain spiritual merit by maintaining correct behavior*.

This same perversion keeps many Christians today from the very *union with our Lord* which the Bible promises. They are walking 'the Disneyland Road' and don't realize it, for their underlying thought patterns are:

- "Show me the path of least suffering and personal cost so I can decide how I should live as a Christian."

- "I need to do things so that I can earn God's love."
- "I'm a better Christian than other people because I do more for God."
- "Everyone else I know is doing it, so it must be right."

Another indicator of people on the broad road is their habitual mentioning of their religious activities. Their spiritual prestige in the eyes of others is very important to them. These people herald their 40-day fasts and the concerts of prayer or prophecy seminars they attend. But the real test is: Do they do the things only the Father in heaven sees in secret? [See Matt. 6:4,6,18.]

A brief look at Romans and Galatians reveals several foundational, *interwoven* truths:

1. God's path of righteousness.
2. Living in union with Christ.
3. Being children of our father Abraham
4. Receiving the promise of Abraham.
5. Living in trust-grounded obedience.
6. Depending on the trust-based power of the Holy Spirit.
7. The purpose of Torah to reveal sin.
8. The wide road of legalistic perversion of Torah.

The following quotes or paraphrases come primarily from the *Complete Jewish Bible* by David H. Stern. This translation is helpful in the Restoration because it emphasizes the verb—the action, whether it's one-time or ongoing—rather than the noun or subject as most English translations do. But first, let's define some concepts:

- 1) *Torah*: God's righteous teachings; also called the law or the Pentateuch.
- 2) The Narrow Road
 - Trust: the entry on the road lead-

- ing to the narrow gate.
- Righteous teachings: the stepping stones on the narrow road.
- Holy Spirit: our Empowerment to walk the narrow road.
- Jesus: our Companion along the journey, and our goal.

Through the trust we share, we might encourage one another on the journey to heaven

Paul opens his letter to the Romans by enunciating the true gospel and the pertinent issues related to living it out. Sadly, the gospel he shared appears almost non-existent in the US today:

*“I am not ashamed of the gospel, since it is God’s **powerful means** of bringing salvation to every-one who **keeps on trusting**... For in it is revealed how God makes people **righteous** in His sight; and from beginning to end it is **through trust**—as the [Hebrew Bible] puts it: ‘But the person who is **righteous** will live his life by **trust**’” (Rom. 1:16,17).*

We are declared righteous before God because of our trust in the completed work of Jesus’s blood sacrifice for our sins. Our trust in Him alone guarantees eternal life. The *covenant relationship* established with God through our trust results in a yearning to walk in His ways. Before that trust, we were walking the broad road to destruction. Now, because of our trust, we are given the Holy Spirit’s power to walk the narrow road through the narrow gate.

Unlike the intellectual ‘gospels’ of today that give lip service to biblical truths but are powerless to change lives, Paul proclaims that the gospel he preached was “*God’s powerful means of bringing salvation.*” It would seem that relatively few of the people we’ve met in our travels have embraced the powerful gospel that **changes lives**—the gospel which leads to the narrow

³gate. So many struggle in their own energy to pursue religious practices which they hope please God. The gospel Paul preached was neither an intellectual assertion nor a frustrating rat-race: “*For the kingdom of God is not a matter of words but of **power***” (1Cor. 4.20).

Whose power is he talking about? The *Holy Spirit’s!*

One evidence of a person embracing the narrow-road gospel is their desire to talk about Jesus with others! It’s not difficult to speak of Someone you experience on a daily basis. Life on the narrow road is lived *in union with our Lord*. If you haven’t embraced the gospel of God’s power, then you may find yourself fearful to speak of Him. How tragic if that silence means that the Lord will be ashamed of you [see Luke 9:26; 12:9; Gal. 1:8; 2Cor. 11:4].

Seven Realities To Experiencing God

In their book *Experiencing God*, Henry Blackaby and Claude King capture the sequential elements of walking the narrow road. They progress from *what God is doing* to *how you can join Him* to *what it will cost you* if you are to fully experience Him in your life. Blackaby and King write,

1. God is always at work around you.
2. God pursues a continuing love relationship with you that is real and personal.
3. God invites you to become involved with Him in His work.
4. God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways.
5. God’s invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action.

6. You must make major adjustments in your life to join God in what He is doing.
7. You come to know God by experience as you obey Him and He accomplishes His work through you.”

Ponder these biblical realities. Where do you get hung up? Have you asked your Father to help you?

“For with the heart one goes on trusting and thus continues to righteousness” (Rom. 10:10).

The gospel that Paul preached required an ongoing trust in Jesus and His power to make followers righteous: “*That if you **acknowledge publicly** with your mouth that [Jesus] is **Lord** and **trust in your heart** that God raised him from the dead, you will be delivered. For with the heart one **goes on trusting** and thus **continues toward righteousness**, while with the mouth one **keeps on making public [testimony about Jesus] and thus continues toward deliverance**” (Rom. 10:9,10).*

Paul was not only presenting the way of salvation for all of us; he was also addressing those Jews who walked the broad road of perverting Torah through legalism. The *perversion* of Torah viewed God’s teachings as a *pattern of correct behavior* rather than as the God-intended means to reveal their sin and their need to rely on His grace: “*For in His sight no one alive will be declared righteous on the ground of **legalistic observance of Torah**; rather, because what Torah really does is show people **how sinful they are**... Therefore, we hold the view that a person comes to be **considered righteous** by God on the ground of **trusting**, which has **nothing to do with legalistic observance** of Torah commands” (Rom. 3:20,28).*

To contrast:

Legalistic perversion: Observing⁴ where it says Abraham is **our father in God's sight because he trusted God.**'

Torah in such a way that evidences no need to trust in God nor depend on Him. This person walks the broad road priding himself in his correct behavior. *What he does* is paramount, for he is often motivated to fulfill self-gratification and the need to be noticed.

Narrow road: Embracing the Holy Spirit as the power to understand and live out Torah. *Why he obeys* is paramount. The Holy Spirit's presence results in love and produces trust-grounded obedience.

Before we can proceed down the narrow road, there must be no doubt that *entry* onto the narrow road begins with our trust. This is clearly the Hebraic basis of walking the Abrahamic road **in union with our Lord:**

"In fact, [Abraham] received circumcision as a sign, as a seal of the righteousness he had been credited with on the ground of the trust he had had while he was still uncircumcised. This happened so that he could be the father of every uncircumcised person who trusts and thus has righteousness credited to him, and at the same time be the father of every circumcised person who not only has been [circumcised], but also follows the footsteps of trust which Abraham had when he was still uncircumcised.

For the promise to Abraham and his seed that he would inherit the world did not come through legalism but through the righteousness that trust produces" (Rom. 4:11,13).

Paul goes on to tell us that *"the promise is based on trusting so that it may come as God's free gift"* [see Eph. 2:8,9]. The free gift is given to those *"with the kind of trust Abraham had—Abraham, our father for all of us. This accords with the [Hebrew Bible],*

Crucial for us today is that *"[Abraham's] trust did not waver"* (Rom. 4:19). Unwavering trust is what the Holy Spirit gives us as we face troubles. If you trust in the powerful gospel that changes lives, you will encounter troubles and suffering. No stranger to pain, Paul encourages us, *"So let us boast about the hope of experiencing God's glory. But not only that, let us also boast in our troubles; because we know that trouble produces endurance...character...and hope"* (Rom. 5:2,3). [See Rom. 8:17.]

To counter both Jew and Gentile alike who are ensnared in legalistic perversion hoping to gain God's acceptance, Paul writes, *"God demonstrates his own love for us in that the Messiah died on our behalf while we were still sinners. Therefore, since we have now come to be considered righteous by means of his bloody sacrificial death, how much more will we be delivered through him from the anger of God's judgment!"* (Rom. 5:8,9).

So many today, even among those who have embraced the true gospel, live in doubt of their salvation. Why? Because of the legalistic perversion brought about by anti-Semitism in the Church. Instead of growing *in loving union with Jesus*, church activities become the primary focus of their religious expression. Once you are duped into embarking on the path of legalistic perversion, you'll perceive rejection by God. NO! He is not rejecting you, but your *means of gaining His favor*. The favor of our Father's grace has been given freely to all who put their trust in His Son. Instead, many try to *earn* what has already been freely given! Legalistic perversion is unacceptable to God. That person will not

experience a loving intimacy with the Father—something He dearly desires!

Jesus Christ is the Aim of Torah

Jesus dealt once and for all with the penalty and payment for our sins. Paul speaks to both Jew and Gentile when he declares, *"Sin was indeed present in the world before Torah was given, but sin is not counted as such when there is no Torah. And the Torah came into the picture so that the offense would proliferate; but where sin proliferated, grace proliferated even more. All this happened so that just as sin ruled by means of death, so also grace might rule through causing people to be considered righteous, so that they might have eternal life through [Jesus] the Messiah, our Lord"* (Rom. 5:13,20-21).

Do you understand what Jesus accomplished on your behalf? If you would continue to trust in His shed blood, you can avoid the ensnarement of legalistic perversion. To summarize:

'For sin will not have authority over you; because you are not under legalism but under grace... so now offer your various parts as slaves to righteousness, which leads to being made holy, set apart for God. For what one earns from sin is death; and anything not based on trust is a sin...but eternal life is what one receives as a free gift from God, in union with the Messiah [Jesus], our Lord.'

There is No Christian Nirvana!

Embedded like a computer virus in the broad path of legalistic perversion is the delusion that a person will someday reach a "Christian Nirvana" where all temptations will cease. The Bible tells us that as we walk *in union with Christ* we will struggle. To counteract the

“Nirvana” group Paul reminds us that we will all struggle with sin until we die:

*“So the **Torah is holy**; that is, the commandment is holy, just and good. Then did something good become for me the source of death? Heaven forbid! Rather, it was sin working death in me **through something good**, so that **sin might be clearly exposed as sin**, so that sin through the commandments might come to be experienced as **sinful beyond measure**. For we know that the **Torah is of the Spirit**; but as for me, I am **bound to the old nature**, sold to sin as a slave” (Rom. 7:12,14).*

*“For the old nature wants what is **contrary to the Spirit**, and the Spirit wants what is contrary to the old nature. These **oppose each other**, so that you find yourselves unable to carry out your good intentions” (Gal. 5:17).*

*“To sum up: with my mind, I am a **slave to God’s Torah**; but with my old nature, I am a **slave to sin’s ‘torah’**” (Rom. 7:25b).*

Once again, note the contrast:

Broad road teaching: *Your life will improve. Things will be easier as you follow Jesus.*

Narrow road teaching: *You will suffer and be tested as you walk in the footsteps of Jesus.*

During the 10 years I counseled clergy, the false assumption of a “Christian Nirvana” imprisoned many from seeking appropriate help when overwhelmed with besetting sin. Most people serving as clergy feel they can’t turn to people in their congregation. Most parishioners think their pastor is more “spiritual” than they are, and above the temptations that plague “lay people”. Pastors are often ashamed to let people know of their struggle with sin. They can’t go to their denominational leaders for fear that they will consider him a

failure or morally weak. [I’ve shared before that a leader of one of the largest Protestant denominations revealed to me that 50% of their clergy were or had been involved in adultery.]

For some reason I was a safe person to whom clergy could reveal their struggles. Sadly, I don’t think I ever managed to help even one clergy person break out of his prison. Why? They were in the same prison as their flock. By maintaining the false assumption that one’s spiritual life becomes easier as he goes on, leaders inadvertently (or consciously) control the very ones who have put them on a pedestal. Power in any form is difficult to relinquish. It rivals narcotics in addiction.

“Many people’s love will grow cold because of increased distance from Torah”

Jesus not only addressed the legalistic perversion of the Torah teachers. He also warns all of us not to depart Torah: *“Many people’s love will grow cold because of **increased distance from Torah**. But whoever **holds out till the end will be delivered**” (Matt. 24:12,13).* Again, anti-Semitic English translations make it seem that Paul was doing away with Torah when they use the word “law” in Romans and Galatians. Not so! As did Jesus, Paul affirmed God’s purpose for Torah. Ignorance of God’s righteous teachings chills the holy love relationship and can result in legalistic perversion.

To undo the volumes of anti-Semitic translations, translators like David Stern are exposing Jesus’ true regard for the Torah—a regard that nullifies the perversion so prevalent in churches today: *“I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from*

the Torah until everything is accomplished” (Matt. 5:18). Jesus and Paul affirmed Torah while attacking the *legalistic perversion* of Torah in their day. Today, we must continue to expose legalistic perversion because it is the means by which the antichrist spirit can operate so readily inside so many congregations.

In his letters Paul encapsulates the function, the aim, and the way of Torah:

Function of Torah - *to know what sin is.*

Aim of Torah - *to walk in union with Jesus*

Way of Torah - *trust-grounded obedience empowered by the Holy Spirit*

To walk *“in union with the Messiah”* requires the Holy Spirit’s empowerment to walk the narrow road. The Holy Spirit comes to all who embrace the true gospel: *‘Those who identify with the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. Having one’s mind controlled by the old nature is death, but having one’s mind controlled by the Spirit is life and [peace.]’...*

*But you [who embrace the true gospel] do not identify with your old nature but **with the Spirit**—provided the Spirit of God is **living inside you**, for anyone who **doesn’t have the Spirit of the Messiah doesn’t belong to him**. However, if the Messiah is in you, then, on the one hand, the body is dead because of sin; but, on the other hand, the **Spirit is giving life** because God considers you righteous. All who are **led by God’s Spirit are God’s sons**” (Rom. 8:9,10,14).*

People walking the broad road neither “need” nor receive the Holy Spirit. Their lives rely on human effort and are measured in correct behavior. Isn’t it interesting that Paul asked the men at Ephesus, *“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you trusted?”*

They answered, 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit'" (Acts 19:2). It seemed important enough for Paul to ask, and the men answered honestly, "No." What would happen if we asked in our faith communities today, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you trusted?"

What are the biblical evidences of the Holy Spirit's presence in someone's life?

Have you ever studied the Bible to discern: **What is the way of the Spirit?**

Really, *how* do we detect the Spirit's presence? A few things come to mind: He empowers us to love, and to understand and apply the Bible; He empowers us with gifts; He enables us to be children of our Father!

"Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did" (1Cor. 10:6).

If we today are to get back to the trust of Abraham, we need to understand how the Jewish people who rejected Jesus missed their promised Messiah's coming. First of all, Paul tells us that they cursed themselves by misunderstanding the truths of Lev. 18:5: "*For everyone who depends on **legalistic observance of Torah** live under a **curse**, since it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does **not keep on doing everything** written in the Scroll of the Torah.'* Now it is evident that no one comes to be declared righteous by God through legalism, since 'The person who is righteous will attain life by trusting and being faithful.' Furthermore, **legalism is not based on trusting and being faithful, but on a misuse of the text** that says, 'Anyone who does these things will attain life through them' [Lev. 18:5]" (Gal. 3:10-12).

Paul not only counteracts the

legalistic perversion so embraced by the Jews, he also addresses every Christian who takes the broad road of perverted legalism. Perverted legalism prevails in many parts of the Christian community, both Gentile and Jewish alike. It is subtly disguised, often taking on an atmosphere of 'Christian correctness.'

Do you want to know what 'Christian correctness' looks like? Ask the children in your congregation. They are very aware of the behavior changes their parents go through to appear 'Christian.' Ask your own family: Does your behavior or attitude *at church* reflect the same behavior and attitude you demonstrate *at home*?

"Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the [Jewish people] is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge" (Rom. 10:1,2).

Sadly, legalistic perversion is epidemic especially among Messianic Jewish communities in the US. We hear from so many that "*Torah observance* is the basis for a person's righteousness." We are grieved by reports of Gentile Christians who fellowship in certain Messianic Jewish communities and in their zeal to explore their "Jewish roots", eventually forsake Christ and convert to Judaism. This is not surprising, however, because the *legalistic perversion* of 'Torah observance' ultimately leads to an anti-Christ spirit—one that denies our Lord's substitutionary atonement for us and relies instead on self-righteousness.

As we have ministered in several Messianic communities, we have found that the prevailing demonic strongholds that keep them captive are *rebellion, bitterness* and *rejection*. These spirits

cooperate to keep people from experiencing our Lord. Rebellion is the very nature of Satan, operating to seduce a person away from Christ by perverting the way of Torah into self-dependency and pride.

Once on the broad road, that person becomes embittered because the very relationship with the Lord and the freedoms that were promised in the Word are never experienced. Perverted legalism encourages them to observe Torah even harder, resulting in further feelings of rejection because the broad road they have chosen continues to be rejected by God.

I am crying as I write this. Sue and I are deeply burdened for our Jewish brothers and sisters. I can feel Paul's deep love and his frustration when he wrote to the Galatians who were giving in to legalistic perversion: "*As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!*" (1:9). Hey! This is no light matter. Paul is telling the legalistic perverters, "Go to h---!" Friends, where do you think the broad road ends up?

Do you think Jesus's response to the perverters was any "nicer"? Think again! "*Woe to you hypocritical Torah teachers and Pharisees! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him **twice as much a son of hell** as you are*" (Matt. 23:15).

Please pray for the Hebraic foundations to reach the Messianic Jewish communities in this country. Ask your Father to enable you to feel His sorrow over the legalistic ensnarement the Jewish people continue to fall into by trying to *earn* His approval in their own strength.

Instead of uniting Jew and Gentile in the Messiah, many in the

Messianic Jewish community have become trapped by the same legalistic perversion their Jewish ancestors fell into. Isn't Paul speaking to *both Jew and Gentile* today when he asks, "So, what are we to say? This: that **Gentiles**, even though they were not striving for righteousness, have obtained righteousness; but it is a **righteousness grounded in trusting**.

However, **Israel**, even though they kept pursuing a Torah that offers righteousness, did not reach what the Torah offers. Why? Because they did not pursue righteousness as being grounded in trusting but as if it were **grounded in doing legalistic works**" (Rom. 9:30-32).

"For, since **Israel** is unaware of God's way of making people righteous and instead seek to set up their own, they have **not submitted themselves to God's way of making people righteous. For the goal at which the Torah aims is the Messiah, who offers righteousness to everyone who trusts**" (Rom. 10:3,4).

God's warning is still applicable for all of us: "All day long I held out my hands to a people who **kept disobeying and contradicting**" (Rom. 10:21).

What does Paul affirm in terms of our observance of Torah?

Whether Jew or Gentile, disobedience and contradiction of God's Word is the pattern of the broad road. What is the essence of the narrow road? It is a simple thing—sacrificial, God-empowered love!

"Don't owe anyone anything—except to love one another; for whoever **loves his fellow human being has fulfilled Torah**. For the commandments, 'Don't commit adultery,' 'Don't murder,' 'Don't steal,' 'Don't covet,' and any others are summed up in this one rule: **'Love your neighbor as yourself.'** Love does not do harm to its

neighbor; therefore **love is the fullness of Torah**" (Rom. 13:8-10).

Paul's emphasis on love as fulfilling Torah concurs with the words of Jesus:

"**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.** This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: **'Love your neighbor as yourself.'** All the Torah and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matt. 22:37-40).

"So in everything, **do to others what you would have them do to you**, for this sums up the Torah and the Prophets" (Matt. 7:12).

All the Torah and the prophets hang on our love for God and our love for our neighbor. The Torah shows us how to live a life of loving Him and each other. From even a cursory knowledge of the Scriptures it should be evident that every relationship entails certain freedoms and boundaries.

Biblical freedom: To be considerate, kind, hospitable, merciful, generous...
Biblical boundaries: Don't covet, don't slander others, don't be proud...

Our love causes us to learn Torah and to live in trust-grounded obedience to it. But, if we can't think of a particular passage that might pertain to our specific loving action, then God would have us "*do to others what we would have them do to us.*" In essence God is saying to each of us, "In the absence of any other criteria for what love represents, judge your actions toward others based upon 'Would you want the same thing done to you?'"

As a Navy pilot I was governed by a myriad of regulations. But there was one called "The Prudent Pilot Rule": "In the absence of any pertinent regulation to your action, your action will be judged based upon what a 'prudent pilot' would do in the same circumstances."

Can you see the similarity?

God requires us to be lovingly prudent in the absence of any specific Torah command for our specific situation. Every relationship, including our covenant with God, includes both freedom and boundaries. This is where our love, empowered by the Holy Spirit, produces trust-grounded obedience. Torah is a personal matter between you and God. Take the time and make the effort to:

- know God's Word.
- seek your own empowerment from the Holy Spirit.
- experience Jesus for yourself.
- tell others of your experiences with Him.

"And this is our prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God" (Phil. 1:9-11).

Mike & Sue Dzwigiewicz

Psalm 86:11

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