



SCRIPTURES

- Galatians 1-6
- Matthew 11:28-30; 12:1-14
- Matthew 23:23-24
- John 7:20-24; Joshua 2:1-4

STRAINING A GNAT TO

CHOKER ON A CAMEL

- Strangle-ism
- Religionship or Relationship
- Prioritizing Laws

SCRIPTURE READING:

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are **heavy laden**, and I will give you rest. Take **My yoke** upon you and learn from Me, for I am **gentle and lowly** in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My **yoke is easy and My burden is light.**” Matthew 11:28-30 NKJV

“But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. **For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.**”” Matthew 12:7-8 NKJV

“Then He said to them, “What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? **Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.**”” Matthew 12:11-12 NKJV

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have **neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith.** These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. **Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!**” Matthew 23:23-24 NKJV

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, **not of works,** lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works,** which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:8-10 NKJV

“Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, **does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—**” Galatians 3:5 NKJV

“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.**”” Galatians 3:10 NKJV

INTRODUCTION

People love systems and procedures. There is nothing inherently wrong with that. In fact, God designed humans with a built-in recording system, one that can be programmed to

memorize systems and procedures to your great advantage. The recording mechanism is the nervous system, with countless interconnections between nerves throughout the body. One property of the system is that the more often you send signals down a certain path, messages that jump in a specific order from one nerve to the next to produce a desired action, the more locked-in that pathway becomes. It's like the busiest roadways in the largest cities; have you seen them? The endless passing tires carve out grooves in the roads. Or, like a river that cuts a channel into a mountain because it has flowed there for a thousand years.

However, what's even more stunning about the nervous system is that if the pathway is not efficient, it will grow new connections, novel pathways that are shorter and straighter, which are then memorized to run on autopilot. What advantage does this serve? Well, just think about tying your shoelaces. Or better yet, don't think about it! And that's the point; you don't have to think about it. You have repeated the pattern so often that now all you have to do is initiate the path and it seems to run on autopilot. You can do just about anything and tie your shoes at the same time. People that play musical instruments learn patterns and eventually their fingers do the walking with what appears to be no conscious effort. In both cases it did not start out that way. It was a repetitive step-by-step process, until it became "natural." The pattern of message

transmission has, in a sense, carved efficient paths, like tire grooves in a road or river channels through a mountain. And there are so many other examples in which these efficient patterns of message transmission are advantageous: typing, sports, dancing, driving, professional skills, etc. The nervous system learns efficient pathways, builds new connections as needed—then the nerves fire on autopilot to produce consistent reproducible actions—in other words, methodical duplicatable patterns that seem unconscious.

We humans seem to use this type of system-building in just about everything, and most times it is beneficial. However, when we apply these system-building tendencies to relationships, things don't go so smoothly. It seems that humans don't respond well to their connections with loved ones being overridden by an oblivious system that requires no conscious effort, no thoughtfulness. No one wants to be in a mechanical relationship that is built on autopilot—human connections nurtured by “methodical duplicatable patterns that seem unconscious.” And let me assure you, nor does God.

When we build our relationship with God into a system of rules and procedures—that is called religion. And when we insist others adhere to our preferred system of rules and procedures—that is a brand of legalism. Legalism is strangle-ism. It's the way we choke the life out of our relationship with God. God is not interested in your legalism or your religion; He is, nevertheless, interested in a

relationship. Don't turn your relationship with God into a religionship with God. If you do, you will actually be worshiping a God of your own creation, one who would command you to sit back and rest on the Sabbath, while you watch a man suffer. You will have created a God who would prefer you to strictly adhere to rules, rather than heal a man who had been suffering his whole life. Trust me, if you think that the Father of our blessed Savior Y'shua would choose Sabbath prohibitions over a man's life, you are in a religionship with Him, not a relationship. In other words, you would prefer to strain out a gnat, while being totally unaware that you are choking on a camel!

Straining a Gnat to Choke on a Camel

1. To define religion and legalism, and strangle-ism
2. To have a ([Religionship or Relationship](#)) with God
3. Prioritizing Laws: to resolve legal contradictions in God's commands.

*STRANGLE-ISM

1. Religion, Legalism and Blindness

A. The Blinding Darkness of Legalism

- (1) To set the stage we begin with Y'shua's words...
 - (a) The last words of Matthew 11...

1. “Come to Me, all you who labor and are **heavy laden**, and I will give you rest. Take **My yoke** upon you and learn from Me, for I am **gentle and lowly** in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For **My yoke is easy and My burden is light.**” Matthew 11:28-30 NKJV
 - a) There were many burdens attached to the religion that Jewish leadership foisted upon the people.
 - b) It was “heavy laden!” It was piled up, weighing too much to carry.
 - c) It was a yoke, as in that which was used to control beasts of burden.
 - d) The religion was hard, heavy and dark—not easy and light.
 - 1) ***Strangle-ism** is a made word. It’s the way we choke the life out of our relationship with God.
- (b) Heavy Laden: What made their religion so heavy?
(Context here is critical: we will be exploring Galatians in great detail.)
1. “And this occurred because of **false brethren** secretly brought in (who came in by stealth **to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage**), {16} knowing **that a**

man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be **justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law**; for **by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.**" Galatians 2:4, 16 NKJV

- a) This approach to God and His laws was typical in the first century (before Christ and still continued after the resurrection—even to the present day!)
 - b) And this is precisely the problem. Works of Law is what, in the modern day, we would call legalism.
 - c) It's bondage because redemption is predicated on something other than faith in Christ.
 - d) Even if good, like obeying God's commands, if you attach any requirements for justification, other than faith, it is complete bondage!
 - e) One liberty we have in Christ is that we have been freed from the erroneous belief that we can obey our way into redemption.
2. "Stand fast therefore in **the liberty by which Christ has made us free**, and **do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.**" Galatians 5:1 NKJV

- a) Now Y'shua's words should mean more than ever... *"My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*
 - b) Many Christians **erroneously interpret** "heavy laden" as the label attached to any teaching that espouses the value or necessity of obeying God's commandments.
 - c) However, correctly interpreted, heavy laden is instead when there is any requirement to be saved (even something good), other than by grace through faith.
 - d) Y'shua consistently addressed "heavy laden" errors.
 - e) Paul was doing the same! That is why it is essential that we read Galatians in context.
- (c) Why a yoke? Peter used the it too! And again, context is critical!
1. "Now therefore, why **do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?** But we believe that **through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved** in the same manner as they.'" Acts 15:10-11 NKJV

- a) This crisis was still being addressed in the Book of Acts, as the Church expanded.
 - 1) A yoke, as symbolic of something oppressive or burdensome, would have been well understood in their culture.
 - 2) A yoke is a wooden crosspiece fastened over the necks of two (or more) animals and attached to the equipment they are required to pull.
 - 3) Under complete control of their master, the animals are bound together and “forced” to perform their “duty.”
 - 4) The yoke around the neck, to which Peter is referring in Acts, was any requirement, other than by grace through faith, to be saved.
- b) Religious “masters” **yoked salvation to obedience**—**something that no one *could* bear!** They also wished to **yoke the people to themselves**, to have them under their complete control—**something that no one *should* bear!**
 - 1) *“They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, **that you may be zealous for them.**” Galatians 4:17 NKJV*

2) “For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but **they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.**”

Galatians 6:13 NKJV

c) It is essential that we read the text in context!

1) Many Christians erroneously interpret this teaching in Acts 15 (and Galatians), as if they are minimizing the importance of, or canceling altogether the value of God’s commandments.

2. “And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, “**Unless** you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, **you cannot be saved.**” {5}
But some of the sect of the **Pharisees who believed** rose up, saying, “**It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.**””

Acts 15:1, 5 NKJV

a) Notice this addresses “**Pharisees who believed**” that Y’shua is the Messiah—not adversaries who denied Him. The context is quite clear.

b) First century Jews were having a difficult time accepting that obeying God’s commandments was not a requirement for eternal redemption.

- c) It makes sense they would be stuck in this way of thinking because that is what they had been taught their whole lives by the Jewish leadership.
- d) This is why Y'shua and the New Testament authors make numerous corrections to this faulty doctrine.

RELIGIONSHIP OR RELATIONSHIP

2. A Walk Through Galatians

A. Context: Don't add a single requirement to be saved!

(1) Defining Terms: Concerning People

- (a) Relation: the way in which two or more people are **connected**, as in by blood or marriage.
- (b) Relationship: *Relation* + the way in which people **regard** and **behave** toward each other; the **effect** one person has on or his **relevance** to another person.
- (c) Religion: the **belief** in and worship of a superhuman power, especially a god(s); a particular **system** of faith and worship; a **pursuit** or **interest** to which someone ascribes supreme importance.
- (d) *Religionship: *Religion* + the connection people have to that particular **belief**, **system**, **pursuit** or **interest**; the **impersonal** behavior toward their religion, as opposed to a **personal** connection with God.

1. **Religionship is not a “real” word (at least not yet). I invented it, with its definition, for the purpose of emphasizing the main point of this sermon. DJH*

2. Working Concepts!

- a) Religion: when we **insist** that our relationship with God is dependent on a system of rules and procedures.
- b) Legalism: when we **insist** others must adhere to our or a preferred system of rules and procedures (religion) to be in right standing with God.

(e) Religionship or Relationship?

1. **“Do not quench the Spirit.** Do not despise prophecies. **Test all things;** hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.” I Thessalonians 5:19-22 NKJV

- a) It is incumbent upon you to test whether or not you are involved in religion, legalism, strangle-ism, and religionship—or relationship!
- b) There are those who would prefer to practice a religion over seeking the intimacy of a relationship with God, those who would choose the religion of a man over the relation of a Father.

- c) Note to self: Yahweh cannot use a compromised man to change a compromised world!

(2) The Definitive Word on Legalism—a taste of Galatians

- (a) Exploratory surgery into Galatians. You are encouraged to read the entire letter, but for now, let's isolate a number of key verses that will sufficiently diagnose and treat the prevailing disease of **religionship** and **legalism**.

1. "I marvel that you are **turning away so soon** from Him who **called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another**; but there are some who trouble you and want to **pervert the gospel** of Christ." Galatians 1:6-7 NKJV

- a) A different gospel: it is not really another gospel (good news) because it is not good news at all!
- b) Why? Because it is a perverted version of good news, and quite troubling.
- c) If you believe you must add something to God's grace to be saved, that is NOT good news.

2. "For you have heard of my **former conduct in Judaism**, how **I persecuted the church** of God beyond measure and **tried to destroy it**. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, **being more**

exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers."

Galatians 1:13-14 NKJV

- a) Paul was previously the most zealous for the "traditions of his fathers," which is precisely the problem.
 - b) Those traditions dictated strict obedience to God's commandments in order to be saved, in other words, legalism.
 - c) Paul was adamant about his "legalism and religion," so much so that he persecuted the church over it.
 - d) As a result of his beliefs, he was bound to "works of law" for salvation. (More clarity on what that means is coming later in this study.)
3. "And **this occurred** because of **false brethren** secretly brought in (who came in by stealth **to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ** Jesus, that they might **bring us into bondage**)," Galatians 2:4 NKJV
- a) After his conversion, Paul realized how so many Jews were stuck in their "legalism and religion."
 - b) Those who still had the same wrong beliefs that Paul used to have, had come into the region after Paul, and they tried to convince the Galatians that

they still needed to adhere to all the commands of God to be saved.

c) To require anything but faith to be saved is bondage! That is quite the opposite of the liberty we have in Christ. What is our “liberty” in Christ?

d) Remember, it was by grace you were saved through faith; it was not **because of** any works (of law) you performed, but it is for the good works you will perform.

1) “For by **grace you have been saved through faith**, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, **not of works**, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand that **we should walk in them.**”

Ephesians 2:8-10 NKJV

e) Bondage: You believe works are needed for your salvation.

f) Liberty (freedom): You believe works result from your salvation.

g) It is for this freedom (the freedom and empowerment to obey God) that Christ has set us free! (Galatians 5:1)

(b) Let's clarify what it means when Paul uses the term
"works of the law."

1. "knowing that **a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ**, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be **justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law**; for **by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.**"

Galatians 2:16 NKJV

- a) Here is Paul's definitive statement, clarifying that it is only by faith that a man is justified.
- b) He uses the Hebraic phrase "works of the law" to distinguish the requirement to obey the law in order to be saved, from obedience to the law as a result of faith.
- c) That is why he says, "by **works of the law** no flesh shall be justified."
- d) He brings complete clarity to this distinction in his letter to the Romans. Notice the two opposing ideas..."doers of vs. works of"
 - 1) "(for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but ***the doers of the law will be justified***;" Romans 2:13 NKJV

- 2) “Therefore ***by the deeds [works] of the law no flesh will be justified*** in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” Romans 3:20 NKJV
- e) “Doers of the law” is a phrase that means obedience as a result of faith (an indication that justification has taken place).
- f) “Works (or deeds) of the law” is a phrase that means you are trying to be justified by obedience (apart from faith).
2. “O foolish Galatians! Who has **bewitched** you that you should **not obey the truth**, before whose eyes Jesus **Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified**? This only I want to learn from you: **Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?**” Galatians 3:1-2 NKJV
- a) The Galatians already had the truth, but someone came in and twisted their thinking.
- b) Paul clearly taught them that faith in Christ crucified was the only path to salvation.
- c) That’s how they received the Holy Spirit.
- d) They did not receive the Holy Spirit by trying to work their way to salvation by obedience to God’s laws in their own strength.

3. “Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it **by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?**—”

Galatians 3:5 NKJV

- a) Make up your mind, did you come to the truth by trying to get right with God the same way Jewish leadership has always taught it?
- b) Or, was it by hearing about Christ and believing?

4. “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.””

Galatians 3:10 NKJV

- a) Here is where most Christians really twist Galatians. If you are of “works of the law,” Why are you under a curse? Choose one:
 - ☐ It is a curse to try to obey the law.
 - ☐ If you try to obey the law you will fail.
 - ☐ Works of law, by definition, means you are NOT obeying the law!
- b) Hint: consider what you have learned thus far in this teaching

- c) Reference point for Galatians 3:10: *“Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”*
 - 1) *“‘Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law **by observing them.**’ ‘And all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’” Deuteronomy 27:26 NKJV*
- d) Ask yourself, are you cursed for trying do (obey) God’s laws, or are you cursed for not doing (obeying) them (see Deuteronomy 27:14-25)? And don’t forget what “doing the law means as per Romans 2:13. (*Doers of the law*” is a phrase that indicates obedience as a result of faith (a sign of justification and that obedience is now possible!))
- e) Cursed is the one who... Deut. 27:14-25
 - 1) ...makes a carved or molded image
 - 2) ...treats his mother and/or father with contempt
 - 3) ...moves his neighbor’s boarder
 - 4) ...makes the blind to wander off (deceives them)
 - 5) ...perverts the justice
 - 6) ...lies with his father’s wife
 - 7) ...lies with any kind of animal

- 8) ...lies with his sister
- 9) ...lies with his mother-in-law
- 10) ...attacks his neighbor secretly.
- 11) ...takes a bribe to slay an innocent person.

f) **Obedience to what?** *As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, because cursed is the one who doesn't observe all the words of the law, hence "works of the law" describes one who does NOT do the law—in other words, one who violates God's commands.*

g) **Legalism:** *"For as many as are of the **works of the law** are under a curse."*

5. "But that **no one is justified by the law** in the sight of God is evident, for **"the just shall live by faith."**"

Galatians 3:11 NKJV

- a) You can't obey the law to be justified. Doing so would mean you are not obeying the law, because the law teaches that it can't be used to be justified!
- b) Any attempt to be justified by law is works of the law is just a **veiled brand of disobedience.**
- c) Anyone who believes they can or must achieve right standing with God by **works of the law** is living under a curse.

- d) Why is “works of the law” a curse?
 - 1) It is impossible to obey God’s commands in your own strength.
 - 2) It specifically identifies someone NOT keeping God’s commands by faith.
 - 3) You are under a curse—for not obeying God.
- e) Hint: because we cannot do it in our own strength is why we need a Savior and the Holy Spirit. If you could do it on your own, you’d need neither.
- f) **Point of Clarity:** Faith in Christ does something that a man cannot do on his own.
 - 1) That is why a man must be justified by faith in Christ— *“The righteous will live by faith.”*
- g) But one must be careful when interpreting all that Paul is saying, and to NOT read into something he is NOT saying.
 - 1) *“...even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you, as also in all of his letters, speaking in them of these things. In those, **there are some things that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unsettled twist, as they also do to the other***

Scriptures, to their own destruction." 2 Peter

3:15-16 WEBUS

h) We can be certain of Paul's intent in Galatians 3:11 by what follows in the next verse...

6. "Yet the law is not of faith, but "***the man who does them shall live by them.**" Galatians 3:12 NKJV

(*Paul also referenced this passage in Romans 10:5)

a) This will help prevent you from coming against the importance of obedience to God's law.

1) When he says, "*The law is not of faith,*" you must take what he says in context. Interpret the phrase as, "*The works of the law is not of faith.*"

2) Then, to understand, "*the man who does them shall live by them,*" you need to know its origin.

b) It is a quote from the Old Testament (Leviticus 18:5), a reference that magnifies the importance of obeying God's law, and thus Paul could not possibly use it to disparage God's laws in any way.

c) If we go to the reference passage, it should be easy to discern that leaving the pagan practices of your past and strongly adhering to Yahweh's commands will bring you life (a very good thing)! So, how could Paul mean it to be negative? It would be

only be “bad” if you attempt to “do them” in your own strength—works of the law—because that guarantees failure to obey!

- 1) *“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, ‘I am Yahweh your God. You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived. You shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. You shall not follow their statutes. You shall do my ordinances. **You shall keep my statutes and walk in them. I am Yahweh your God. You shall therefore keep my statutes and my ordinances, which if a man does, he shall live in them.** I am Yahweh.”*

Leviticus 18:2-5 WEBUS

- d) Romans Outtake: Now that you understand what **“works of the law”** means, and what it doesn’t mean, you must also understand what it means to be **“under the law”**.

- 1) *“Now we know that whatever things the law says, it speaks to those **who are under the law**, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God. **Because by the works of the law, no flesh***

will be justified in his sight; for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.” Romans 3:19-20

WEBUS

- e) Legalism or Under the law!
 - 1) It means that you believe you can be justified by strict adherence to God’s commands in your own strength, and now with one added nuance—albeit a critical one.
 - 2) If you are “under the law”, there is no remedy when you fall short of total obedience.
 - 3) To not be “under the law” DOES NOT mean God’s laws no longer apply—it simply means you have a remedy for falling short.
 - 4) Under the law equates to having no remedy for disobedience because you are depending on yourself for total obedience.
- f) It is clear that Paul magnified obedience to God’s commands as a way of life, **but the act of being obedient to God by faith was called something other than the idiom: “works of the law.”**
- g) That idiom was: **“doer of the law.”** Do you see here that although by *“works of the law, no flesh*

will be justified,” “the doers of the law will be justified”?

1) *“For as many as have sinned without the law will also perish without the law. As many as have sinned **under the law** will be judged by the law. **For it isn’t the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law will be justified.**”* Romans 2:12-13 WEBUS

h) A doer of the law identifies those being obedient by faith because, *“The righteous will live by faith.”* They are those of whom the Scripture speaks, *“The man who **does them** will live by them.”*

i) For our purposes and to forever bring clarity, we will call doing the law, *“grace-empowered-faith-based-obedience,”* to contrast it from legalism, works of the law, and under the law!

j) Therefore...

1) *“We maintain therefore that a man is **justified by faith apart from the works of the law.**”*

Romans 3:28 WEBUS

k) Back to Galatians...

7. **“What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should**

come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.”

Galatians 3:19 NKJV

- a) With all this new knowledge, does the law still serve any purpose?
- b) The law always existed, yes, even before Mount Sinai. But it was added (or codified in writing), so that no man could have an excuse.
- c) Once codified, transgressions became more obvious.
- d) How long will the law serve this purpose?
- e) Until the seed should come!
- f) But what does that mean? Does it mean that the law had a purpose only until Christ came in the first century?

8. **“Is the law then against the promises of God?**

Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, **that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ** might be given to those who believe.”

Galatians 3:21-22 NKJV

- a) Is there something wrong with the law? Of course not!
 - b) The law serves its purpose to show us that we can't ever be righteous on our own.
 - c) If the law could have ever done what Christ came to do, there would have been no need for Christ.
 - d) So again I ask, with all this new knowledge, does the law still serve any purpose?
9. "Therefore **the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ**, that we might be **justified by faith**. But **after faith has come**, we are **no longer under a tutor**."
- Galatians 3:24-25 NKJV
- a) The law is the tutor to bring us to Christ and to the understanding that He is the only way to be justified.
 - b) Once we have Christ (after we have faith), why would we need a tutor anymore?
 - c) Again I ask, with all this new knowledge, does the law still serve any purpose?
10. "For **you are all sons** of God **through faith** in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:26 NKJV
- a) We become sons through faith, and...

11. "And if you are Christ's, **then you are Abraham's seed**, and heirs according to the promise." Galatians 3:29 NKJV
- a) So, in Christ, you are Abraham's seed, and the following explains why you still need a tutor...
12. "Now I say that the heir, **as long as he is a child**, does **not differ at all from a slave**, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father." Galatians 4:1-2 NKJV
- a) As long as the heir (the Church) is an immature child, he is still in need of a guardian and tutor to keep pointing to Christ.
- b) For how long? Until the appointed time.
- c) And when is that?
13. "Even so we, **when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world**. But **when the fullness of the time had come**, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we **might receive the adoption as sons.**" Galatians 4:3-5 NKJV
- a) We now have a remedy when we fall short, so we are redeemed from being "under the law."

- b) So again, does the law still serve any purpose?
- c) Wasn't the appointed time when Christ came the first time, as it was then that we were adopted as sons?
- d) Certainly, it was then that we were freed from bondage to the "elements of the world..." but were we freed from God's laws?
- e) Answer: as long as the heirs are still children (developmentally immature, not adults), the appointed time is not complete. Christ's first coming was just the beginning!
- f) In other words, although we are master of all, we are still **under guardians and stewards!**
- g) And... we need to look for ANOTHER appointed time.

14. "My little children, for whom I labor in birth again **until Christ is formed in you,**" Galatians 4:19 NKJV

- a) Ah, there it is 17 verses later.
 - 1) The appointed time was not at Christ's first coming, but instead, when Christ is fully formed in His people.
 - 2) In other words, when the kingdom of heaven manifests on earth.

b) And that is consistent with the words of our blessed Savior Himself:

- 1) *“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 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.**”*

Matthew 5:17-18 NKJV

c) And it is also consistent with what Peter says we are still waiting for...

- 1) *“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, **so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things,** which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.”*

Acts 3:19-21 NKJV

- 2) So again I ask, with all this new knowledge, does the law still serve any purpose?

- 3) Yes...until Christ is fully formed in His people and the restoration of all things, the guardian and tutor remains necessary.
- d) This is consistent with Paul's teachings to the Ephesians:
 - 1) *"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, **till we all come to** the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to **a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;** that we should **no longer be children, tossed to and fro** and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,"* Ephesians 4:11-14 NKJV
 - 2) And because this is true, it is imperative you keep this in context and don't get drawn back into thinking you need to obey the law to be saved!
- 15. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and **do not be entangled again**

with a yoke of bondage. Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to **every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.** You have become estranged from Christ, **you who attempt to be justified by law;** you have fallen from grace.” Galatians 5:1-4 NKJV

a) There it is... We have come full circle; the context is crystal clear:

1) If you attempt to be justified by law, you have alienated Christ; placed yourself in bondage again; and rejected your dependence on God's grace.

2) Do not be brought back into bondage, thinking that obedience can save you.

b) But rather live in the liberty that only grace through faith can save you, and with that grace you are now empowered to obey.

1) You see... *“For by **grace you have been saved through faith**, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, **not of works**, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God*

prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:8-10 NKJV

- c) That was our launchpad—now we can move onto Prioritizing Laws!

PRIORITIZING LAWS

3. The Proper Perspective on God’s Laws

A. The Lord of the Sabbath

(1) Mercy over Sacrifice

(a) Sifting through priorities...

1. “At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, “Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!” But He said to them, “**Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread [1 Samuel 21:1-6] which was not lawful for him to eat [Leviticus 24:5-9], nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and**

are blameless? [Numbers 28:9-10] Yet I say to you that **in this place there is One greater than the temple.** But if you had known what this means, '**I desire mercy and not sacrifice,**' [Hosea 6:6] you **would not have condemned the guiltless.** For **the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.**"" Matthew 12:1-8 NKJV

- a) I think this will be easier to grasp, now that we've examined those heavy burdens and yokes.
 - 1) What Y'shua imparted about heavy burdens in three verses in Matthew 11:28-30, Paul emphasized throughout his letter to the Galatians. *"To require obedience to the law to be justified is an overwhelming weight that will crush you."*
 - 2) The light burden is this...a man is justified by by faith in Jesus Christ. So, stand in the liberty by which Christ has made you free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage...
 - 3) Bondage? Yes, if you attempt to be justified by law, you will neglect the gift of grace.

b) Now Y'shua is walking through the grainfields with His hungry disciples on the Sabbath and they pick some grains and eat.

1) They are immediately accused by the Pharisees of doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath!

2) Y'shua knows there is no such law, and the accusation is really just about a violation of the tradition that men "added to the law."

c) And God is very clear on not adding or taking away from His word!

1) *"You **shall not add to the word** which I command you, **nor take from it**, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you."* Deuteronomy 4:2

NKJV

2) *"For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: **If anyone adds to these things**, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and **if anyone takes away from the words** of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the*

things which are written in this book."

Revelation 22:18-19 NKJV

d) "Adding or taking away" is very different than what Y'shua did in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) when multiple times He said, *"You have heard it said said of old... but I say to you..."*

1) Why is it different? Because He did not add or take away; instead, He clarified what they were missing. *"Y'shua did not come to loosen or halt the law, but to fully preach it."*

2) Apologetics for Y'shua's stance on the Law: *"Do not think that I came to **destroy** the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to **destroy** but to **fulfill**."* Matthew 5:17 NKJV

3) See all three teachings on the Sermon in the Mount...

☐ [On Collision Course!](#) (Matthew 5)

☐ [Tomorrow Never Comes](#) (Matthew 6)

☐ [Six Degrees of Separation](#) (Matthew 7)

e) Y'shua equipped us to discern the heart of God and understand what He would see as priorities!

1) As such, Y'shua rebuts their assertions by referencing how David and his men ate the

Showbread when they were in need and how the priests serve or work in the temple on the Sabbath and are considered blameless.

- 2) And now you are looking at One greater than the temple!
- 3) He goes on to teach them how God is about mercy and not sacrifice, the heart, not legalism.
- 4) *“For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”* Matthew 12:8

(b) A Perfect Example of God’s Heart

1. Showbread and Temple Service

- a) David and his men had not eaten. Do you eat from the showbread meant only for the priests or do you let you men suffer? (See I Samuel 21:6)
- b) The bread was replaced every Sabbath with fresh bread and only the priests were permitted to eat it! (See: Leviticus 24:5-9 and Exodus 25:30)
- c) What do you do? The bread happens EVERY WEEK; the men are hungry NOW! Clearly the men are MORE IMPORTANT than the Bread.

2. Another Perfect Example: The Priests and the Sabbath

- a) The Priests are commanded to work on the Sabbath (see Numbers 28:9-10). *Have you not*

read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? (Matthew 12:5)

- b) Are they Guilty of violating the Sabbath?
 - c) What should they do?
 - d) The Levitical Priests were divided into 24 groups for the purposes of their service in the Temple, known as the [priestly divisions or courses](#). You can see the details in I Chronicles 24:1-19.
 - e) This simply means that a priest only served on the Sabbath one time every 24 weeks.
 - f) Why are they blameless? (Matthew 12:5) Because the command for the Temple service happens every week, and the priest who is on duty must do so only two times per year!
 - g) Therefore, there is no prohibition in the sanctuary on the Sabbath!
3. Now we really know what Y'shua meant when He said... **'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,'** [*Hosea 6:6*] you **would not have condemned the guiltless.** For **the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.**"" Matthew 12:7-8 NKJV
- a) *I desire mercy and not sacrifice...*

- 1) “For I desire **mercy and not sacrifice**, And **the knowledge of God** more than **burnt offerings.**”

Hosea 6:6 NKJV

- 2) Yahweh prioritizes the heart above all else, especially your understanding of His heart!
- b) If you understood these things, you would have recognized that when one command is transgressed in order to fulfill another command, which takes precedent in the moment, the “violator” is guiltless (as if they have transgressed no command)!
- c) *Why is the Son of Man Lord even of the Sabbath?*
 - 1) Not because He has taught us how to violate it, but because he has taught us how to keep it with the heart of the Father!

(2) Not All Laws are Created Equal

(a) Weightier Matters of the Law

1. ““Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and **have neglected the weightier matters of the law:** justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. **Blind**

guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!”

Matthew 23:23-24 NKJV

- a) You are hyper-concerned about the minute details of the law, instead of seeing how God’s laws reflect God’s heart.
 - b) God is infinitely more concerned with justice, mercy and faith, than your obsession with using His commands, as if completing a checklist will make you more pleasing to God.
 - c) Sure, every one of God’s laws are important, but they lose their meaning if you dismiss God’s true intent, in lieu of simply checking things off on a to-do list.
 - d) You can become so concerned for the slightest details that you miss God’s heart—so desperate to find the tiniest insect that might have landed on your food that you can’t feel the giant elephant sitting on your chest.
- (3) The Father’s Heart: Pay attention, be sensitive to God’s Heart for people
- (a) I perceive that you are very religious...
 - 1. “Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, **I perceive that in all things you**

are very religious; for as I was passing through and **considering the objects of your worship,** I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, **Him I proclaim to you:"**
Acts 17:22-23 NKJV

- a) You must catch the brilliance here.
 - 1) Paul is addressing a group of pagans in Greece.
 - 2) But, he also recognizes that they consider themselves highly spiritual.
 - 3) They worship many gods, and to ensure they don't miss one, they have even erected a statue to an unknown god.
 - 4) Paul acknowledges their spiritual propensity, thus connecting with their hearts, and then he tells them that he has good news for them.
 - 5) He knows who the unknown god is, the God they don't know.
 - 6) Then, he introduces them to the Lord of all Creation, Yahweh, and his son Y'shua. (See Acts 17:16-33)
- (b) All things to all men by all means...for the Gospel's sake!

1. “For **though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all**, that I might win the more; and **to the Jews I became as a Jew**, that I might win Jews; **to those who are under the law, as under the law**, that I might win those who are under the law; **to those who are without law, as without law** (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; **to the weak I became as weak**, that I might win the weak. **I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel’s sake**, that I may be partaker of it with you.” I Corinthians 9:19-23 NKJV

- a) Again, you must appreciate Paul’s brilliance.
 - 1) Recognize the context. What is he saying?
 - 2) He connects with people on a heart level.
 - 3) He ensures that people know that he understands them, and has empathy for them.
 - 4) He does this because it opens their hearts for the Gospel.
 - 5) He is certain to clarify for us that he is NOT saying he is without law to the lawless, and that he is always adhering to God’s laws.

6) The big takeaway is simply that he wants to connect with people, so they can hear the message of the gospel, instead of repelling people with religion and legalism.

(c) The Law of Liberty (See: [Identify Politics](#))

1. **“Receive one who is weak in the faith,** but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. **Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats;** for God has received him... {13}

Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, **not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way.** I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. **Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.”** Romans 14:1-3, 13-15
NKJV

a) See Romans 14:1-15 to understand the liberty we have in Christ.

- 1) In it we learn that the welfare of a brother takes precedence over our own liberty!
- 2) What is liberty? The freedom, power, and knowledge to obey God, and the wisdom to know when our brother's needs are the priority in the moment!
- 3) When you study the context of Romans 14, you will come to realize that the conflict Paul is resolving goes two ways.
- 4) Those weak in the faith do not have enough knowledge about God's laws to make informed decisions about their food and the rules God has placed in the Torah. They can't recognize clean from unclean meat so they choose to eat vegetables only.
- 5) Those who are mature in the faith know the difference. However, even though knowing gives you liberty to choose clean meat, if that choice causes another brother to stumble, because they do not share that same liberty, then you are better off eating only vegetables, so they do not stumble, believing they might be eating something unclean.

- 6) Once they become mature in the faith, they will know the difference (and gain liberty).
- 7) Conversely, those who cannot distinguish clean from unclean, should refrain from judging those who do.
- 8) In other words, in all matters, the heart of God is that we prefer one another.

B. Healing on the Sabbath

(1) Doing Good on the Sabbath

(a) Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?

1. “Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, **“Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”**—that they might accuse Him. Then He said to them, “What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? **Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.**” Then He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees

went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him.” Matthew 12:9-14 NKJV

- a) Y’shua again wants to demonstrate what it means to be the Lord of the Sabbath—one who masters the heart of the Father!
 - 1) He finds a man with a withered hand in the synagogue. And again He wants to challenge the religious leaders and their prevailing legalism. He asks, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”
 - 2) He compares men to animals and how everyone knows any human with a heart would help a hurting animal—even if it was on the Sabbath.
 - 3) Why? Because it should be obvious that there is no law that would prevent a man from doing good on the Sabbath—even if doing that good deed actually violates a true Sabbath prohibition.
 - 4) In other words, the welfare of a man (and animal) supersedes Sabbath Law.
 - 5) And if you had your pulse on God’s heart, you’d know that!

- 6) So, Y'shua healed the man and the religious leaders were incensed and wanted to execute Him—such hypocrisy.
- 7) Why would Y'shua create such controversy... AGAIN to show that... "The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." Matthew 12:8

(2) Apologetics when one Law is in conflict with another...

(a) Knowing the heart of God... Sabbath vs. Circumcision

1. "The people answered and said, "You have a demon. Who is seeking to kill You?" Jesus answered and said to them, **"I did one work, and you all marvel. Moses therefore gave you circumcision [Leviticus 12:3] (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath [Exodus 20:8]. If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath?** Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

John 7:20-24 NKJV

- a) **Prioritizing laws: Y'shua exposes the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders in John 7:20-24.**

1) *“You claim to follow Moses while breaking the law of Moses. You want to kill Me for healing a man on the Sabbath, and yet Moses would circumcise a boy on the Sabbath if that’s what it takes to obey the command to circumcise on the eighth day. In other words, it’s obvious that at times you must break one law to obey the greater law in the moment.”*

(b) The controversy: essential clarification about the Law.

1. “And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin **shall be circumcised.**” Leviticus 12:3 NKJV
2. “Remember the Sabbath day, to **keep it holy.**” Exodus 20:8 NKJV
 - a) When one Law is in conflict with another, you must discern the heart of God on the matter.
 - 1) In other words, when keeping one command will cause you to break another, you must choose which one is the “priority in the moment.”
 - 2) When you do, it’s as if you did not break the command that you chose to violate, because you honored the higher command in the moment.

- 3) The opportunity to keep the Sabbath is WEEKLY, the opportunity to circumcise on the eighth day is ONE TIME! What would you do?
- 4) Y'shua's emphasis on priorities was not an annulment of the law, but instead the proper application of the Law.
- 5) *"Y'shua did not come to loosen or halt the law, but to fully preach it." Matthew 5:17*

(c) **Prioritizing laws:**

1. "Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." So they went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there. And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, "Behold, men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the country." So the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the country." **Then the woman took the two men and hid them. So she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from."** Joshua 2:1-4 NKJV

- a) This is an outright lie. And the Bible has much to say about that, however the priority here is the life of God's servants OVER the lie told to protect them!
- 1) Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. **You shall not testify falsely [that is, lie, withhold, or manipulate the truth]**. Exodus 20:16
 - 2) **"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?** Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God." I Corinthians 6:9-10 NKJV
 - 3) "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and **all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone,** which is the second death." {27} **But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie,** but only those

who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

Revelation 21:8, 27 NKJV

- b) When one Law is in conflict with another, you must discern the heart of God on the matter.
 - 1) When keeping one command will cause you to break another, you must choose which one is the "priority in the moment."
 - 2) When you do, it's as if you did not break the command that you chose to violate; you honored the higher command in the moment.
 - 3) Y'shua's emphasis on priorities was not an annulment of the law, but a proper application.
 - 4) *"Y'shua did not come to loosen or halt the law, but to fully preach it." Matthew 5:17*

QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION (PLEASE REFER TO THE SERMON NOTES TO HELP NAVIGATE THESE QUESTIONS)

1. In Matthew 11:28-30, Y'shua offers us rest from hard yokes and heavy burdens.

- A. In order to understand what that means, please explore Galatians 2:4, 16; 5:1 & Acts 15:1-11. Then, explain what the

hard yoke and heavy burden must be (while also considering Matthew 5:17-20).

2. Read and re-read the letter to the Galatians and refer to the sermon notes to help.

- A. Why might we consider the letter to the Galatians the definitive word on legalism (the belief that works are needed for your salvation)?
- B. In light of this, define “works of law.” (See Romans 2:13 and 3:20 to help.)
- C. Explain why if you are of the works of the law are under the curse. (See Galatians 3:10 and Deuteronomy 27:26)
- D. Use Galatians 3:24-25 and Galatians 4:1-2, 19 to explain why the law still has value!

3. Read Matthew 12:1-14 and consider the Father’s heart when there seems to be conflicts in applying His Laws.

- A. Use Acts 17:22-23; I Corinthians 9:19-23; Romans 14:1-15 and John 7:20-24 to explain God’s heart about how to apply His laws in different circumstances.
- B. Then re-read Matthew 12:1-14 and explain why Y’shua taught what He did.

4. Prioritizing Laws: Explain the proper perspective on obeying God’s laws as per...

- A. Y’shua being the Lord of the Sabbath. (Matthew 12:1-8)

- B. Straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel (Matthew 23:23-24)
- C. Paul's words to the men of Athens. (Acts 17:22-23)
- D. Becoming all things to all men. (I Corinthians 9:19-23)
- E. Those weak in the faith. (Romans 14:1-3, 13-15)
- F. Healing of the Sabbath. (Matthew 12:9-14)
- G. Moses and circumcision on the Sabbath (John 7:20-24)
- H. Rahab lying to protect Joshua's spies. (Joshua 2:1-4)