

Defending the Ten Commandments

Bible Sabbath Association

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**Reference Guide
for Commandment Keepers**

Bible Sabbath Association

Written by: Kelly McDonald, Jr.

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Introduction

This booklet is designed to help commandment keeping believers defend their faith. Many say that the commandments of God are done away with. Some people use the letters of Jesus or even Paul to say that the Ten Commandments are no longer in effect today. Peter gave us instruction about Paul's letters in 2 Peter 3:15-17:

“15 Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. 16 He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.”

Peter informs us that Paul never contradicts the other Scriptures, which is a reference to the Old Testament. As you will see from this booklet, Paul is a staunch defender of the commandments of God.

This booklet will teach you how to defend your faith. It is also a way to reach out to other believers and help them understand the truth of God's Word.

Argument #1: Christ nailed the Law and the Old Testament to the Cross

Scripture Reference: Colossians 2:13-15

In Colossians 2:13-15, Paul wrote, “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; 14 **Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances** that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; 15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (KJV, emphasis mine throughout). Many people use these verses to say that Christ nailed the Law of God or the entire Old Testament to the cross.

In this verse, the phrase “handwriting of ordinances” is the Greek phrase *choriographon dogma*. *Choreigraphon* means a bill of indebtedness written in the debtor’s handwriting. *Dogma* means a man-made decree. This phrase refers to our sin debt. This is reinforced by the fact that the phrase “blotting out” means to erase something that is written. The word of God mentions that a record of our deeds are kept in heaven (Revelation 20:12, Hosea 13:12, Nehemiah 13:14, Psalm 109:14). Christ erased our sin debt by nailing it to the cross. He also erased the record of sin that is recorded in Heaven!

Revelation 12:10 explains that Satan is the accuser of the brethren. He accuses us because we have outstanding sin that we have not repented of! When we repent, our sins are blotted out of the books in Heaven, so that the powers and principalities of this world are put to an open shame! They are disarmed! Their accusations are rendered null and void. This should be very humbling to all of us. Our sin debt was nailed to the cross, not the Law of God. As a second witness to this, see Galatians 5:24, which reads “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” It is our sin and sinful behavior that must be crucified, not the Law.

Argument #2: Paul said any day can be the Sabbath
Scripture Reference: Colossians 2:15-17

In Colossians 2:15-17, Paul wrote “15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. 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)

There are those who use these verses to say that Paul was teaching against keeping the Feasts of the Lord. One of the chief things to understand about the church in Colossae is that they were dealing with the false teaching of asceticism. Asceticism is a man-made philosophy that views enjoyment such as rejoicing, feasting, or anything that brings about happiness as morally wrong or incorrect. To give an example of this, Paul says a little later in verses 20-23 that: “20 Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: 21 ‘Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!’ 22 These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. 23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.” (NKJV)

These ascetic teachers were teaching the Colossians not to participate in anything physically enjoyable because they viewed such things as sensual or indulgent. Paul rebukes this false teaching and says that it is merely a man-made teaching that cannot restrain sensual indulgence at all. Understanding this ascetic heresy is the key to understanding Colossians 2:15-17. Paul begins verse 15 by explaining Christ’s victory over the powers and authorities of this world through His crucifixion.

In the second half of verse 16, Paul says to let no one judge you “regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths.” The Greek words he uses for festival (*heorte*), New Moon Celebrations (*noumenia*), and Sabbath (*sabbaton*) are words used only to refer to the Feast Days in Leviticus 23, the New Moon Celebrations in Numbers 28:11-15, and the seventh day Sabbath in Genesis 2:1-3.

The Feast Days, New Moon Celebrations, and the Sabbath are often lumped together in the Bible (I Chron. 23:31, Neh. 10:33, Ez. 45:17). In the Bible, they are the most joyous times of celebrations and feasting. This is why the ascetic teachers began to judge the Colossian believers for keeping these things.

Paul concludes verses 15-17 by saying that these things "...are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ." He tells the Colossians to let no one judge them for celebrating the Sabbath. Christ is the substance or reality of each one of these things.

He is saying that the real meaning of the Sabbath is Christ. The Sabbath depicts salvation in Jesus Christ. It depicts His Kingdom. These verses are not condemning the Sabbath or changing it; they are telling us yet another reason why we should obey it!

Argument #3: Christ fulfilled the Law, so the Ten Commandments do not matter anymore.

Scripture Reference: Matthew 5:17-18

In Matthew 5:17-18, Jesus said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (KJV).

There are people who have used these verses to say that Christ did away with the Law of God by fulfilling it. They say that since He did it all, then we do not have to do any of it. We must realize that these verses are a fulfillment of a prophecy. In Isaiah 42:21, God said, “The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness’ sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable” (KJV). This scripture is a prophecy about Jesus, who came to magnify or enlarge the Law.

Jesus said that He did not come to do away with the commandments. The Greek word for destroy is *kataluo*, and it means to dissolve, disunite, or to loosen something that has been joined together. Christ did not come to loosen the Law’s requirements, but to fill their meaning to the full or tighten its requirements. Christ fulfills the Law in that He fills their meaning to the full by adding inward obedience to the outward obedience.

When you take a magnifying glass and put it over something, that object becomes larger. In Matthew 5, Jesus gave an entire chapter about how He magnifies the Law. For instance, the commandment “Do not commit adultery” is magnified in Christ because He reveals to us that we should not even lust in our heart or mind. The Sabbath is magnified in that we should not even think about breaking it. This means that we must still obey the commandments outwardly, but we must also obey them inwardly. The requirements of the Law become magnified or enlarged in Christ because we now have the added power of the Holy Spirit.

Argument #4: We are no longer under the Law, but under grace. The Law no longer applies.
Scripture Reference: Romans 6:14

In Romans 6:14, Paul wrote: “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” This is one verse used by many to say that the requirements of God’s Law, especially the Ten Commandments, are no longer necessary. The key with this verse, and all verses, is the context.

In the next two verses, Paul wrote, “What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” One definition of sin in the Bible is transgression of God’s Law (I John 3:4). To clarify the phrase “under the law”, we must go to the other letters of Paul.

In Galatians 4:4-5, Paul wrote: “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (KJV). If the phrase “under the law” in Romans 6:14 means obeying the Law, then Paul said in Galatians that Christ only came to redeem those that were obeying the Law. We know that is not true! Christ came to redeem all mankind (John 1:29, 3:16).

The phrase “under the law” means under the penalty of the Law. Christ was born under the penalty of the law to free those who were under its penalty – which is all of us! All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Later in Romans, Paul wrote that the Law is holy, righteous and good (Romans 7:12-14). In Romans 8:7, Paul explains that the sinful mind is hostile to God’s Law and refuses to submit to it. Being under grace means that when we make a mistake, God is not going to stone us or strike us dead.

We have a grace period to learn right from wrong. We are not under the law’s penalty, but we are not free from its requirements because grace is not a license to sin or transgress God’s Law. Our goal and aim is to let the Holy Spirit guide us in obedience to the commandments of God. Since we are under grace, we are alive in

Christ and enabled to obey the Law of Life (see also Deut. 30:11-15, I John 5:1-5).

**Argument #5: The Law is our school master to lead us to Christ. Once we come to Christ, we no longer need the Law.
Scripture Reference: Galatians 3:23-25**

In Galatians 3:23-25, Paul wrote “But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (KJV).

These verses are used to say that the Law was our school master before Christ came. Once we receive Christ, they say we no longer need the Law of God. The Greek word for schoolmaster is *pedagogue*. It was used of a school master or tutor that would make sure children always went the right way. In school, we only need a tutor if we are having a hard time with a subject. If you are failing math, you need a tutor. When we have faith in Christ, we are trusting Him to guide us in obedience to the Law of God. When we have faith in Christ, the law’s requirements should spontaneously manifest because it is the life that Christ lived. This means a tutor is no longer necessary. We are proficient in doing the right thing because we are trusting in Him to walk it out in us. These verses prove that faith in Christ leads to obeying God’s law.

As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God” (I Corinthians 7:19). So, what matters is keeping the commandments of God. Paul, as in all of his letters, does not condemn keeping the Law. Paul’s concern, as in the entire Bible, is our motivation for obedience. Our obedience should come out of faith in Christ, which means a tutor for the Law is not necessary. He teaches us the right way to live God’s law, which does not negate its requirements.

**Argument #6: The Law was torn down by the Sacrifice of
Christ
Ephesians 2:11-15**

In Ephesians 2:11-15, Paul wrote “11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands— 12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace...” (NKJV)

In Ephesians 2:11-15, Paul explains that each of us who are Gentiles were at one time excluded from citizenship in Israel. However, through the blood of Christ we have been made one with Israel and one with the covenants of promise. For Gentiles and Israelites to be unified, Christ had to die to abolish the ‘law of commandments contained in ordinances’ that separated us from citizenship in Israel. The Greek word translated as ‘ordinances’ in this phrase is *dogma*, and it refers to a man-made ordinance or decree. The phrase “law of commandments contained in ordinances” refers to the laws and commandments in man-made ordinances of the Pharisees and Sadducees, which separated Gentiles from becoming members of Israel.

The man-made rules of the Pharisees and Sadducees often treated Gentiles as second-class human beings. For instance, some Jewish people had a man-made rule which stipulated that any fellowship with Gentiles would make them unclean. God never said this in the Bible. It was a man-made rule. Rules such as this separated Gentiles from coming into covenant with God and becoming citizens in Israel. As a physical representation of this, the outer court of the Temple in Paul’s time had a wall preventing Gentiles from associating and worshipping with Jews. They had a separate court in the Temple called “the court of the Gentiles”.

This is the middle wall of partition that Paul says was torn down through Christ's death. This wall was a physical representation of the wall of regulations (man-made ordinances and commandments) that the Pharisees and Sadducees had built to create enmity between Israelites and Gentiles. According to the Law of God, Gentiles were allowed to enter into covenant with God (Leviticus 24:22). They just simply had to take the sign of the covenant, circumcision, and obey the terms of the covenant, which is the Law. When the Israelites left Egypt, they left a mixed multitude of Gentiles and native Israelites (Exodus 12:38). All of the Gentiles that left Egypt with the Israelites became naturalized citizens. They were baptized by the sea and cloud (I Cor. 10:1-4). Through Christ's death, everyone is allowed to enter into citizenship in Israel without having to go through man's rules.

Argument #7: The Law is a Yoke of Bondage

Scripture Reference: Galatians 5:1-5

In Galatians 5:1-5, Paul wrote, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled **again** with the **yoke of bondage**. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.”

Many people say that the letter to the Galatians was written to a group of Jews “going back to keeping the law”. These people also say that the yoke of bondage Paul refers to is the commandments of God. This is easily disproved. One of the issues in the Galatian church was whether circumcision was a necessary requirement for salvation. If the Galatians were all Jews, then they would already be circumcised. Galatia was a region composed of mostly Gentiles. It is in the letter to the Galatians that Paul affirms that he is an apostle to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15-16).

First of all, what does the Bible say about the Law? Many people tend to think that rules and regulations hamper personal freedom, but God’s law actually promotes freedom. In Deuteronomy 30:11-14, God says about the law, “Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven so that you have to ask, ‘Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?’ Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, ‘Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?’ No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.” The word of God is near us because we were made to obey it. The law of God are rules for basic human living so that we can live a healthy, prosperous life. Even the Apostle John says about the law, “This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome...” (I John 5:2-3). God’s commandments are easy to keep, not a burden.

Notice the word AGAIN in Galatians 5:1. The Galatians were in

danger of going back to serving other gods, which do bind us to sin! In Ezekiel 20, God rebuked the Israelites for being disobedient to His laws and commandments, and He said in verses 24-25, “Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols. Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live;”

In these verses, disobeying God is called being given over to statutes that you cannot live by – in other words, statutes that are bondage. The Galatians were in danger of going back to worshipping other gods. You see, the Gentile religions of this world believe in self-affliction as a means of atonement for sin. This is why people in many ancient cultures were forced to walk over hot coals, a boards of nails, or struck themselves to purify themselves from sin. Some Catholic priests do this to this day.

Christ took the beating so that we do not have to beat ourselves up! Paul is saying that if we think our works will save us (in this case, the act of circumcision), then Christ means nothing to us. Paul also discusses the doctrine in the Bible of justification. The Law, and no law, can justify us. Justification means a cleansing from past sin.

In other words, how do we come back to God now that we have sinned? If our works alone can do this, then we do not need Jesus. Only the blood of Jesus can justify or wipe out our past sins so that we are declared innocent before God (Romans 5:9-11). Even if we were to only sin once and be perfect the rest of our lives, we would still be guilty before God because of that one sin.

Paul tells the Galatians that if they believe circumcision will save them, then they are a debtor to obey the entire law. This means that they must obey the entire law without ever breaking it again. Paul's issue is not circumcision in itself as he circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:1-3). The intent of the Galatian believers for being circumcised was the issue.

They thought it was for their salvation and justification before God. Paul then concludes this part of the chapter by saying that through God's Spirit we await for the righteousness for which we hope. Paul defines righteousness as keeping God's command-

ments in Romans 2:12-16. We learn from those verses that the Spirit of God will lead us toward commandment-keeping. He told the Galatians that their desire to keep the righteousness of the Law was a good thing. Our obedience to the Law should spring out of the leading of God's Spirit and faith in Christ to lead us in obedience to them.

Argument #8: Paul preached that the Feasts were Bondage **Scripture Reference: Galatians 4:8-11**

In Galatians 4:8-11, Paul wrote: “8 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature (by the order of things) are not gods. 9 But now that you know God – or rather are known by (under) God – how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable (lacking) principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? 10 You are observing days and months and seasons and years! 11 I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.”

As mentioned in the argument above, the Galatians were a group of Gentiles going back to paganism and the worship of other gods. First, Paul begins this passage by saying, “Formerly, when you did not know God, you served those gods who were by nature not gods.” Paul is addressing a group of churches who at one time worshipped other gods. Secondly, the language used in this passage does not support any claim that Paul is preaching against observances found in the Old Testament. The phrase Paul uses - “days and months and seasons and years” - does not contain **any** of the Greek words used in the New Testament for the Sabbath (*sabbaton*), New Moon celebrations (*neumenea*), or Feast Days (*heorte*).

What are the “days and months and seasons and years” to which Paul refers? To understand this phrase, one must understand some of the history of this region (Galatia was a region located in modern day central Turkey). Between 279 B.C. and 189 B.C., the peoples of this region were influenced by their own traditions of pagan worship as well as Greek mythology. The region was conquered by the Romans around 189 B.C. By the time Paul wrote to these churches in approximately 53 A.D., this region was dominated culturally and politically by the Roman Empire. The days, months, seasons, and years to which Paul refers are the Greek and Roman worship practices that permeated Galatian culture over 300 years before Paul’s visit to Galatia (see Acts 14:8-20 for an example).

For an illustration of this, take into consideration the “days” that Paul mentions. Every day was dedicated to a specific god or goddess in Roman and Greek culture. The practice of naming every

day of the week comes from this custom. The day we know as the second day of the week (Monday) was dedicated to the moon god (**days**). In addition to these days, the Romans also dedicated each month to a specific god or goddess. They held ceremonies during the month to commemorate that particular deity. The month we call January was a month dedicated to the goddess Janus, who was said to have two faces. The month of March derives its name from the Roman god Mars (**months**). The Romans also kept certain seasons or times of celebrations to their gods that coincided with events in nature. The Saturnalia was a seasonal festival held in December to commemorate the god Saturn during the winter solstice (**seasons**). The combination of observing all these events makes up years (**years**). These ancient celebrations involved worship practices such as making sacrifices to other gods and/or making vows to these gods, which are the “weak and miserable principles” Paul mentions in Galatians 4:9.

Paul links these days, months, seasons, and years to a time when the Galatians served or worshipped **other gods**. The Sabbath, New Moon Celebrations, and Feast Days were named by God and ordained by God, which is why they are called holy in the Old Testament. God is **one**, meaning he does not contradict himself or go against his own words. God gave everything in the Law show mankind how to serve and worship Him. Paul kept the Sabbath with Galatian churches in Acts 13 and 14. Therefore, he would never condemn observances of them. He is warning them about going back to celebrating pagan feasts they kept before being converted.

Argument #9: Paul said that any day can be the Sabbath
Scripture Reference: Romans 14:5-6

Another passage commonly used to say that Paul changed the Sabbath is Romans 14:5. In Romans 14:5-6, Paul wrote, “One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.”

The first key to understanding these verses is to understand the audience he is addressing. He is writing to the Romans and he is applying these verses specifically to days that the Romans considered to be important. Paul’s intention is to turn the focus of the Roman believers away from specific days they observed in honor of other gods and to turn their attention towards the Lord. Secondly, the Greek word Paul uses for day, *hemera*, refers to any common day. Thus, he is addressing common days, not holy days like the Sabbath. The word for holy, *hagios*, is not even found in this chapter (Romans 14). If he were referring to the Sabbath, Paul would have used the Greek word for Sabbath, *sabbaton*. Third, he is not addressing which days God considers to be holy, but what days **men** esteem higher than others. God is the one who set aside the Sabbath, not man.

The Romans were very superstitious. They considered some days to be good days to farm and other days to be good days to fish, but they dedicated these daily activities to other gods and goddesses. They were basically following a daily horoscope.

Paul is essentially saying that if we are going to consider a common day as important to perform a specific activity, then we should do so unto the Lord and not a pagan deity. He is addressing this specific Roman cultural activity, not the Sabbath or any day declared holy by God.

God is the one who declared the Sabbath Holy (Genesis 2:1-3, Exodus 31:12-18, and Leviticus 23:1-6 to name a few). Man did not declare the Sabbath holy nor did man declare the feasts of the Lord as holy. God firmly established the Sabbath on the seventh day in the beginning. Christ even called himself Lord of the Sab-

bath!

Any argument that tries to say that Paul did away with the Sabbath or Feast Days does not take into account his example. He says in I Corinthians 11:1 to imitate him as he imitates Christ. Paul's example in the Bible shows us that he did not condemn any observance of the law, but that he continued to keep and reverence the Sabbath *after* his conversion to Christianity (for a few examples: Acts 13, Acts 17, and 18). In his letter to the Colossians, Paul says to let no one judge them *for keeping* the Sabbath (Col. 2:16). The early church kept the Sabbath.

Argument #10: The Law was given to Israel, so it does not apply to Christians today

There are those who argue that because they are Gentile converts to Christianity, then they do not have to obey any parts of the Ten Commandments. This line of reasoning runs into some serious problems in the scope of the Word of God. First of all, God said that native born Israelites and foreigners who join into covenant with Him are to have the same requirements (Leviticus 24:22). Secondly, Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:11-22 how Christ's death allowed Gentiles to be fellow citizens in Israel (some of which is reviewed above). Third, Christians are Israelites because the New Covenant is only made with the houses of Israel and Judah (Jeremiah 31:31-34, Hebrews 8:8-12). To be in the New Covenant requires that you be a part of Israel. Unless you are a part of Israel, you cannot be in the New Covenant.

Fourth, the Greek word used for church in the New Testament, *ekklesia*, is a direct translation of the Hebrew word used to describe ancient Israel in the Old Testament. In the Septuagint or Greek translation of the Old Testament, the word *ekklesia* is used to describe ancient Israel. The word *ekklesia* basically means those who are called out or the called out ones. In Acts 7:38, this word is used to describe Israel! Whenever you read the word church in the New Testament, it is a direct reference to Christians being citizens in Israel.

Christians are an extension of Israel, not something completely separate. Fifth, Paul explains how we are grafted into Israel in Romans 9-11. Lastly, consider that Christ is a natural born Israelite. If we are one with Him, then we too are a part of Israel because He is the perfect Israelite. These examples in the New Testament prove that we as Christians are a part of Ancient Israel, God's means to bring salvation and covenant to the whole world. This makes the Ten Commandments just as binding on Christians as on natural born Israelites.

Argument #11: Christ is the End of the Law
Scripture Reference: Romans 10:1-4

Romans 10:1-4 (NKJV)

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel[a] is that they may be saved. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

The Greek word for "end" is *teleos*, and it can mean "to terminate, a goal, the purpose at which something is directed, or a tax". Some put forth the idea that this verse means that Christ is the termination of the Law. What does it really mean? One thing to keep in mind when we study the Bible is that every verse has a context. The meaning of this verse can be ascertained by previous statements by Paul in the letter to the Romans and also by the Words of Jesus. Earlier in this booklet, we explained that Jesus did not come to destroy, terminate, or loosen the law. He can fulfill it or fill its meaning to the full. When Jesus came, the meaning of the Law became magnified.

In Romans 3:31, Paul provides more context for us. "Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law." The Greek word for void is *katargeo*, and it means "to render idle, unemployed, inactivate, inoperative – to deprive of force, influence or power... to terminate". So, our faith in Christ does not weaken the power or influence of the Law. It does not terminate. Instead, the law is upheld or established by our faith. It is made more firm. In Romans 3:31, Paul established a foundation of understanding for us to properly interpret Romans 10:1-4. From the context of Paul's own letter and the words of Jesus, we can see that the proper interpretation of Romans 10:4 is that Christ is the goal or purpose of the law. Our faith will lead us to obey it (compare also John 14:12).

Argument #12: Gentile Christians no longer have to keep commandments

Scripture Reference: Acts chapter 15

“Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: ‘Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.’ This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all brothers very glad. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them. Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, ‘The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses.’ The apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: ‘Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. **Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are**” (Acts 15:1-11).

Some have said that the “yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear” is the law, but this interpretation contradicts what God said about His own Law. Even John, a New Testament writer, attests to the freedom that law provides: God’s commandments are not burdensome. Let’s look at these verses: **Deut. 30:11-14** “For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ But the word is very

near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.

I John 5:2-3 “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”

James 1:25 “But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the word, this one will be blessed in what he does”.

So what is the yoke of bondage? The question that the apostles and elders met to consider in Acts 15 was whether or not circumcision was a requirement for Gentiles to be saved. The “yoke” that Peter refers to is the yoke of man made rules. The Pharisees had burdened the people down with man made rules (Matthew 23:4). This caused people to trust in human effort instead of looking to God. Salvation by human effort is impossible. If circumcision was a necessary requirement for salvation, then we could earn our salvation. That would make the sacrifice of Christ of none effect. In Ezekiel 20, God rebukes the Israelites for being disobedient to His laws and commandments, and He said, “**I also gave them over to statutes that were not good and laws they could not live by**” (verse 35). The laws that were not good and they could not live by were man-made rules. Because they refused to listen to God’s rules which were good for them and easy to live by, they were given over to rules that were bondage. When the apostles conferred to decide how to handle this question, they decided that “...we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead, we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. For **Moses** has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the **synagogues** on every **Sabbath**” (Acts 15:20-21). These four commands are the minimum requirements for Gentiles so that they could **attend** the Synagogue and learn the law on the Sabbath. Notice that the Apostles even specify what they want Gentile converts to learn (Moses), where they want them to learn it (Synagogue), and when they want them to learn it (Sabbath)! Some have said that these four requirements are the only four things that Gentile believers in Jesus should obey, but this interpretation has problems because lying, stealing,

coveting, idol worship, and a host of other sins are not listed either. Paul said thieves, coveters, and drunkards will not enter the Kingdom (I Cor. 6:9-10). When we read it in context, the apostles are establishing a minimum level for Gentiles so that they can attend synagogue and hear the Word of God.

This same command is repeated to believers in Judea in **Acts 21:17-26**. In this second mentioning of this decision, we learn something very important about the life of Paul, God's chosen instrument to carry the gospel to the Gentiles. "When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers received us warmly. The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present. Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. When they heard this, they praised God. Then they said to Paul: 'You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come, so do what we tell you. There are four men with us who have made a vow. Take these men, join in their purification rites and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everybody will know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law. As for the Gentile believers, we have written to them our decision that they should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality.' The next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he went to the temple to give notice of the date when their days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them." Paul, God's chosen instrument to carry the gospel to the Gentiles, was questioned by his Jewish friends. Reports came about that claimed he was teaching Gentiles to turn away from the law. Paul is then tested by his fellow brothers: If he participates in the purification vows of the men, then he will show that the reports are not true and that he is obedient to the law (and teaches others to do the same). In the latter half of this passage, Paul partakes in the purification vows of these men in the temple area and shows them that he does not teach against the Law of Moses or break the Law of Moses himself.

You must remember that circumcision was the sign of the covenant. This was why this became a big issue in the early church.

For Gentile converts, the only way to hear the Word of God was to go to a Synagogue and the only day for them to hear the word of God is on the Sabbath. Requiring converts to be circumcised or be completely obedient to Torah before even coming to church might have made new converts think that salvation came by works. In fact, many Gentiles might have been discouraged by this because it takes time to learn God's ways and walk them out. Realizing this, the apostles made the requirements simple. When Gentiles enter into the synagogues and other places of worship, they can learn with everyone else as long as they follow those four precepts.

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- 1) Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation.
- 2) The Ten Commandments are God's guiding principles for the Christian Life.
- 3) The Sabbath is from Friday Sunset to Saturday Sunset.

Founded in 1943, the purpose of the BSA is not to bring all churches under an umbrella. Instead, we serve as a support group to all Sabbath keeping groups.

We have a wide variety of materials to help you defend and affirm your belief in the Sabbath. Additionally, we provide materials to help churches reach their communities.

Our main purpose is to promote fellowship and cooperation between Sabbath-keepers of various groups; to promote Sabbath observance on a nondenominational basis; to restore respect and honor for the Ten Commandments as a whole, with special emphasis on the Fourth, which has been forgotten by most of the world; to encourage the repeal of laws which enforce the keeping of Sunday (or any day) by any unit of man's government; and to defeat the adoption of any calendar which would disrupt the seven-day weekly cycle.

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Bible Sabbath Association
P.O. Box 7707
Bonney Lake, WA 98391
www.biblesabbath.org