

Christianity 101:

What every Christian needs to Know Concerning their Faith

By William H. Hohmann

Preface

This book is by no means complete, as there always seems to be something further that needs to be covered or clarified. The most difficult issue in relation to this material is in dealing with those who are still ensconced in belief systems that are flawed; systems based on deceptions, where part of the issue is the indoctrination and conditioning one undergoes that serves to shut out any and all information that contradicts the belief system.

It is a methodology of deceit that goes far beyond religion, for we see it employed in many other fields, especially politics. Rarely do you see politicians “jumping ship” for the “other side” and when it does happen, sparks fly as a result. Likewise, rarely do you see people abandon a false belief system, and when you do, the theological sparks fly, followed by all sorts of accusations and rationalizations designed to justify one's continued involvement in a false system. Those who abandon the false belief system are labeled as not really ever being with the program. They are seen as those who “had a bad attitude” or my favorite, “he/she/they are just “disgruntled ex member(s)” who now have an axe to grind over some imaginary issue or problem.

When you read the gospel accounts, and see the things said by those who were the enemies of Christ, they often employed this line of reasoning, disparaging Christ as a person in order to diminish or reject out of hand anything He had to say. You would think that those who claim to be Christian would see that there is a problem when you start using the methods employed by the enemies of Christ to serve your own beliefs.

I have counseled and interviewed many people who have come out of false belief systems, and the results of all this have been enlightening. Rarely does a person leave a false belief system due to their personal studies of the Scriptures. In fact, those involved in a false system will proverbially swear on a stack of Bibles that they diligently and prayerfully studied the Scriptures and came to their conclusions and beliefs as a result, never admitting they were led down a prim-rose path by the very organization they are a part of through any indoctrination through literature or fixed Bible studies or Correspondence courses.

It is generally the case that people either leave as a result of some abuse inflicted on them by the group or the leadership of the group that is inconsistent with what they believe the representatives of God would do, or they left the group or environment of the group long enough that they began to think for themselves, and started evaluating their involvement in said group or religion with a more critical eye than they did previously. For example, I have met people who were raised in the Islamic faith in another country, who, upon leaving that country and immigrated to this country, no longer had to deal with the fear of living among others of the same belief, and felt free to truly examine their beliefs, only to conclude their prophet was a false prophet who was his own witness.

The power of the group cannot be underestimated therefore, for in a false belief system, the individual's existence becomes tied to the group, and conformity to the group is commanded by the group. For these people, connection to Christ as a “branch” of the plant to Christ, is via the organization. They get in the way; they get in between the believer and Christ (when it comes to false Christianity). They interpret and 'intercede' between Christ and the believer, filtering everything in the process.

This book then is an attempt to “cover the basics” in Christianity and to supply the reader with a “primer” of sorts of the tools one needs to discern truth from error, for the one who has been taken in by a false belief system has no real method of determining truth from error other than the methods taught to them by the very groups that mislead them, using the methods of deception.

Section I ~ The Basics

Chapter 1

The Theme of Scripture: Faith

There is an over-arching theme to Scripture from beginning to end. A ¹legalist concludes the theme is law. All things are viewed from the perspective of law; Adam and Eve sinned, sin being transgression of law. God gave “His Law” to the Israelites in the furtherance of God’s revelation to mankind. Jesus came to “magnify and make honorable the law” and that Christ will rule the nations through law; a law that will remain eternal. God, in the new covenant puts “His law” in the believer.

This however is not the theme of Scripture. As there is one true gospel and many false gospels, there is one over-arching theme of Scripture, and many false themes.

The theme of Scripture is faith; Faith lost, and faith restored. Faith in Christ; faith in God.

What was the sin of Adam and Eve? Was it a violation of law? God gave a commandment to them, that of every tree in the garden of Eden, they could freely eat, with the exception of one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. One with a legalistic paradigm concludes they violated the “law” of God in the transgression of His commandment. But we need to make a distinction here between the action of violating a command of God and the intent of heart, which is where the issue truly begins.

Adam and Eve had to first make a decision to eat of that tree. There was an intent of heart.

But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man; ...
Matthew 15:18-20 NASB

Why then did Adam and Eve decide to eat that fruit? What was their motivation? What was the real sin here?

They did not believe God. God said they would surely die. The serpent told them otherwise, that;

1. They would not die
2. They would be as gods, knowing good and evil.

The lesson was learned the hard way. They learned what evil was alright, and the consequences of evil; in this case their faithlessness in God and subsequent disobedience.

Their minds were now corrupted. There was now a separation from the mind of God, and soon this was to be followed by a physical separation from God and His Provision, being ejected from the garden of Eden. This was their “death.”

¹ A legalist is broadly defined as one who believes in some form of law of the letter being adhered to, whether it be the law of the old covenant, or parts of it, or some entirely different set of laws concocted by their particular organization that the membership are required to comply with.

And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; — Colossians 2:13 KJV

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. — Ephesians 2:1-2 NASB

Jesus came to redeem mankind. To redeem something is to return it to a former state or condition.

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; — Colossians 1:12-23

To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. — Ephesians 1:6-14

Adam and Eve abandoned faith in God. Christ came to restore mankind to a condition of faith in God; a faith of trust, belief, dependence and assurance in God; a faith based in love.

But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus

Christ might be given to them that believe. 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. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. — Galatians 3:22-29

Abraham is the father of the faithful. The example of Abraham in Scripture is one of a relationship with God and the development of Abraham's faith. Abraham received a covenant of promise from God that extends out to Abraham and his children, which in time will include children of faith.

Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. — Galatians 3:7

Chapter 2

In the Beginning

What led up to where we are today? It has been said that if you don't know where you are going, chances are you won't get there. Likewise, it is important to know where you are coming from; what led up to where you are now.

Genesis to Revelation

The opening chapters of the Bible contain much symbolic language as well as the last book of the Bible, Revelation. As such, much speculation goes into trying to understand the symbolism employed. Oddly enough, many have attempted to imply a literal meaning to passages of scripture where the language is symbolic and allegorical, and imply allegory to language that should be taken more literally. But such is the nature of the study of the Bible by various people over time.

In the opening pages of Genesis, we read the narrative of God's creation of the heaven's and the earth, culminating in the creation of man, said to be created in God's image. Is this to be taken literally in the sense that we physically look like God, or are we to take this more symbolically and figuratively in a more non-physical way, such as mental make-up, for instance? After all, God is described as a Spirit, and strictly speaking, spirit is not physical. Yet we try to anthropomorphize such statements as a means of trying to understand that with which we have no experience or association. If one is careless, they might just end up making God after their own image!

The man and the woman are placed in a garden with instructions to care for this garden, and that their provision is provided for by the God who created them. They live in Eden, a place name that has come to be associated with a place of perfect peace and harmony; an idyllic setting where everything they could want or need is literally at their finger tips.

But, as the story goes, the plot thickens. There is a creature there, identified as a serpent, elsewhere identified or at least equated with the one known as Satan, the devil; the adversary of God, who had rebelled against God and was cast to the earth.

Another item important to the plot development is the existence of two trees within this garden of Eden that have a symbolic importance: The tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – a rather cryptic name for this particular tree.

God instructs the man what He wants him to do in relation to the one particular tree:

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. —
Genesis 2:16-17

In the New Testament writings, Jesus the Christ is identified as this tree of life, where it comes out that eternal life only comes through Him; that He was with God from the beginning, and indeed is God (John chapter 1). He is the bread of life, and that those who partake of Him will have eternal life (John chapter 6).

But not much thought is given by many as to the nature of the tree of the knowledge of good and

evil. The association will surprise some people, and outright anger others, for that tree represents that covenant law given to and required of Israel when they came to Sinai after leaving Egypt. This will be explained in further detail elsewhere, but for now suffice it to say that it is the law that taught the Israelites good and evil; right from wrong, and prescribed punishments upon all who transgressed that law. The fruit of the law indeed was death, for all that law could ever do was condemn the one who transgressed it, and all who were ever under the law transgressed the law.

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. — Romans 7:7-13

All too many today believe the law is an end in itself, teaching that Christians should be keeping that law. One of the keys to understanding Scripture and indeed our own selves is to comprehend that the law proved no one righteous. All that law could do was condemn the transgressor and prove man to be sinful in nature. Those who are big on the law are quick to cite Jesus from Matthew chapter 19 and claim Jesus is saying one must keep the law in order to be saved. The context proves otherwise further on in the chapter. What these proponents of law do not stop to consider is that, if keeping the law results in eternal life, and they can indeed keep it, then what need is there of Christ? Is He some pocket sacrifice they think they can pull out every time they transgress the law, wave it magically in the air and put it back in their pocket again, to be taken out the next time they break the law?

In the beginning, a pattern was set; the Adamic nature where it is all too easy for us to imagine evil, and act on the imagination.

The onset of this Adamic nature was in the thought process that led to their rebellion against God. Adam and Eve entertained the idea God had lied to them. They entertained the idea of eating that fruit believing there was something greater to gain. The serpent had told them that to eat of that fruit they too would be as gods, knowing good from evil.

The unspoken declaration? You don't need God. You can, based on your own efforts, be as God.

The unspoken declaration of those who insist on keeping the law states the same thing; you can, based on your own efforts, become like God by keeping the law. You can "prove" yourself worthy by keeping that law. You can prove yourself righteous.

The devil was out to make man over into his own image; a rebellious creature that believed he could be like God, and no longer dependent upon God, having abandoned faith in God.

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! ¹³For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: ¹⁴I will

ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. — Isaiah 14:12-14

Man was destined to fall, but under conditions mankind could be redeemed, unlike the angelic beings who followed the lead of Satan.

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; ¹⁹But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: ²⁰Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, ²¹Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. — 1 Peter 1:18-21

Adam to Noah

God evicted Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. You know how it goes... violate your lease agreement, and out you go. With their departure went their provision by God, and now Adam and Eve were going to have to make it on their own with the added difficulty of having the ground cursed, where it would be even more difficult to bring forth groceries from the earth. God wanted to really drive it home that Adam and Eve messed up big time. Their “death” was their separation from Him and everything that went with being in His Presence.

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; . . . — Ephesians 2:1

The Patriarchs are examples of those willing to follow God and live by faith, with Abraham being the father of the faithful. The balance of the old testament revolves around the children of Israel, and the examples of their faithlessness, and their relationship to the law of the old covenant that was given to them in order to be a witness against them in relation to their faithlessness and rebellion against God (Deuteronomy 31:26-27).

Chapter 3

The Spirit of the Law

Back in the dark ages before I understood and believed the true gospel, I did not understand the spirit of the law. To a legalist, the spirit of the law was where one had internalized the letter of the law; having that law “written on the heart” which in hindsight now is an impossibility. That law was the law written on tables of stone, and penned on parchment. When God inspired the prophesy concerning the new covenant and stated that He would write His Law on the heart, the legalist assumes this *must* be the old covenant law embodied in the ten commandments, despite the plain language of that prophesy that states this new covenant was not going to be like the one made with Israel when they left Egypt (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

To those few legalists who have even a rudimentary comprehension of the spirit of the law, they view it as an impossibility to abide by the spirit of the law without conforming to the letter of the law. If you try to point out to these few people the examples in Scripture where Jesus fulfilled the law in the spirit while breaking the law in the letter, they refuse to see it. Because they believe Jesus could not have “sinned” thereby disqualifying Himself as Savior, the idea is rejected out of hand. To them, sin is the transgression of the law (I John 3:4) and that is that. The example of David eating the show-bread and being blameless is lost on them. The law comes first, and all must conform to that overarching belief.

To those who have bought into the legalism of the old covenant and have concluded that this law is “the” law of God, the true law of God; the spirit of the law, becomes incomprehensible as a result. A blindness results, as even Paul points out in II Corinthians chapter 3. This is the veil before the eyes that people have who insist on remaining in the teachings and writings of Moses; the old covenant. Point this out to a legalist, and this too is rejected without any critical evaluation. Ask them what this veil is if it is not before those who remain in the teachings and writings of Moses and they cannot answer. Regardless, they will not admit to the obvious. If you believe you have to keep the old covenant law, regardless of the rationales used to justify the practice, that veil will be firmly there, obscuring the mind from the comprehension of spiritual things and a spiritual, new covenant Jesus Christ.

In order to understand the spirit of the law, one must first understand the difference between “keeping” the law in the letter versus “fulfilling” the law in the spirit.

The spirit of the law is described in a few different ways in the Scriptures. Paul gives us the widest applications and descriptions of the spirit of the law.

Paul calls this law the law of faith (Romans 3:27), the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:2); the law of God (Romans 7:22); the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2). Legalists redefine the law of God for Christians as being the old covenant law of God for Israel, which Paul contrasts with the law of God for Christians in the context of Romans chapter 7. Elsewhere this law of the spirit is called by James the law of Liberty. The legalist’s definition of liberty in this context ends up being Orwellian in scope.

The old covenant dictated when and where one had to worship; in Jerusalem on those holy days the people were commanded to assemble together. In Jesus’ conversation with a Samaritan woman, He brings out that to worship God in Spirit and in truth is to do so without the restraints of location. The legalist reinstates the restraints of worshipping God, not based on location, but rather by restraints of time. A sabbatarian legalist redefines the sabbath as a day of corporate worship, and then uses this argument in order to construct a straw-man argument against Sunday.

Yet the weekly sabbath was never a commanded day of corporate worship. The Sabbath was a “holy convocation” where one came before God on that day in their dwellings individually or as a family. They were envisioned as being in the presence of God on that day. That time was owed to God, and they were not to be about doing their own business or pleasure.

Some of them go so far as to claim Sunday worship as being the sign of the beast. To them, worship on Sunday instead of Saturday is to follow and worship the beast and to bear the mark of the beast. There is no evidence to support the teaching. The real purpose of the claim though is to induce phobia and fear into a person so as to better control them with a forced worship on sabbaths.

The old covenant law demanded that no work be done on a sabbath:

Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. — Exodus 31:14-15

Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the LORD: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death. — Exodus 35:2

Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings. — Leviticus 23:3

But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. — Deuteronomy 5:14

Jesus healed people on sabbaths. This was work on the part of Jesus, and he did not deny it was work. Notice again in the citations above and the prohibition against “any” work.

The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole. And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. — John 5:15-18

The sabbatarian legalists have their own particular spin to this passage, claiming that healing a person really wasn’t a “work.” This redefining of work also serves to obscure the spirit of the law, which is also anathema to the legalist who redefines the letter of the law as being spiritual also. To them, Jesus didn’t really work, and therefore Jesus really didn’t break the law. You can’t have Jesus going about breaking the law that defines sin for them, thereby resulting in a saviour who sinned, disqualifying Himself as the Saviour.

Herein lies the distinction between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law. The spirit of the law is a case of fulfilling the law through love. Jesus was fulfilling the law through works of

love and compassion done on sabbaths. The Scriptures show Jesus intentionally doing these works on sabbaths in order to confuse the Jewish religious leaders and expose *their* real sin, hatred:

If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause. — John 15:22-25

The Jewish religious leaders could not comprehend the spirit of the law any more than the modern religious old covenant legalist. Love fulfills the law. You cannot break the spirit of the law when doing acts of love and compassion. You might however break the letter of the law by not “keeping” it in the strict sense the law required in the letter. The spirit of the law trumps the letter of the law, even under the ministration of that law.

If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. — John 7:23-24

But they could not judge righteous judgment. Their righteousness was enhanced through the observance of the minutia of the law, and the last thing they were ever going to do was jeopardize their perceived righteousness by going outside the perceived limits of the letter of the law.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. — Matthew 23:23

Judgment, mercy, and faith are claimed by Jesus here to be of the law, yet under the ministration of the letter of the law, things like mercy were not comprehended. If, for example, two people were caught in the act of adultery, they were to be put to death as a warning to Israel, so that the people would not fall further into the depravity of sin.

And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. — Leviticus 20:10

If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you. — Deuteronomy 22:23-24

Proper mercy and judgment are related to love. The zealous religious leaders of Jesus' time were full of hatred. To them, the law was a tool that they could wield in order to rule and control others, all the while appearing righteous in the process. Then Jesus comes along, and exposes them and their hypocrisy time and again.

Keeping the letter of the law makes no one righteous or moral. The law states that a person is not to murder another. If one refrains from murder while harboring hatred, this behavior does not make that person any better a person. The real problem is with the human heart (psyche) and not whether or not they transgressed a point of law found in the old covenant. Hatred, after all, is the spirit of murder.

It needs to be understood that all the old covenant law could do was condemn the one who lived by it, being under that law. The law was limited in scope, for the most part, dealing with the actions that followed the intent of an evil heart. The last of the ten commandments touches on the heart by commanding that one not covet that which belonged to another, the implication being, if one did, they would follow up by taking away by force or subterfuge the possessions of another. It also serves to demonstrate that, no matter how much a person tried, they were eventually going to covet regardless, exposing that imperfect heart we were all born with.

Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, . . . — 1 Timothy 1:9

The law proves no one is righteous based on their own efforts, through the law.

I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. — Galatians 2:21

Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. — Galatians 3:21

And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: — Philippians 3:9

The law was not given to Israel to make them over into a more righteous and godly people, but to be a witness against them, showing them to be exactly what was written of them; a stiff-necked, rebellious and faithless people. They were placed under the law because they were faithless, etc. and the law was played up big time, playing into their desire to be God's special people and be blessed by Him.

Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee. For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the LORD; and how much more after my death? Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them. For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands. — Deuteronomy 31:26-29

In order to better understand the spirit of the law, it is helpful to understand the letter of the law.

Those points of law that required an action on the part of the one under the law are referred to as

the “works” or “deeds” of the law. Many are unique to the old covenant as contrasted to points of law that are commonly found in most all cultures, such as prohibitions against murder and theft which are not “works” or “deeds” oriented. One does not have to actively “do” something in order to comply with such laws; one merely refrains from performing an illegal act. The works of the law were of such a nature that one did have to do something in order to comply. Circumcision and the sacrifices are good examples of points of law that are works oriented. What a sabbatarian legalist refuses to admit is that the sabbath commandment comes under the letter of the law, being works oriented. The sabbatarian legalist insists that since a person is resting on that day; not working, it cannot be a “work” of the law, seeing as one does not “work!” This is nothing more than arguing semantics. A person, in order to “keep” the sabbath, must alter their normal routine and activity on the sabbath day. Seeing as they like to play with the word, “work” in this context, let’s use the word, “deed” of the law, seeing as the apostle Paul uses the two words in relation to the same concept.

A sabbatarian would agree that the sacrifices were of the letter of the law, and that one who performed a sacrifice was doing a work of the law. But technically, the average Israelite did not actually make the sacrifice, a priest did the “dirty work.” The Israelite brought the animal of his to the priest who dispatched the animal, and did what was necessary with the animal in accordance with the law. So did the Israelite “work?” Was this a “deed” that he performed? Yes, because the Israelite had to give up an animal that had value, and surrender the life of that animal. Likewise, the Israelite surrendered that period of time in order to comply with the sabbath command. It was a sacrifice of time that otherwise the Israelite could have profited from through normal work.

This line of reasoning though just won’t work with the sabbatarian legalist who is determined to keep the sabbath in order to demonstrate his or her dedication and obedience to God, even though Scripture nowhere commands the sabbatarian legalist to do so. This then is a case of trying to produce one’s own righteousness through law, and the legalist has no problem putting forth a ton of rationalizations to justify his behavior, even insisting that the sabbath is a morally based law and not sacrificial in nature, even though Jesus Christ Himself equated the sabbath to be ceremonial and sacrificial in nature.

The endpoint of this debate is found in the spirit of the law. Even the sabbatarian legalist will admit that the sacrifices were a shadow of Christ and His sacrifice. The animal sacrifices of the old covenant pointed to Christ in this regard. But what of the sabbath then?

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. — Colossians 2:16-17

Sabbatarians have done more to this passage of Scripture than perhaps any other in order to obfuscate the obvious. These things that are works of the old covenant law are shadows of Christ; they point to Christ who has the “body” that has substance – something shadows are devoid of. Now, the sabbatarian insists Christ points us back to the shadows! Why then doesn’t Christ point us back to the sacrifices?

The clever twist you will get here from a legalist is in their interpretation of the phrase, “which are a shadow of things to come.” To the legalist, there are things yet to come, therefore these shadows need to continue to be observed. However, the thought is not taken out to its logical conclusion by the legalist if this were true. Once all these unspoken things do come, then what? Then they are no longer observed? Not quite, for the legalist also holds to the belief the law is eternal, therefore the sabbath is eternal and is going to be kept even in the new heavens and

earth. So this is nothing more than an argument to get around the “here and now” in the hopes the topic won’t come up and conflict with the other beliefs the legalist holds dear to his heart of stone.

One of the most important things to take into consideration in this regard is the nature of the old covenant and how such covenants work in the first place. That old covenant was between God and Israel only. If anyone not of Israel wanted to join themselves to Israel, they had to undergo circumcision in order to enter into the nation of Israel, and they then came under that law. Were Gentile converts to Christianity required to undergo circumcision? No. Were they required to keep the law? No. Anyone with a fourth grade reading comprehension ability can understand this. What happens if you are a party to a covenant; a legally binding agreement between two parties, and you fail to meet even one condition or requirement of that covenant? You have violated said covenant, and whatever was promised in return for your completion of that covenant will not happen, and even James attests to this concept:

For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. — James 2:10

Legalists will cite this out of context as a proof the law is required of Christians, overlooking the fact it refers to the “whole” law; the entirety of the old covenant. Again, does the legalist keep all of the law? Hardly. They pick and choose, claiming the sabbath and the ten commandments were a separate covenant and eternal. No proof or evidence is offered in support of this claim. It was the book of the law that was sprinkled with blood along with the people when that covenant was ratified. The tablets with the ten commandments inscribed on them did not undergo a separate ratification, and neither did the sabbath. That, and the only thing that is truly eternal is God. To claim the law is eternal is to set the law up as a god, which is exactly what happens. The legalist serves the law, and attributes it to being like God, thereby violating the very law he claims he is “keeping.” Without any realization at all, the legalist has set the law up alongside God, making the law an idol. The legalist has embraced the wrong tree; the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the law teaches just that; good and evil. Like that tree, the law has a fruit that leads to death, which is why Paul refers to the law; the old covenant, as the ministration of death and condemnation in II Corinthians chapter 3.

For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. — Romans 13:9

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. — Romans 13:8

Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. — Romans 13:10

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. — Galatians 5:14

If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: — James 2:8

The Two Great Commandments revolve around complete love for God and fellow man. A deceiver who believes in keeping the old covenant in the letter insists that in order to love God,

one must do what God commanded in the old covenant, and this is the rationalization used to convince others to keep that law. This in turn bolsters the legalist's belief that he is right and all others are wrong, despite all the Scriptural evidence to the contrary. Force of numbers overcomes truth of Scripture.

If you have love for others; that Godly love that is shed upon the heart of the believer, which is God's Spirit, you will not do anything to harm another. You will have love for even an enemy, thus fulfilling the law. Without God's spirit, the best you could do was "keep" that law in the letter, despite the heart that is inclined to sin, which that law was designed to expose. After 3500 years, it should be obvious by now that the heart we are born with is exposed for what it is by that law that imparts a knowledge of good and evil, and concludes that no one, no matter how hard they try, will ever make their own heart over into a heart of "flesh." It is God who does this, and not the individual. God gets the credit and not man through his own efforts and any boast in the law, deceiving the self.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.
— Ezekiel 36:26

Jesus, when He walked the earth, performed works and deeds of love and compassion, often healing people on sabbaths in order to demonstrate the spirit of the law. Did the religious people and religious leaders who were under the law understand? No. They were so focused on the letter of the law, and they were blinded to all else. Today, religious people and leaders who look to the letter of the law are also blinded to all else, even to the point of denying Jesus broke the letter of the law while fulfilling the law through love.

Did Jesus come to fulfill the law, or keep the law?

These people judge according to the deeds and actions of that law; some putting a great deal of emphasis on the sabbath, while at the same time denying that the sabbath is related to deeds and actions! This is called "cognitive dissonance" and is covered elsewhere. It is where a person holds to two beliefs that in actuality cannot be held as true at the same time, yet it is common in all false religious systems.

Jesus came and fulfilled the law. Did He fulfill the law by keeping all 613 points of that law, down to the most minute detail? No, he broke the sabbath by working on the sabbath. He worked on the sabbath. He admitted He worked on the sabbath. The legalists of that time condemned Him and sought to destroy Him, and the law was their weapon they wielded to accomplish this. In the process, they revealed *their* true nature; the true nature of their hearts, despite all their law keeping. Through the law, they cloaked their evil hearts of hatred. Today's legalists work in much the same manner. Instead of validating the truth of Scripture regarding Jesus working on sabbaths, they deny the spirit of the law by claiming He really didn't break the sabbath; that he transgressed the added restrictions placed upon the sabbath by the post-exilic Rabbis. They have redefined and reformed Christ in order to comply with their image instead of *they* complying with Scripture and Christ.

Keeping points of law in the letter has no value in Christianity. There is nothing to be gained, and nothing to be proved by doing so. It is counter-productive, as brought out by Paul in places like Galatians chapter 3. That law was for the "immature". A Christian is seen as being spiritually mature, living by faith. The believer is not perfected through law:

This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or

by the hearing of faith? ³Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? ⁴Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. ⁵He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? – Galatians 3:2-5

Teaching the law to the Gentile Christians was seen as a perversion of their Christian soul's (Acts 15:24). One's focus comes off of faith in Christ, and once again is placed upon compliance with points of law, jumping through legalistic hoops.

The law, being for the immature, is like telling a child not to cross the street. Why? Because the child is not mature enough to evaluate traffic so as to cross safely. When a person gets older and mature, they no longer need to be told not to cross the street.

Chapter 4

The Gospel in Detail

The best thing the reader can do for him or herself is to read through the accounts of the gospel being preached by the apostles as found primarily in the book of Acts. See what is a part of the gospel, and try to see what is not a part of the gospel. For an example of the preaching of the gospel to work from, I cite the example of Peter preaching to Cornelius, et.al.

And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man. And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me? And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. — Acts 10:24-45

What exactly did Peter say that these Gentiles heard that resulted in their being in receipt of the Holy Spirit? A message about Christ; His life, His sacrificial death, and His resurrection and the

proof or evidence of the resurrection through their witness, and that it is those who believe; place their faith and trust in Him that receive remission of their sins (the application of that sacrifice to their lives). Having one's sins forgiven redeems the individual to God, and that individual's life is now hidden in Christ. The believer takes on the righteousness of Christ.

For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. — Colossians 3:3

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. — Romans 3:21-26

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: — 1 Corinthians 1:30

Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. — Philippians 1:11

And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: — Philippians 3:9

The gospel can be falsified in several ways, most commonly through adding to the gospel what is not a part of the gospel; claims of things required for salvation either explicitly or implicitly claimed. It cannot be emphasized enough— anything claimed as something a believer must do or even should do besides faith in Christ needs to be examined carefully and thoroughly. Some of the more common claims include:

Obedience to the old covenant law, usually couched in the terminology of keeping God's commandments or the "law of God." Proof texts will accompany any such claims, and there are quite a number that are very convincing up front. If deceptions were not subtle and believable, who would believe them? And who is behind all deceptions anyway? The devil, who has had plenty of time now to refine and hone the deceptions so that, as Christ said in Matthew 24:24, even the elect might well believe them. Conclusion? Everyone believes they are the elect, therefore they cannot be deceived! Can we afford to be so cavalier and arrogant in our own thinking? No, we must be willing to diligently go about covering every issue and the nuances of every issue in order to gain a more complete picture of the truth of Scripture, and fight the temptation to let our beliefs and assumptions drive our understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures.

The apostle Paul was constantly at odds with those of the circumcision who were going behind him, teaching the Gentile converts they had to keep the law in order to be saved. To them, it was a logical conclusion based upon a lifetime of serving the law. It was, after all, a sin to break that law, and how could it now not be a sin? All such issues however are answered when one has an understanding of the spirit of the law, and an understanding of sin.

The paradigm of those who have bought into law, arguably the first heresy found within the early

church, is that everything is seen and interpreted in terms of the law. All mankind's problems are a result of breaking law, and this law gets defined as the law given to Israel at Sinai, including events prior to Sinai. The proper paradigm for examining Scripture is faith. Adam and Eve rejected faith in God, and as a result, decided to partake of that tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And it does no good to point out to those who have a legalistic paradigm that it is the law that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil represents.

The gospel then is a message of faith; faith in Christ based upon the evidence and witness of the resurrection from the dead. Christ shows us that He has conquered death – the one thing that is most dreadful to mankind. You know that you will die. What you didn't know was whether you would stay that way in a state of having perished as though you had never existed.

What then does God want from mankind? Does he want a bunch of people conditioned to blindly obey a plethora of rules and regulations like those of some despotic ruler who demands his followers jump through hoops in order to “show” their dedication to him, or does God desire to have the love and trust of mankind He created? Abiding by rules and regulations does not prove one's love. You can comply with a law that says, “do not murder” despite your harboring hatred in your heart for someone.

But the picture painted by those who preach a false gospel of law is one of a harsh God who demands obedience to laws that at times even appear arbitrary and capricious.

Legalism is not the only form a false gospel takes on, but it is one of the main forms. If it is not the legalism from the old covenant, it can be a totally new legalism created by a person or church organization. Some churches teach it is a sin to drink alcoholic beverages. I should mention here that a Christian is dead to sin, and this will be covered elsewhere in detail. Suffice it to say some churches and false prophets resurrect the Christian back to sin for the sake of control. The result of this sort of teaching is a group of people fearful of sinning, thus risking their salvation, and their greater dependence upon the leadership or false prophet who is there to lead them from sin where he or they define sin and direct people as to how to avoid sin.

Any teaching of any church or man needs to be subjected to certain criteria in order to ascertain whether the teaching is true or a deception. Without a methodology to abide by, one can find themselves misled all the while being totally convinced the deception is truth. First, we ascertain whether the teaching falls into any of the categories commonly used to foster lies and fables. Are any of the methods of deception being employed?

Another valuable tool is the use of one's critical thinking skills. Unfortunately, those who are drawn into cults and false doctrines undergo a subtle process of indoctrination and conditioning so as to abandon their critical thinking skills in favor of letting the leadership decide what is right or wrong, again using the methods of deception. The deceived are led to believe that the leadership are called of God and to question them and their interpretation of things is to question God Himself.

But if your critical thinking skills have not been compromised by the group, which will happen after even a brief exposure to them and their teachings, you can ask yourself important questions in regards to what they teach.

Does the teaching have a comprehensive backing of Scripture? Sometimes a deceiver will flood the issue with a great deal of material that is all based on inference in order to appear comprehensive. The best proof of a belief is a “thus saith the Lord” statement.

Most deceptions resort to claims that are not falsifiable. What this means is that every claim, in order to be considered true, must also be of such a nature that evidence must be *possible* to disprove the claim. Is the claim or rationale so stated that it is impossible to either confirm or refute the belief? Such statements are useless when it comes to discerning truth from error, and so they are best dismissed. An example would be a “prophet” who claims direct revelation from God. False ministers/preachers/prophets are expert at making claims that cannot be disproved or verified. Those who recognize this ploy up front are not going to follow such a person, but those who do not know the rules of proper critical thinking may well fall for such a ploy, and these, after all, are the sort of people the deceivers are looking for.

Getting back to the example of some churches teaching that alcohol consumption is a sin, we ask ourselves, what Scriptures exist to back up the claim, and what specifically do they relate? Close doesn’t count when it comes to digging out truth. Does Scripture declare drinking is a sin? As evidence, they may produce a Scripture such as this:

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

The deceiver will take this passage, and take the term “drunkard” and redefine it to suit his or her own purpose. But what is a drunkard? One who drinks to excess so as to become inebriated regularly. They have a habit of “sin” in this regard. The difference here is that a Christian is one who no longer lives a lifestyle of sin. Their conversion and their receipt of the Holy Spirit is what changes this. The Christian still can and does sin, but it is not the lifestyle; it is not the common practice any more of the individual.

Critical thinking asks these sort of questions. If drinking any alcohol defines one as being a drunkard, then why would Christ turn a great deal of water into wine where people would drink it, become drunk, and be excluded from the kingdom of God? Wouldn’t this be counter-productive in regards to why Jesus came in the flesh in the first place?

Deceivers have their answer to this issue. They claim the wine was not alcoholic. They claim the wine contained no alcohol. What evidence do they provide for their claim? None. Does this claim meet the falsifiability test? No, it fails miserably. They cannot provide any evidence for this being true, and there is no way to even disprove such a claim of divine intervention in regards to this wine.

Critical thinking also forces us to ask, if drinking is a sin because it will lead to drunkenness, then what if we applied the same logic to eating? If one overeats, it is gluttony. Therefore, using the same logic, people should not be allowed to eat lest they eat to excess and commit the sin of gluttony.

Another critical thinking tool is to subject a claim to the question, is there any Scriptural evidence that appears to refute the claim? Rarely does a deceiver address Scriptures that appear to contradict their claims, and when they do, they subject those Scriptures to the methods of deception. Often, you will see their explanation couched in an accusation. An example of this is the response legalists give when confronted with Scripture that says Christians are not under the law; the old covenant law, which includes the ten commandments. They will often respond with, “then it would be alright for a Christian to lie, steal, and murder without concern of punishment.” Does the claim provide evidence to support their overall claim Christians should keep the law, or

does it attempt to make a rationalization based in an accusation? It should be obvious, but it has been an effective argument for them. What it does not answer is whether a Christian would be doing such things should they conclude they are indeed free of that law. But the real critical thinking question to ask in response is to turn it back on the one making the accusatory rationalization and ask them that, if it were indeed proven to them that Christians are not under that law, would they personally in turn go about committing those acts such as lying, stealing, committing adultery and murder?

We must also ask if a claim is logical. This in and of itself though is not enough, for many false claims can be made to look logical. It takes all these criteria to make a more informed decision regarding the veracity of a claim. But some claims are not logical, seeing as they can be based on faulty logic or use logical fallacies, hence the importance of studying into logical fallacies so that you recognize when someone is using them in a claim or premise.

All this takes time to learn and apply, and the time to learn it is not after you have been tricked into a false religion or a cult. But if one can be honest with themselves, it can reap rewards and benefits in one's Christian walk.

The other item of importance is to read Scripture regularly while comparing what you read to what you believe and what you have been taught.

Getting back to the gospel then, we will examine it in greater detail in regards to how it was presented to people as recorded in the New Testament Scriptures from Acts onward, but first, a Scriptural definition:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. —
Romans 1:16

What can we safely conclude from this statement? If the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to the one who believes, then what of one who buys into a false gospel? Is there salvation in a false gospel? Can the reader see the necessity of understanding and believing the true gospel, leaving no proverbial stone unturned in this quest for truth concerning the gospel?

Before we begin an examination of the gospel as preached by the apostles (and others) we need to stop and ask ourselves what motivates one to preach a false gospel. There are a number of issues, but first and foremost is the false prophets desire to feed his own belly, and if he can do it at the expense of others, that's just fine with him.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. — Matthew 7:15-20

The false prophet has an outward appearance of respectability and can appear to be the perfect minister of Christ. The real tell tale sign though are the fruits. See Galatians chapter 5 for a list of fruits and works of the flesh, and remember that even here, the deceiver will redefine fruits. Bursts of temper will be redefined as a zeal for God, for example.

An interesting aside is how many ministers today wear wool suits; the clothing of a sheep, but wearing a wool suit does not mean one is a false prophet. False prophets though can be found wearing wool suits – expensive wool suits.

In order to make his living off of a flock, the deceiver has to control the flock, and this is accomplished through a number of deceptive practices. The most important to the false prophet is to do whatever it takes to prevent sheep from leaving. Next in importance is recruiting new members, so it is no big surprise that almost all false churches (I say almost, even though I have not yet found one that did not do this) make the claim that only members of their particular group will be saved. Again, what can we conclude from this claim? Does it meet the falsifiability test, for example? We may intrinsically know it to be false, but this too is a claim they can neither prove, and that we cannot properly disprove. Part of the problem is in the definitions again. In this case “church” gets redefined as being their particular organization; the “one true church.” Scripture though defines “church” as being the Christian collective, regardless of where they live and what group they associate with.

There is another tell-tale sign that you may be dealing with a false prophet and a false church, not based upon their gospel, but their goal. Is their goal to preach the gospel as found in the Scriptures, or is their goal one of recruiting you into their church? Try telling him or them that you believe their “gospel” to be the true gospel, and that you already attend a church that teaches the same thing. What will be of interest is their response.

You might be wondering why I would want to begin examining the gospel as preached beginning with the book of Acts instead of the gospel as preached by Jesus the Christ. In the cult church that I was a part of for nearly 25 years, they relied on the gospel as preached by Jesus, which was through the use of parables. According to Jesus, those parables were used for a reason; to disguise and hide the meaning behind the parables:

And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? ¹¹He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. ¹²For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. ¹³Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. – Matthew 13:10-13

By relying on the parables, it is relatively easy to redefine the gospel in light of the parables; in this case redefining the “kingdom of heaven” or “kingdom of God.” Kingdom of God was equated with the “Government” of God, and from there the case was made to justify keeping the old covenant law.

In the preaching of the gospel by the apostles, the veil comes off, and the gospel is preached in its fullness. What I would like the reader to take note of is that nowhere in the preaching of the gospel is it ever mentioned that one had to keep the law; any of it, in order to be saved or attain to salvation. Those who insist we keep the law must rely on assumption and rationalization in order to make their case, and this incorporates the tools of deception as a result. There is evidence in Scripture to refute this line of rationale, found in Acts 15. This too gets its particular spin from those who believe otherwise, by attempting to break up the law into two separate and distinct laws, one of which is the ten commandments as a stand alone covenant. At other times though, the legalist plays it the other way around in order to justify laws not found in the ten. What needs to be understood is that there is but one old covenant law, and it was the book of the law that was ratified, and not the tablets of stone.

But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: ¹⁵For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. ¹⁶But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; ¹⁷And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: ¹⁸And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: ¹⁹And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: ²⁰The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: ²¹And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. ²²Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: ²³Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: ²⁴Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. ²⁵For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: ²⁶Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: ²⁷Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. ²⁸Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. ²⁹Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. ³⁰Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; ³¹He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. ³²This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. ³³Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. ³⁴For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, ³⁵Until I make thy foes thy footstool. ³⁶Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. ³⁷Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? ³⁸Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. ³⁹For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. ⁴⁰And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. ⁴¹Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. – Acts 2:14-41

Did Peter say anything about keeping the law; any of it? No. You have to resort to those things commonly employed in deceptions to make any such case, and one that is employed here is the redefining of what it means to repent. It means to turn to God, or to return to God. In doing so, one abandons a lifestyle of sin and living according to one's own will and desires. The legalist redefines repentance as turning from sin, and by relying on the poor translation in the KJV found

in I John 3:4, one has to keep the law, or turn to the law in order to turn from sin and avoid sinning by transgressing that law; that covenant law Christians are not a party to.

And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, ²⁸Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. ²⁹Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. ³⁰And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? ³¹And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. ³²The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: ³³In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. ³⁴And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? ³⁵Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. ³⁶And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? ³⁷And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. ³⁸And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. ³⁹And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.
– Acts 8:27-39

Philip taught the Ethiopian about Jesus and belief in Him. Nothing at all here makes any mention of keeping the old covenant law, or any other requirement. What we need to understand is that Luke did not leave out important details when he recorded these events. God does not leave things up to assumption or imagination, and neither did Luke. Philip covered the basics of the gospel with this man in regards to faith and their call to preach the gospel. The man heard, understood, and believed. If it were important for the man to believe he had to keep the law; any of it, we would expect to see it here. This man returned home with the knowledge of the gospel; faith/belief in Jesus as the Christ.

But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. ¹⁵And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. ¹⁶Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience. ¹⁷The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it. ¹⁸And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness. ¹⁹And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot. ²⁰And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. ²¹And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. ²²And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. ²³Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus: ²⁴When John had

first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. ²⁵And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose. ²⁶Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. ²⁷For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him. ²⁸And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. ²⁹And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre. ³⁰But God raised him from the dead: ³¹And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. ³²And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, ³³God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. ³⁴And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. ³⁵Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. ³⁶For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: ³⁷But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. ³⁸Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: ³⁹And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. ⁴⁰Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; ⁴¹Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you. – Acts 13:14-41

Paul preached Christ, and salvation and forgiveness of sins. Through Christ, a man is justified from “all things” which could not be accomplished through the law of Moses. Here then was salvation through faith in Christ that was not reliant upon that law at all. Indeed, the law was rendered irrelevant and useless when it comes to salvation.

Why then Paul's closing comments? Because he understood the Jew's reliance on that law. They could not imagine a “work” in association with their religion and faith that was apart from that law. All was defined and understood through that law. Those who rejected Christ did so in favor of the law of Moses.

In Acts chapter 15 is the discourse over the law and its possible relation to the gospel and salvation. There were Jews with a Pharisaical background who believed the Gentiles should be circumcised and made to keep the law of Moses in order to be saved. It was established then and there that the Holy Spirit was given to the Gentiles as a result of their belief in the gospel and their faith in Christ; that they were excepted by God and sealed by God with the Holy Spirit without having to keep that law or come under that old covenant. Indeed, it was concluded that to teach the Gentiles to keep any of that law was to subvert their souls. How? Why? When one lives by a set of rules (laws) one's focus is on complying with those rules and laws. As a result, their focus comes off of that which is important; living according to faith in Christ. The focus of a Christian is to be on Christ, and not a faith divided between Christ and the law. The Christian is complete in Christ. There is nothing to be added or gained by keeping that law. The Christian is called to “fulfill” that law through that love of God shed on the changed heart that God has given the believer. The Christian is no longer motivated by that hard heart of stone he was born with.

He has a new heart of flesh and “God's law” written on the heart to lead him, and this new heart; this “law of God” written on his inner being, is that Holy Spirit imparted to the believer.

Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. – 2 Corinthians 3:3

That which was written in stone, and written with ink, is not this “law” written on the heart. Yet legalists will insist it is, ignoring the prophesy spoken by God Himself as recorded in Jeremiah 31:31-34:

³¹Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: ³²Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: ³³But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

With that old covenant law, there was a constant reminder of their sins.

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. ²For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. ³But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. ⁴For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. – Hebrews 10:1-4

And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. ²⁶And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. ²⁷And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. ²⁸But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. ²⁹Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, ³⁰And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? ³¹And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. ³²And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. ³³And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. – Acts 16:25-33

What was Paul's answer in regards to how the man could be saved? Faith in Christ. Believing in Christ. Placing one's faith, hope, trust, assurance in Christ. Believing this promise found in Christ.

Note also the man was baptized that night. There was no waiting period of time for any

indoctrination of the law. When it came to the gospel and Paul it was a matter of what?

For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. – 1 Corinthians 2:2

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: ²And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, ³Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. ⁴And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. – Acts 17:1-4

By now, one should be asking themselves why some Jews, who were attending synagogues, who were doubtless religious, rejected this message of Paul's. It is a simple message; a message of faith. The reason some would reject the gospel is that it is too easy; too simplistic for many. They reason there must be more to it. If anything, the law became a stumbling block to them, for the message of the gospel was quite a departure from what they understood in relation to the law. Here was salvation apart from the law.

Later in Acts 17, Paul is in Athens, and preaches Christ and the resurrection. He also speaks of how God now commands all men to repent, and that Christ will judge the nations.

To a legalist, repenting is associated with turning to the law. To Paul, repenting has to do with turning to God and abandoning one's lifestyle of sin and self indulgence and the ego-centric nature of life apart from God.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, ²(Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) ³Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; ⁴And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: ⁵By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: ⁶Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: – Romans 1:1-6

Here, Paul equates the gospel specifically with Christ and His resurrection and one's obedience being to the faith, for His name.

In the opening of Romans, Paul makes this statement in regards to the gospel:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. – Romans 1:16-17

This gospel of Christ is shown to be associated with salvation to those who believe the gospel, and associated with faith; the just living by faith, and faith is contrasted to those who live by law:

But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. ¹²And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. – Galatians 3:11

In the opening of I Corinthians, Paul writes:

For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. ¹⁸For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

²³But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; – 1 Corinthians 1:17-18; 23

Here, Christ's sacrifice is equated with the gospel.

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; ²By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. ³For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; ⁴And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: ⁵And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: ⁶After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. ⁷After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. ⁸And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. ⁹For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. ¹¹Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed. ¹²Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: ¹⁴And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. – 1 Corinthians 15:1-14

Here, the gospel is associated with the death and resurrection of Christ.

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; ²But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. ³But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: ⁴In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. ⁵For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. – II Corinthians 4:1-5

The gospel is about Christ.

For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him. – 2 Corinthians 11:4

A false gospel could be a gospel not of Jesus, or be about “another” Jesus; a counterfeit. This could be a Jesus misrepresented; a Jesus who is said to teach what Jesus did not teach.

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: ⁷Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. – Galatians 1:6-8

The true gospel is a gospel of grace. This false gospel is a gospel devoid of true grace. Paul was constantly battling those of the circumcision who were going behind Paul, attempting to teach Gentile converts to Christianity they had to undergo circumcision and keep the law. Law and grace are contrasted in Scripture.

There are those today who also teach Christians are required or obligated to keep that law, thereby falsifying the gospel; preaching another, that is not another, but rather adds to the gospel requirements that are not required for salvation. Teaching law perverts the gospel. They teach salvation through Christ, but then redefine grace and add the law, all the while claiming one does not keep the law in order to be saved. To expose this false gospel, all you need do is ask them what happens to their salvation should they quit keeping the law.

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. ¹²For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹³For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: ¹⁴And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. ¹⁵But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, ¹⁶To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: – Galatians 1:11-16

Note that the gospel is in contrast to the religion in which Paul was raised and a part of. And again, the gospel is related to Christ and preaching about Christ.

Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. ²And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. ³But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: ⁴And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: ⁵To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. – Galatians 2:1-5

These false brethren were false in relation to circumcision. The desire of these false brethren was to bring Christians under bondage while removing Christian liberty. What they taught was in contradiction to the gospel.

Was the law seen as bondage? What law was circumcision a part of? In Both Acts 15 and Galatians 4:21-5:1, the old covenant law is what was seen as bondage and a yoke. The Israelites served the law, and the law was a harsh taskmaster, condemning those under the law.

But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. ¹²For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the

Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. ¹³And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. ¹⁴But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? ¹⁵We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, ¹⁶Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. – Galatians 2:11-16

Their not dealing with the Gentiles in accordance with the gospel was a case of their reverting back to the law. Paul hits Peter with the argument that was extant with many of the Jews in regards to the erroneous belief put forward in Acts 15 that the Gentiles should be living like Jews. Peter was playing both ends against the middle, as we are apt to put it. He lived like the Gentiles, associating with the Gentiles when in the company of Gentiles. But when other Jews showed up, he flipped and lived like a Jew. So the logical question Paul breaches was that of why some believed the Gentiles should live like Jews in the company of Jews and Gentiles? Paul therefore exposes the double standard of Peter in regards to the gospel. It is the Jewish Christian that changes in regards to the law, and not the Gentile.

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. ⁹So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. ¹⁰For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. ¹¹But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. ¹²And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. – Galatians 3:8-12

The gospel is associated with faith, and as preached to Abraham, in regards to the promises made to faithful Abraham; promises that are not related to law; promises that are related to faith.

For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: ¹⁵Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. ¹⁶Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, ... – Romans 4:13-16

Jesus preached the gospel couched in the terminology of parables for the express purpose of hiding the meaning of the gospel.

And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? ¹¹He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. ¹²For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. ¹³Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear

not, neither do they understand. ¹⁴And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: ¹⁵For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. – Matthew 13:10-15

All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: – Matthew 13:34

The carnal mind is a sick mind, in need of healing. But if the sick think they are well, then what? Will they not reject that which does not fit within the confines of their belief system?

The law was given to the Israelites as a witness against them; to prove to them they were exactly what God declared them to be; a stiff-necked and rebellious people.

Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee. ²⁷For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the LORD; and how much more after my death? – Deuteronomy 31:26-27

Psalms 44 is a good example of Israel in denial; refusing to believe and accept the reality of their situation.

In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. Selah. ⁹But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies. ¹⁰Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy: and they which hate us spoil for themselves. ¹¹Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat; and hast scattered us among the heathen. ¹²Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price. ¹³Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us. ¹⁴Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people. ¹⁵My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me, ¹⁶For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth; by reason of the enemy and avenger. ¹⁷All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. ¹⁸Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way; – Psalms 44:8-18

Jesus referred to them as a whole as merely giving God lip service, and having a heart far from God.

This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. – Matthew 15:8

So Jesus preached the gospel to them in parables, often referring to the gospel in relation to the kingdom of God. This leaves the kingdom of God, or heaven, open to a great deal of interpretation and deception in regards to the gospel. However, in the writings of the apostles, the “kingdom of God/heaven” is only rarely referenced, and when it is, no specifics are given. I would remind the reader that Luke and the other writers of the New Testament writings, were not in a habit of leaving out important details. It is the deceivers who like to “fill in the blanks” for the purpose of misleading people, and the true gospel is the greatest target in this regard, for what

better way to get people to follow you and do as you say by convincing them that what you claim is necessary for their salvation?

If a deceiver declares that only those who are members of their particular church and brand of Christianity can be, and will be saved, would this not influence the unwary to join him, and do as he (or she!) says?

The gospel is a message of salvation. It is specifically about Christ and what He accomplished for us, dying for us and rising from the dead so that we might live. It is not about jumping through theological hoops, complying with a set of rules or laws where we “do this” and “don't do that.” It is not about being a member of any particular group or organization. It is about believing Christ and placing our faith and trust in Him. Faith is what was lost; faith is what was restored. Faith, resulting in our being in receipt of the Holy Spirit is what heals our minds; minds that were corrupted when faith in God was abandoned.

No wonder then that Paul proclaims a double curse on those who would teach a false gospel. There is no salvation in a false gospel, and the gospel is easily falsified by adding things to the gospel that are not a part of that gospel.

Anything attached to the gospel falsifies the gospel, and anything attached to faith falsifies faith.

The gospel can be falsified in a number of ways; through addition, subtraction, or outright substitution, or any combination of the three.

A false Christ is one proclaimed as teaching that which Christ did not teach and preach. Legalistic ministers teach a Christ who taught and upheld the law as necessary for salvation, often citing Matthew chapter 19 as their proof text:

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? ¹⁷And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. – Matthew 19:16-17

As is usual with a false belief, the context is ignored. Further in the chapter Jesus makes it plain that no one is going to achieve eternal life based on their own effort. So what is happening here? The man asked a specific question, and Jesus answered him accordingly. He asked what he, personally, could do to have eternal life. If one could live a sinless life, which would be demonstrated by keeping that law perfectly, then that person would have no need for a Saviour. But the purpose of that law was to show man he could not live a perfect, sinless life.

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. – Romans 3:19

That law has nothing to do with salvation. That law existed to show man his utter inability to save himself. All that law could do was expose the man as a sinner, and condemn him accordingly, justly and rightly.

To teach the law is to teach a doctrine of failure. You will never prove to God anything more than what He already knows. You are not God, and you cannot make yourself over to be like God. God wants to make sure you understand He alone is God and there is none other like Him, and there never will be. The believer's life is hidden in Christ. The believer lives by faith, and

not self-reliance through law. You are saved by grace, and not a combination of grace and your own efforts. Christ paid the price for your salvation. Christ did not pay half of it, with you attempting to make up the difference through your own effort.

When a person has been a part of a false, legalistic organization for any length of time, the hardest thing to do and accept is to step out in faith. The law becomes a crutch. It is like a drug that is hard to overcome. Humanly, we want to prove ourselves worthy. Of ourselves, this is impossible. Only through God's Holy Spirit are we able to produce the fruit God desires of a believer. It is a fruit of faith; a fruit of love. It is a fruit of the Spirit.

We do not overcome based on our own efforts. We surrender.

Chapter 5:

Methodology of Truth

How does a person perceive truth? How does a person recognize deception or falsehood? There have been philosophical debates regarding truth that span quite a contrast, but what I hold to be of importance in regards to Scripture is that we do, indeed, need to attempt to discern the original intent of the author of any particular passage or book/letter. We also need to go one step further, and derive the intent of the One who worked through the authors of Scripture, for Scripture itself claims to be God inspired; God “breathed.”

We can begin to discern God's intent by examining what Scripture reveals as God's will. What does God want of mankind, and from mankind? Does He want a bunch of brain-numbered robots who, when God commands them to jump, reply, “how high”? Does He desire mankind to exist in a condition like serfs in some feudal state with God as king, following and adhering to a long list of laws that regulate even the most minor behaviours, sometimes in what appears to be an arbitrary fashion?

All too often, man makes God over into his own image, and imagines God to be like a human king, demanding allegiance and demanding the people jump through hoops to satisfy His need to see whether we will obey His commands. It is a tenuous relationship, where a person would constantly be concerned over whether his lord and master was pleased or displeased with him and his performance. God ends up more tyrant than loving God in the minds and hearts of many.

Scripture paints a picture of the Israelites being in a relationship with God, where God is not only Lord and King, but also husband. In this scenario, we need to take into consideration what sort of wife Israel was to God.

She was a treacherous, cheating wife, and God knew it before He entered into that relationship, which was, in a sense, an “arranged” marriage due to the promises God made to Abraham and the patriarchs. So God made some “prenups” for Israel in the form of a covenant that was likened to a marriage covenant, but with conditions that were designed to expose the Israelites for what they were, while appearing to give Israel what she wanted. While Israel tried to prove herself worthy of God's “affection” all Israel managed to do was prove herself to be what she was by nature; stiff-necked and rebellious; a treacherous and cheating woman. Israel rarely admitted her true nature. When she found herself in big trouble, she would admit her faults and transgressions; God would forgive and intervene, only to watch Israel repeat this process over again. Israel was, for the most part, in denial regarding her nature and true relationship with God. Psalms 44 is a good example of Israel's denial.

Is it therefore God's will that people be kept in a condition where they will continually prove their sinful nature through acts of transgressing a law whose sole purpose is to expose the sinful nature?

Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee. For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the LORD; and how much more after my death? –
Deuteronomy 31:26-27

Is it God's will to be bound to rebellious people who have no real love for the husband? What

then is God's desire, and what is God's will?

God desires a wife who loves Him, unconditionally, even as He loves the wife. God's relationship with Israel was conditional; one of having to command Israel to obey in order to receive blessings from her Husband, and even on this level, Israel proved herself to be untrustworthy. What lesson then is to be learned from Israel and the law she was given? That man, with his "human" (Adamic) nature, is incapable of pleasing God. It is a nature devoid of any real faith in God, unless God imparts faith to men, and this is the example of God's relationship with the patriarchs.

That law proves man to be faithless and sinful. That law imparts a knowledge of good and evil, and exposes the knowledge and understanding that man is evil. That law cannot prove a man to be good or righteous. Those who put their trust in the law, claiming we must keep the law, are like the Pharisees and religious of Jesus' time who saw the law as the standard of righteousness for them, blinding themselves to the fact they did not keep the law perfectly, as required by that law.

And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. –
Romans 7:10

God desires we have faith in Him. God wants us to understand we cannot make ourselves acceptable to God based on our own efforts. God desires we love Him, for He loves us. God is willing to give of His nature; impart His nature to us so that we can love Him in return. But there was a danger involved, should one in possession of God's Holy Spirit not have faith in God, or reject the love of God. We have the example of king Saul in this regard.

Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven? Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He

that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. – John 6:28-48

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. – John 3:16

Christ is seen as having been slain from the foundation of the world. Everything was planned out from the beginning, as well as this ultimate expression of love on the part of God.

This should not be lost on mankind. God, who is infinitely greater than man, needed to convey to man certain facts; that man in his fallen state cannot please God. A thousand lifetimes of trying to keep that law that was a reflection of God's standard would still result in a man standing condemned before God. That law pointed to the need for an atonement of man's collective and personal sins, which was accomplished through God's ultimate expression of love for His creation, by undergoing the ultimate sacrifice for God; a brutal and painful death as a man, but so much more than just a man.

God doesn't need us. God wants us. God made man in His image; a unique creation to dwell with God and exist as children of God in a loving relationship with God. This relationship was made possible by what God did and does, and not as a result of anything we did based on our own might, such as keeping a law. That law did not prove men good by keeping it; that law proved men sinners and depraved because man transgressed it, and that as a result of man's Adamic rebellious and faithless heart. It is God who gives the believer a heart of flesh to replace the stony heart we are born with. It is God who gives His Holy Spirit to those who place their faith and trust in Christ. The man needed to learn and understand that, based on his own efforts, he can do no real good, given the heart the man is born with.

God reaches down and pulls us up. We do not, and cannot, climb up to God through our own efforts, whether it be keeping that old covenant law, or through means associated with religions based on human effort. “Just jump through the proper theological hoops” and achieve nirvana, salvation, or whatever.

You might ask what this all has to do with understanding and using the proper methods of scholarship when it comes to discovering the truths of Scripture. Even ministers and theologians of Churches that have a false theology know what the proper methods of scholarship are, for the most part, and they will still ignore the proper methods of scholarship at times, and fall for using the methods of deceptions, such as eisegesis, without realizing they are doing so. One can only wonder why, and the answers lie deep within the psyches of the deceived, and how a deceived mind operates “in the dark” as it were.

False doctrines and beliefs have a common denominator, in that they are based on a belief in a false gospel. Invariably, a false gospel is the true gospel falsified through addition. For example, the gospel is a declaration of salvation through faith alone in Christ. He came and paid the ultimate price so that we could be reconciled to God. He offered Himself in sacrifice for our sins, and the sins of the world.

What then is the undeclared statement when one falsifies the gospel, by adding to the gospel something they believe must be done besides faith in Christ in order to be saved? Sabbatarian legalists believe the ten commandments must be kept in order to be saved, citing Matthew 19:17. They publicly declare salvation through faith in Christ, but hold to this belief also, and claim that you can lose your salvation should you quit keeping the ten commandments, especially the sabbath command.

The undeclared statement is this:

Christ's sacrifice was not enough

Faith in Christ is not enough

What is God's response to those who do not believe the gospel, but are so brazen as to falsify it with their additions to the gospel? Well, let's see, God gives the ultimate sacrifice He can give by shedding His glory, taking on the life of a servant, and dies a most horrible, painful, drawn out death that man has ever devised, thus not only paying the penalty of death for sin, but also demonstrates his boundless love for His creation, and some people don't believe it was enough, and feel they have the right to add to that gospel conditions for salvation God never intended. It is a reflection of pride and arrogance on a whole new level. It is the ultimate insult to God. It is so close to the ultimate sin as to be terrifying, once you realize you were guilty of this special sin.

Recall, if you will, what John the Baptist had to say to those religious leaders who came out to his baptism:

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: – Matthew 3:7-8

They were not interested in repentance. After all, they had the law, and their righteousness was tied to that law. As long as they thought they were compliant with the law, they thought they were right with God, and as a result, no need to truly repent. And by repent, I mean the act of turning to God. They thought they were already in tight with God, having been deceived by that law into thinking they were already righteous.

From my own personal experience of having believed a false gospel for over 25 years, I had to bring forth the evidence to God that I was truly trying to turn to Him and seeking him over the course of over three years of intense personal study. It took that whole three years and then some to finally get to where I was ready to understand the gospel, and I was shocked at the simplicity of the gospel, and how easily I had bought into a false gospel that clouded and darkened my understanding all those years. It is only through the boundless mercy of God I was “granted” repentance.

With all this prefaced then, we are ready to cover the proper methods of scholarship, necessary for searching out the truths of Scripture.

Some of what I cover is commonly taught in churches and religious schools, and some of it is based upon my own personal discoveries that I believe to be Scripturally sound, which I will identify as my own so that the reader can evaluate my claims in this regard.

1. Scripture is stated to be God-breathed and God inspired. As such, I conclude that no man or organization of men have the right to alter Scripture or its application in any way.

God was never careless in what He inspired to be written, therefore it is arrogant of us to alter Scripture through any rationalization, including the claim that a belief is based on the principle of Scripture when there is no actual Scripture to support a view or belief. I conclude that the Bible leaves nothing to chance; leaves nothing hanging where we have to conclude things that are not

clearly stated in Scripture. Once you justify the alteration of Scripture and its application, you can justify just about anything you want.

Things in Scripture are not always what they seem to be also. God spoke to Adam and stated that he was not to partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; that on the day he did, he would surely die.

The serpent came along and said he and Eve would not die should they eat of that fruit, and gave a justification; a rationalization for going ahead and partaking of it. God said one thing, and the serpent said something else, but with a subtle twist in that what God meant by “die” and what the serpent meant by “die” were two different things. What then did Adam and Eve believe was meant by dying on that day they partook of that tree?

What it means though is that we should be relying on God and His Word to define things for us, and not rely on human understanding, assuming we know what things mean that have to do with Scripture.

An example of men altering the Scriptures that is commonly practiced is the Scriptural teaching and law concerning tithing. Without going into a lot of detail, the tithe was a tenth of the increase of produce and/or livestock. No one was ever commanded to tithe of their wages. Yet look at how many people just assume this is Scriptural; that this is a biblical definition of tithe. Again, can we afford to assume? The serpent (the devil) deceived Adam and Eve (or at least, Eve) and the devil is described as one who deceives the whole world. His deception was extremely subtle, revolving around the word “die.” His was a half-truth. Satan knew what God meant, even if Adam and Eve didn't. Adam and Eve didn't bother to ask God for further information as to what exactly He meant. But we have the ability to go to the Scriptures; the inspired “God-breathed” Word of God for our understanding. Or, we can rely on the definitions, or redefinitions given to us by those who claim to represent God.

Old covenant points of law were not to be introduced into Christianity or taught to (Gentile) Christians as per the instructions found in Acts chapter 15. They were inspired to write that to teach old covenant points of law resulted in a subversion of a Christian's soul.

The most common rationale for this change of Scripture and its application is to claim we no longer live in an agrarian society, and that this “principle” of tithing then changes with the times.

However, the economy of ancient Israel had plenty of Israelites who did not make their living through agricultural pursuits or animal husbandry. There were craftsmen and others who earned their living through wages. It should also be noted that when Paul wrote about the rights of those who preach the gospel being entitled to support from the churches, he did not use tithing as a justification, but rather the analogy of not muzzling the ox that treads out the grain.

Paul resorts to a rationalization in this regard. Rationalizations are very weak arguments, and often are flawed, resulting in false beliefs, but this is Paul, and Paul also stated that they had this as a command from the Lord in regards to their support being from the gospel. What needs to be emphasized is that Paul knew better than to use the old covenant tithing law as a justification, where people would then end up believing it to be mandatory, thus undermining the very nature and message of the gospel, which leads to my second point that cannot be violated:

2. The message of the gospel cannot be compromised or altered by any other belief, no matter how convincing. The message of the gospel trumps all other beliefs; salvation through faith only.

This is another of my own rules. Sabbatarians believe that it is the law of the old covenant, or specifically the ten commandments that trumps all, including the gospel. This claim of mine then is also a refutation of their claim that is derived from their teachings, which is rarely so explicitly declared by them.

What was commonly believed by many in the early church is believed today; that Christians are supposed to keep the old covenant law. To these people, the law is what trumps all else, and all things are judged from the perspective of that law, with an emphasis on the ten commandments, which is seen by many to be the immutable law of God.

That law, or more accurately, the perception of that law, and the gospel are in conflict. The gospel declares salvation through faith only, and as such, salvation is a gift. Those who hold to the law or even just the ten commandments declare that to fail to keep or comply with the ten commandments is to sin, and, as it is written, no sinner shall inherit eternal life, loosely citing I Corinthians 6:9-10 as evidence.

Those who see the law as the trump card sacrifice the gospel as a result. I have heard many a Sabbatarian legalist state that it is unthinkable for the law to be of no further consequence and that the removal of the law would, in their minds, justify people's wholesale abandonment, committing all sorts of atrocities without fear of any Godly consequences. Seeing then that in their minds, "that law" cannot terminate, all evidence to the contrary is summarily dismissed without examination of any sort. "My mind is made up; don't confuse me with the facts."

Where this has the potential to be entertaining is to ask such a person what they would do then if indeed that law were no longer relevant; if they would go about doing the very things they claim others would do. Their claim is actually a veiled accusation. I would remind the reader that those religious people and leaders that rejected Jesus and His message did so in favor of that law also; that law they extolled yet did not keep.

Paul calls that law the ministration of death and condemnation in II Corinthians chapter three. What the legalist continually overlooks and ignores is that there is no righteousness to be found in the law. It only condemns. It only exposes the sinful nature. It provides definitions from God as to what is good and evil, and when held up before us like a mirror, it shows us to be what we are; evil.

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. – Romans 7:18

The claim that, should the law be done away with, people would sin with abandon, is almost ludicrous. The people who had that law managed to sin just fine with the law.

There are also general rules that are useful in one's search for truth:

a. Who is speaking, and who is being spoken to?

It is a common practice among aberrant groups to take that which was required of one person or group and assign it to another person or group. The most common abuse is assigning the law, or the ten commandments, to Christians. An examination of these passages misappropriated by legalistic groups shows that it was God speaking to, and addressing Israelites, and even then, through the medium of a covenant law to which Christians are not a legal party.

God commanded the Israelites that He led out of Egypt to keep and observe a law, the basis of which is the ten commandments, or more accurately, the “ten words.” This law was codified into a covenant; a legally binding agreement between those two parties, God and Israel. As such, no others can be required to keep the conditions of this covenant unless they complied with the only provision in that covenant that allowed those not of Israel to enter into that covenant relationship with God by undergoing circumcision. Then, and only then, was a person as one born of Israel and subject to that covenant law.

All manner of explanations and rationalizations have been put forth by those who insist on Christians keeping the conditions of this covenant law who are not party to it. Their claims, when examined properly according to the rules of evidence, fail. Yet look at the numbers of people and churches that claim Christians are required to keep the ten commandments, while telling their followers that anyone who would dare say they do not have to keep them are those who are twisting the Scriptures. I am sure that many who are reading this at this point may well be making the same accusation against the author. But let us allow the evidence to speak for itself.

Using this debate over the ten commandments, we can examine the proper methods of evidence as well as see the methods of deception employed and recognize them as such.

If someone claims we are required to keep the ten commandments, then they should be able to produce evidence to support the claim, and in so doing, not resort to the methods of deception such as inference, assumption, rationalization, substitution theology, or claims that cannot be falsified, to name a few.

Claim: Christians are required to keep the ten commandments.

Evidence to the contrary: The ten commandments are a covenant between the two parties, God and Israelites. Those not a party to a covenant cannot be held to the conditions of said covenant.

This evidence to the contrary is in itself a claim that either has Scriptural support, or has no support, or evidence to the contrary to this claim. It is the duty of the one making the original claim to refute any supposed evidence to the contrary.

In the case of this counter-claim, it should be obvious enough from a legal standpoint alone that a person cannot be held to the conditions of a covenant they are not party to. In any event, we have the following to take into consideration:

Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. — Galatians 3:15-18

Here we have Paul explaining a characteristic of covenants. Once they are put in force, no one can legally reject it or alter it. Would this not include an attempt to add participants to it? Of course.

This claim then regarding covenants is pretty air tight. Those who reject Paul's witness to this and many other things will, as a result, resort to the methods of deception and disinformation in an attempt to discredit Paul. Some go so far as to reject Paul as a true minister of Christ, thereby justifying their rejection of what Paul wrote and taught all together.

The unspoken claim of those who believe we have to keep the ten commandments in this regard is that, if enough "evidence" can be produced indicating we should be keeping the ten commandments, this evidence can therefore outweigh evidence to the contrary! Given the established facts revolving around covenants, we could safely conclude that, in order for Christians to be required to keep the ten commandments, there would either have to be another covenant made to which Christians are a party to it requiring their observance, or some other declaration by either Christ or the apostles stating Christians should be keeping the ten commandments. I will state right here that no such evidence exists. If someone alleges to have evidence to this effect, then that evidence should also be subjected to the rules of evidence.

What then are some of the common claims used by those who claim we should be keeping the ten commandments? One is that the ten commandments are the "law of God" and as such, we should be keeping them as a result.

If you examine the premise, you will see that a claim is made that results from drawing a conclusion. Using this "rationalization" we are led to discard the evidence we have established as fact regarding covenants.

We also need to understand this indeed is a rationalization being employed, and rationalizations are one of the many methods of deception. Not all rationalizations are deceptions, but due to their nature, they cannot be given the same weight of evidence as evidence that does not depend upon rationalizations, assumptions, and inferences.

When we subject the claim then to the rules of evidence, what do we learn?

Is the claim falsifiable? The wording makes it nearly so. That law was a law "from" God, and that law was written in the "book of the law of God." So in that regard, it is "God's law" but not exclusively. Those who hold to this law deny any other law of God. But that book was also called the "book of the law of Moses." Also, the witness of Christ has Him referring to the law as the law of Moses, and credits Moses as having given the law to Israel. Legalists get around this obstacle of that law being also the Law of Moses by insisting there are really two laws as a result; one being "God's law" engraven in stone, and the rest, or the "other" law being the law of Moses. What we end up with are new claims that need to be examined properly also.

This construct creates its own set of issues: If the ten commandments are "God's law" and the rest is the Law of Moses, then why is that book of the law referred to as both the book of the law of God as well as the book of the law of Moses? Also, the law of Moses sans the ten commandments infers that Moses came up with that law without God's input or influence. Scripture refutes this.

However, the real issue is not whose law it is, but rather to whom the law was given, and who then was required to observe and keep that law.

We can further demonstrate the problem with these claims through an analogy.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was God's tree. Can we conclude, using the same

logic the previous claims make, that we should therefore be partaking of that tree? What was the fruit or end result of partaking of its fruit? Death. What was the fruit or end result of living by that law of God? According to the apostle Paul, that covenant law also resulted in death.

And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. —
Romans 7:10

He called it the ministration of death and condemnation in II Corinthians chapter 3, and the law of sin and death in Romans chapter 7.

Can the reader see now that the premise that the ten commandments are the “law of God” does not necessarily mean we should conclude we are to be keeping it? Yet many will choose this rationalization that relies on an assumed conclusion over the hard facts surrounding covenants.

Assumptions lead to deceptions. One must always be aware of whether they are relying on an assumption, and be aware that assumptions can sound very convincing. You wouldn't want to be convicted of a crime based upon assumptions, therefore why would you risk eternity on them? If there are facts in regards to a questioned belief, stick with the facts.

There is one other factor that needs to be taken into consideration here, and that is evidence to the contrary regarding the ten commandments being “the” law of God. That law was mediated by Moses. A mediator is one who works in between two parties in order to produce an equitable agreement between the two parties. Hence, that law became known and called, the law of Moses. It is a law that originated with God and came from God, but it was tailored for the Israelites; a stiff-necked and rebellious people, devoid, for the most part, of faith. Could it be that law served a purpose in relation to Israel that would not be served with Christians? I will leave it here as a question instead of a claim, for I do not wish to stray too far from the topic at hand.

Another claim in regards to the ten commandments is that the ten demonstrate love; love for God and love for fellow man, therefore the conclusion, once more, that we should be keeping those commandments.

The premise here is a claim that is either true or false. Do we have any evidence from Scripture that the ten commandments demonstrate love? The Two Great Commandments are often cited as supporting evidence:

Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. — Matthew 22:36-40

Everything in the law and prophets hang on these two pivotal commandments. The claim that the ten commandments show how to love God and fellow man is actually an attempt to make everything hang on the ten commandments!

We can however apply some critical thinking to this premise/claim. The commandment to “honor” one's parents for example: Why doesn't the command just come out and say, “love” your parents? Why doesn't the command that addresses killing/murder state, “love” your enemies?

We need to take into consideration the nature of the old covenant law, and to whom it applied; stiff-necked and rebellious Israelites that Jesus referred to in this context:

This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. — Matthew 15:8

The call of the prophets follows a major theme. The prophets addressed the Israelites over time, and called to Israel to turn back to God whenever they strayed. If they indeed had a love for God and fellow man, the law and prophets would be fulfilled. But their hearts were far from God, and far from loving their fellow man, right down to their parents. The true nature of the ten commandments revolve around the rights of God and neighbor (fellow man) in relation to the individual who was devoid of love for God and fellow man. If an Israelite despised his parents, there was this command to give them their due “honor” and respect, regardless, for it was owed them, at the least. Likewise, the first four commandments relate what the individual owed God; including the individual's time one day a week.

Paul further defines the purpose of the law in relation to Israel:

Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; . . . — 1 Timothy 1:9-10

The law, according to Paul, is not there for the sake of demonstrating love for God and fellow man; the law was there because the people were devoid of love.

Then there is circumstantial evidence. Ask yourself, If you have love for God, do you need to be told not to have other gods besides God? No. If you love your fellow man, do you need to be told not to murder him? No, for people do not murder those they love. If anything, this circumstantial evidence tends to support the exact opposite of the premise/claim! Seeing as the Israelites were stiff-necked and hard-hearted, they were put under that law for that reason.

Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee. For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the LORD; and how much more after my death? Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them. For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands. — Deuteronomy 31:26-29

That law witnessed to the fact they were faithless and loveless. The law didn't teach them love; the law exposed their lack of love and how they were devoid of faith.

b. Situation in life; Time and Place

Words change in meaning over time. What is important in word studies is to determine how any particular word was used at the time and place the text was written that contains the words or

terms we seek to understand in order to better understand what message the writer was trying to convey.

This then is the practice of taking words and phrases, and examining them in the light of the times and places in which they were written. Over the course of time, words change in their meaning, sometimes coming to mean the exact opposite of what their original definitions were. As mentioned earlier, the temptation sometimes to ignore this form of context is too great. An example of abuse in this regard is the translation found in the King James Version found at I John 3:4:

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

Πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν καὶ τὴν ἀνομίαν ποιεῖ, καὶ ἡ
Every the *one*-doing the missing (sin) and(also) the against law is-doing and the
lawlessness

ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία.
sin is the against-law/lawlessness

The word of interest here is “anomia” transliterated “a” - against “nomia” - law. How was the word used at that time and place by those who spoke and wrote in Greek? The word was used to convey the meaning and understanding of iniquity.

The translators of the King James Version were members of the Church of England who were following the earlier Geneva Bible translation. The scholarship of the time did not always take into account the linguistics of the time of the writing of the New Testament, hence they opted for a more literal translation that, in turn, strayed into interpretation. No other English translation (of note) renders this passage as sin being the transgression of the (old covenant) law.

Was all transgression of the old covenant law sin? No, for Jesus declared that David ate the show-bread that was not lawful for him to eat, yet he was blameless; without sin in this regard. Jesus worked on sabbaths by healing people, and even admitted it was work, making a distinction between breaking the law in the letter while fulfilling the law in the spirit; a spirit of love and compassion. Those who are legalistic in their theological outlook reject Jesus actually working on sabbaths, despite Jesus' own claim that He and the Father worked on sabbaths, by making the assumptive claim that, had Jesus broken the letter of the law, it would indeed be sin, which would disqualify Jesus as Savior. They even cite the passage of Scripture above as a proof text!

What is really happening is the negation of the spirit of the law in favor of the letter of the law. The avoidance of sin and condemnation through the old covenant law takes on greater importance than the spirit of the law the apostle Paul points out as being the law that leads to life as contrasted to the old covenant law that was described as being the ministration of death and condemnation, which results with those who live(d) by that law!

Did David break the law, or not? Yes, he most certainly did. Was he convicted of sin as a result? No, he was not. Is sin therefore always the transgression of that law? No, it is not. Is sin always iniquity? Yes, it is.

Was there sin in the world before there was the old covenant law? Yes there was. In fact, Paul states that the law was added because of sin in order to make sin utterly sinful. So to translate I

John 3:4 to say sin is the transgression of the law is to not only misapply the meaning of the word “anomia” it also ignores that which is established in the rest of Scripture regarding sin.

c. Proper Exegesis.

This is the practice of taking a statement of Scripture that has the potential to be misunderstood, and examine the immediate context as well as the general context. If the conclusion drawn is unrelated to the immediate context, there is probably something amiss with the understanding/interpretation of the passage in question.

One of the Sabbatarian Legalist's favorite passages is Matthew 5:17-19 where it is concluded that the legalities of the law remain inviolate even down to the strokes of the letters of the law. Even a cursory examination of the passage shows this interpretation to be flawed. The context of what Jesus was referring to was the law and prophets. In this context it should be understood that this refers to the first 5 books, commonly called “the law” and the writings of the prophets being “the prophets” as well as the context of Scripture overall. Sometimes the term, “the law” could indeed refer to the entirety of the old testament writings.

What then is found in both the law and prophets that has the potential to be fulfilled or destroyed? Prophecies. Did Jesus state He had come to fulfill the prophecies that were written about Him in the law and prophets, i.e. the old testament writings? Yes, He most emphatically did.

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. – Luke 24:44

What then is the excuse of the legalist for rejecting this explanation in light of Matthew 5:17? They point out that Jesus did not fulfill everything while He walked the earth in human form. Well then, what do they think the very next verse addresses? Things that were not fulfilled prophetically that are escatological in nature will be at that time, before heaven and earth pass away.

Let's humor the legalist a bit here, seeing as they insist this is about the legalities of the law. When then is the conclusion in regards to verse 18? When heaven and earth passes, so to passes this law after it is “filled to the full.” So the law passes away; the same law they claim is eternal. Also, if this is all about the legalities of the law being inviolate down to jots and tittles, what about the context of the same chapter where Jesus proceeds to alter points of that law way beyond jots and tittles, and even negating points of law?

Ironically, the Sabbatarian legalist understands the concept of exegesis, but the temptation to ignore the context is oft times too great when it comes to cherished beliefs.

Is the evidence of Scripture being used exegetically, taking into consideration the surrounding context, or is the evidence eisegetical in nature, lifting the passage out of context; thereby ignoring the context?

Legalistic churches will cite Romans 3:31 as evidence we are to keep that old covenant law:

Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law. — Romans 3:31

Taken out of context and taken at face value, it certainly appears that Christians are supposed to be keeping that law. What then of the context?

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. ²⁰Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. ²¹But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; ²²Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: ²³For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; ²⁴Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ²⁵Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; ²⁶To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. ²⁷Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. ²⁸Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. ²⁹Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: ³⁰Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. ³¹Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law. – Romans 3:19-31

- 1) The law served the purpose of making men guilty before God, and not righteous (v.20).
- 2) No one is, or shall be justified before God through the law, or specifically the deeds of the law; those points of law that required performance by one under the law. Why? Because the function of the law was to make known sin; provide a knowledge of sin, and bring the one under the law under sin.
- 3) Justification and righteousness is now revealed; a righteousness of God that is through faith in Jesus Christ, and not through the law, that is also witnessed or attested to in the law and prophets.
- 4) Why righteousness through faith in Christ? Because all have sinned and come short of God's "Glory" (perfect standard); those under the law (those of the circumcision) and those not under the law (the uncircumcision).
- 5) We are justified; made righteous freely (nothing we did to deserve or earn it). How? Through the redemption found in Jesus Christ. How were we redeemed by or through Christ?
- 6) Verse 25: Through the propitiation of faith in His blood. It was by and through His sacrifice and spilled blood we are washed of our sins. Without Christ's payment of that which the law required, all would otherwise remain in sin, under condemnation, and separated from God.
- 7) By this God's justice is satisfied, and that God now can justify us through faith in Christ, all according to the law.
- 8) All boasting then in the law by those of the circumcision is negated and canceled by this "law of faith" whereby we have our righteousness and salvation, seeing as the law; the works of the law, could only result in sin, condemnation, and death otherwise. So salvation comes to those under the law as well as those not under the law, for God is the God of both Jew and Gentile, and both are justified and made righteous outside the works of the law. This justification comes about

through faith for both Jew and Gentile. Both were under sin, whether they were under the law or not, but it was the law that prescribed what was necessary for the remission of sin; that perfect sacrifice of Christ's spoken of before as found in the law and prophets.

9) Is then the law voided through faith? No, for it was the law that required a sacrifice for sin, and the law was satisfied through the sacrifice of Christ. In this way, the law is forever established as that standard by which God's justice was satisfied, and men are now able to be forgiven through Christ's substitutionary sacrifice, according to that law.

Those who want to make the case the law is established as a requirement to be observed and kept ignore the context. The law was not established as a standard for mankind to keep, seeing as its purpose was not for man's justification or righteousness. Its purpose was to bring all under sin so that God could have mercy on that same all, including those not under that law, yet who were nonetheless still under sin, but whose sins needed to be blotted out also, and this was all done in accordance with that law for both Jew and Gentile. To conclude we must all therefore abide by that law; that it is established forevermore, is to establish condemnation and sin for us and on us forevermore.

Those who live by that law today (or more accurately, those who think they live by that law, when in fact they do not) boast in that law. They define Christianity as related to keeping that law, and conclude all others as false Christians who do not live by that law. A person's faith is accounted for little, if anything, whereas this passage of Scripture, and many more, attest to the over-arching importance of faith apart from, and without that law.

d. Proper Critical Thinking Skills

This is the discipline of properly evaluating a belief that is derived at, hopefully through the proper use of the tools of interpretation, with logic and a sense of Scripture overall. It is borrowed in part from the sciences as a means of examining conclusions derived from observation and experimentation. In cultic groups, people are conditioned to not think critically about their beliefs and their leadership. For the sake of simplifying the process, beliefs are referred to as claims, and Scriptures that support or refute the claims are evidence.

1) A claim cannot be so vague, or worded in such a manner so that any possible evidence to the contrary is rendered impossible. (aka falsifiability)

There are claims made by religious leaders that are designed to circumvent critical thinking. One of the most common found in cults is a leader who claims personal revelation from God, where the conclusion of the matter is that, to question the leader is to question God. It is impossible to produce evidence to the contrary, unless God is in a habit of talking directly to you!

We need to ask ourselves a few critical thinking questions as a result of such a claim:

Is this the way God works? Would He set us up in a condition where we have to resort to a "blind faith" and where we have no real way to "prove all things"? It is illogical to conclude God would use such a method which would circumvent our ability to seek out the truth. When God called men like Moses and the prophets, they were also given the means of showing evidence that supported the belief they were called of God. An exception might be John the Baptist, whose calling was to prepare the way for Another, and be witness to Christ, and not his own calling as a prophet.

Another example I would like to cite in regards to a claim that resists evaluation through critical

thinking is a religious leader who claims to be infallible. How do you produce evidence that might refute the claim? You might show him (or her) to be wrong about a certain belief or teaching, but his followers would only conclude you wrong and he to be right, regardless. This claim often goes hand in hand with the first example regarding personal revelation from God. If what he says he claims came from God, then what God would say would indeed be infallible. The false prophet might even claim to be fallible, but what are you going to do about what he claims he heard from God? So in this context, a claim of being merely a fallible man, used by God, will still end up being a case of what he says as infallible. This too is common among cultic groups; a form of double talk that makes it difficult to pin him down should something he said turns up irrefutably false.

2) Is the claim logical

This does not preclude the possibility a claim can sound logical, yet be wrong. But a claim that is illogical can hardly be considered believable.

What is useful to understand in this context are claims that fall into the category of “logical fallacies” and there are a number of resources on the internet to learn of them and how they work. Normally, a claim can consist of a premise followed by a conclusion. An illogical claim would be one where the premise is flawed or even has no real bearing on the conclusion. The claim can sound reasonable, but still be flawed in logic. An example is the oft stated claim made by legalists that, because the ten commandments are written in stone (the premise) this demonstrates their permanence and the fact that we should be keeping them.

A simple critical thinking question would be, where in Scripture are we informed of this; that God wrote the ten “commandments” in stone so as to emphasize their permanence? Could we not also conclude that the law that was written with ink upon parchment would indicate their transitory nature? What do we have today? Where are the tablets of stone? If the the law engraven in stone was for the sake of showing their permanence, would we not have those stones with us today? What do we have today? That which was written in ink upon parchment, including the ten commandments. The stones are gone. The “logic” here is flawed on several levels. We also have the evidence of Scripture, where we find:

3) Evidence to the Contrary

Are there Scriptures that appear to refute the claim? If so, did the one making the claim in question address the apparent Scriptures that appear to refute the claim in order to demonstrate how those Scriptures do not refute or contradict the claim? Do the refutations themselves use the proper methods of evidence, or did he resort to the methods of deception in order to discredit the opposing Scriptures?

In the above example regarding that which was engraven in stone, the evidence of Scripture found in II Corinthians chapter 3 refutes the conclusion/belief.

4) Does there exist comprehensive, credible evidence?

One of the ploys, or methods of pushing through a false belief is to produce a flood of assumptions, rationalizations, and drawn out conclusions in order to appear as comprehensive evidence. If a belief is supported by such means; inference, assumption, rationalization, or drawn conclusions, these methods or arguments are weak at best, and methods of deception at worse. If a belief is held to be of great importance, then there should be ample, comprehensive evidence to support it that does not rely on inferences, assumptions, rationalizations, or drawn

conclusions. As I like to point out, assumptions lead to deceptions.

A good example of this among Sabbatarian groups are the “proofs” they offer up to support their claim Christians are supposed to keep the sabbath. These lists often exceed 30 claims that, upon careful examination, are indeed rife with inference, assumption, rationalizations, and drawn out conclusions. What is lacking is a “thus saith the Lord” on the part of Scripture. The sabbath was such an important tenet of old covenant/testament theology that it would be impossible to miss it. Yet such evidence is painfully missing for the Sabbatarian who claims we should be keeping the sabbath in the new covenant/testament, given the importance they place upon the sabbath.

There is one more criteria useful for determining truth; A very good familiarity and understanding of the Scriptures.

All too often, it is people who have a basic belief in God who do not have a good grasp of the Scriptures that end up recruited into cults, where from then onward, their understanding and beliefs are perceived through the colored glasses of the cult. Those raised in a cult suffer the same fate. They do not know the Scriptures well, and they are unfamiliar with the proper methods of determining truths from errors. Once completely indoctrinated, it is unlikely they will find their way out of the cult in their lifetime.

Chapter 6:

Methodology of Deceptions

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.
— Matthew 24:24

From my own experience, and in the observation of many others, we all tend to make the same fundamental errors when it comes to the discernment of deceptions. Basic to this is the tendency to believe that God thinks like we do, which He does not. Seeing as we are born with that “stony heart” that has to be replaced, we filter everything through that perspective and interpret everything from that perspective, making the assumption that God’s thought processes are similar. This is a case of making God over into our own image.

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. —
Isaiah 55:7-9

Another commonality regarding deceptions is that people believe that they cannot be deceived. Why? Because they believe they are too smart to be deceived. Is there a touch of pride and arrogance in that belief? What, again, did Jesus declare in Matthew chapter 24 as quoted above? That, if it were possible, even the very elect would be deceived. That is how good and how convincing the deceptions really are. Unfortunately, everyone believes they are of this elect, and as such, beyond deception.

I would point out that one needs to only look at the world scene, and see how religion has played a part of some of the most heinous atrocities committed by men, and continues to be so. Try to show those same people the insanity of their actions and beliefs in relation to God whom they claim to serve, and you will find you are wasting your breath and time.

In seeing how others of another religion act and react in regards to their beliefs, one can catch a glimmer of the underlying problem.

Hatred. A heart of stone. These are those who will kill you and believe they do God a service.

When one is possessed by a heart of stone, how can they be expected to perceive things from God’s perspective, and perceive truth from deception? It is not possible, and even given this understanding, it can lead to further deceptions. Some teachings found in Calvinism are a good example.

A person with a heart of stone is motivated by that heart. Because of this, the psyche, to use more modern terminology, is a psyche that is, in the eyes of God, corrupted. A person solely motivated by hatred and/or self interest is unable to think logically, rationally, clearly, lovingly.

Satan and those angelic beings who were swayed by him and who followed him, had their minds corrupted as a result. Their focus came off of God and faith in Him. Satan’s focus was redirected to himself. There is a clue to the human condition in all of this, where people look to

themselves or to other men for validation as to how they live their lives.

When it comes to deceptions within the realm of Christianity, the deceptions that are the most dangerous are those that result in a redirection of one's faith away from God and onto something or someone else. Quite commonly, this something else is given equal status with God. Those who are legalistic in their theology see the law in the light of it being of God and possessing the same characteristics of God, such as being eternal and never changing. To obey God to them is to obey the law. It is a subtle shift in faith, so subtle that it agrees quite readily with the warning of Jesus there again in Matthew chapter 24. Deceptions can be so convincing as to tempt even the very elect. And just what do you suppose those who have bought into deceptions believe in this regard? That they are indeed the elect, therefore beyond being deceived! It is circular reasoning, that a rational person can spot, but it goes undetected as such by those who have bought into deceptions. Why? Deceptions tend to short circuit one's critical thinking skills, which brings up a topic that will be discussed and covered elsewhere. For now, critical thinking is a skill where one subjects their beliefs to a series of logical and rational evaluations or questions that tend to unmask deceptions and make it easier to more closely approach the truth of a matter when solid evidence is lacking to back up a particular belief.

In order for a man or a group to proffer deceptions though, they must cause those they are trying to influence to abandon their critical thinking skills in order to get them to accept the deceptions, and there are quite a variety of methods employed to accomplish this. The most commonplace methods employ what are commonly referred to as logical fallacies.

A logical fallacy generally is an argument that employs false logic, false premises, and evidence that is not truly relevant to the topic at hand. Some are easy to spot, and some are extremely difficult to unmask for what they are. The one thing they have in common, when it comes to Scripture, is that they attempt to support a belief where there is no "Thus saith the Lord."

Another common factor when it comes to deceptions is that deceptions are used to support other deceptions, so that an entire belief system can be built on these deceptions so that, in order to dismantle the theological structure created by them, each false belief must be taken apart and exposed for what it is; a tedious and time consuming task, made all the harder when trying to "deprogram" someone whose life has been commandeered by a false belief system. For example, it took me over three years of study and work to expose all the facets of the false system I had been exposed to in the proceeding 30 years.

If possible, I would suggest that if you find yourself in the company of a person who is a member of a religious group you believe to be a cult, ask that person if they perceive their theology to be of such a nature that they cannot believe any other system of theology as workable. You will soon see that they are convinced that their way is the only way that works. What need, then, to try or examine anything else? I have long ago lost count as to how many times I have heard people say they have proved their way to be true, and that there was no purpose served to examine everything all over again. This, my dear reader, is a classic example of being dull of seeing and dull of hearing.

In order to expose false teachings and deceptions, there must be some hard fast rules that people can agree on. In other words, there must be some common ground to work from. I have concluded that the basis for determining truth from error is the following statement:

Scripture is the Inspired Word of God. As such, no man, and no church, has the right to alter Scripture or its application in any way.

All too often, ministers resort to a rationale of “principle.” Tithing is a good example. Tithing on one's wages is unbiblical, yet they will justify the practice through the rationale of the principle of the thing. However, once you compromise with one concept of Scripture, where does it stop or end? No, we need to understand that using some excuse to circumvent the Inspired Word of God is to treat that Word of God with contempt. If you desire to know and learn the truth, there can be no compromise with the Word of God.

Here then are a number of the methods of deception.

* Logical fallacies

There are a number of resources on the internet where one can study into logical fallacies. There are quite a number of types extant, and many variations on those themes. They are not only employed to proffer a false belief, but also they are employed as a means of rejecting proper evidence and those who would provide that evidence. If you can disparage a person through an Ad Hominem you can justify in your own mind the rejection of what they have to say. You can see examples of this in scripture where many of the religious leaders of Jesus' day said things designed to discredit Jesus as a person so as to make the unwarranted claim that anything said by Him was seen as not being credible. If you don't have a credible witness, you do not have credible evidence. You can reject the man and what he has to say with the wave of a hand.

There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard. — Ecclesiastes 9:14-16

In the group that I was in, it was a common practice to refer to those who left as “disgruntled ex members” and as such, anything they had to say critical of the group was summarily dismissed. A poor man even within the organization was seen as being unworthy of attention, and that his lack of success and wealth a sign of disfavor with God. In false religious groups, the opposite of love for one another is extant, but not recognized as such.

A logical fallacy attempts to circumvent the proper methods of determining the truth of a matter through a flawed rationale or logic. Often, the fallacy follows the use of a premise followed by a conclusion, where the premise is flawed, or the conclusion is not even related to the premise (a “Non Sequitur”).

When it comes to false religious beliefs, the use of logical fallacies is commonplace, and they are used as an indoctrination tool in order to produce a conditioned response when confronted with an attack upon a belief.

It is commonplace for those who have been so conditioned to respond to any claim contrary to their belief with these conditioned responses so that they are predictable as a result. These conditioned responses serve to throw up a mental barrier to contrary evidence. They also serve to block out any critical thinking in regards to those beliefs. If, for example, you confront a member of a legalistic group that Christians are not under the law; not subject to the old covenant law, two common conditioned responses result:

1. “If the law were done away, people would be free to sin; commit murder, adultery, robbery,

etc. without fear of God's punishment or retribution.”

2. That law defines sin, and a Christian is not free to sin. Sinners will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

In this case, the premise can be shown to be false for Christians. The law defined sin for one under the law, and Christians are not under that law. But again, the OC legalist cannot conceive of any other system being workable, so plain Scriptures that state we are not under the law can't be taken at face value.

There are many more examples of conditioned responses in this regard, but these two will suffice for our purpose now.

These conditioned responses are claims. For claim # 1, no real evidence is given in support of the claim, and when the claim is exposed to the methods of proper examination, it falls apart fairly easily.

Is the only thing preventing you, or the one making the claim for that matter, from going about committing wholesale murder the fact there is a law prohibiting it? I find it is useful to turn the claim back on the one making the claim. In this case, the claim is couched in an accusation, so I turn the accusation back on the accuser. I try to personalize the claim with them. When you do this though, you see another aspect of conditioning kick in, and they invariably try to change the subject at that point, where they make another conditioned response in order to avoid having to deal with a claim critically, thus avoiding being proven wrong.

Claim #2 is accompanied with the scriptural evidence found in I John 3:4 and the translation found in the KJV:

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. — 1 John 3:4

No other modern English translation contains this interpretive translation of this passage, but no matter. They simply make the claim, that this translation is the correct one, and all others are misleading, made by men who refuse to see the “truth” about the law. As mentioned earlier, one or more falsehoods are used to prop up other falsehoods.

An examination of the Greek here, along with an understanding of the linguistics of the time reveals that this interpretive translation is not correct. The Greek does not support the word, “anomia” being used in this fashion, referring to the old covenant law. In context, and in keeping with the usage of the Greek word anomia in that world and at that time, the passage is more precisely rendered as sin being “iniquity.” All iniquity is sin, but not all transgressions of that law were sin. David ate the show-bread that was unlawful for him to eat, yet he was blameless. The translation as it stands in the King James not only neglects to take this into consideration, the spirit of the law is also swept aside.

Mis-quoting, mis-application of Scripture.

Eisegesis (a.k.a. *proof texting*)

This is the practice of taking a passage of Scripture out of context, and focusing on it in such a way as to conclude something beyond the scope of the context. For example, sabbatarian legalists are fond of quoting Mark 2:27:

And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

The context was about Jesus explaining to the Pharisees that the “man” was not made or created for the sabbath, but rather the sabbath was made for the man, seeing as the mindset of the Jews and especially the Pharisees was one of a strict and burdensome interpretation and application of the sabbath commandment. To conclude though that the “man” in this instance is to be interpreted to mean all of mankind is to take this way beyond the scope of what was being discussed. What “man” was given the sabbath and required to keep it? The Israelites via a covenant between them and God. To interpret “anthropos” as being all of humanity in this example is to be sloppy in one’s scholarship. But when you are trying to “prove” a false belief, anything goes, and careful scholarship is the first thing to suffer. In response, I point this out:

And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. — Matthew 10:22

All men would rightly include other Christian believers, would it not? But the sabbatarian attempts to ignore the obvious by insisting “men” is not in the passage; that “men” is implied. Fair enough then. If men is implied, then who are these “all;” all animals? Who or what has the ability to hate? Other people; all of them. So is “all” all inclusive here, or not? Or, is the sabbatarian legalist going to resort to Clintonian semantics now?

If “anthropos” is going to be understood in Mark 2:27 as meaning all mankind, then shouldn’t we apply the same standard to the word “all” here?

What we also need to do is examine how the writer, in this case Mark, uses the same word “man” (anthropos) in the gospel of Mark in order to establish whether Mark always uses the word to mean “all mankind.”

In that same passage, Mark relates that Jesus used the term: “Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.”

The word “man” here is the same anthropos. Is the “Son of man” literally the son of all mankind? No. The word “man” here is used in a more figurative sense. Already we can see that anthropos as used by Mark, does not always mean, all mankind as the sabbatarian insists.

Mark 3:1 And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.

The word “man” here is anthropos. Again, does the word mean, all mankind? No, for not all mankind was standing there with withered hands. Mark is referring to just one man.

The word anthropos is not a rigid word. It can mean anything from a single man, to a man or men in general. To assign to it arbitrarily the meaning of all mankind simply because it is in line with one’s theological beliefs is scholastically dishonest. It is poor and lazy scholarship.

The context of Mark chapter two in regards to this example shows the duplicitous way the entire passage is used by those who are deceived. The Pharisees claim Jesus’ disciples were doing that which was illegal to do on the sabbath; picking grain to eat. The sabbatarian insists this was not unlawful, thereby ignoring the context even moreso. They claim that picking and eating grain on a sabbath was one of the many added restrictions to the law the Pharisees were renowned for, yet Jesus does not dispute their claim regarding the legality of the claim. It was indeed against the

law to pick the grain, even as it was unlawful for David to eat the show-bread. To cover up this flaw in logic and reason, the sabbatarian often resorts to the excuse of the rights of kings, yet David was not at that time king, and the law did not provide a king with special privileges. All were treated equally under the law. This in itself is an example of using one falsehood to prop up another falsehood.

It was illegal for the Israelites to go out and attempt to gather manna on a sabbath, even though there was no manna available on a sabbath. It was illegal to go out and gather sticks. The flawed logic of the sabbatarian would have us believe that to go out into a field to gather grain to eat was not a violation of the sabbath commandment, yet trying to go out to gather manna to eat, that wasn't even there, was a violation!

Let us recap. The sabbatarian quotes Mark 2:27 and makes the claim that "man" means all of mankind, and further concludes all mankind is therefore required to keep the sabbath.

By using just some of the methods of proper scholarship, we have determined the claims to be false, for the premise that anthropos means all mankind is shown to be false based upon the further writings by the same author. We also recognize the passage as being used eisegetically by the sabbatarian, and eisegesis is not a proper method of scholarship. It is one of the many methods employed in deceptions and falsehoods.

The context of Scripture shows that only the Israelites were required to "keep the sabbath" and that the sabbath was the sign between God and Israel in relation to their covenant. We can find no example of anyone prior to Sinai keeping the sabbath, nor do we find any example of anyone else being commanded to keep the sabbath, let alone all mankind. The claim by sabbatarians that the sabbath was instituted at creation is but another example of attempting to prop up one false belief with another false belief. The seventh day may well have been established as the last day in a seven day weekly cycle, but there is no evidence of Adam and Eve being commanded to rest on that day, or anyone else until Sinai. It was God who rested on that seventh day of creation, and not Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve did not work the previous six days; God did. Adam and Eve were created the day before that seventh day. Strange, don't you think, that sabbatarians would insist the sabbath day rest was instituted at creation for all mankind when neither Adam and Eve had been working! But fear not, the sabbatarians have even more false props in their sabbath arsenal.

Redefining of Words and Terms

The most common example of this I can think of is the word and concept of tithing. Ask anyone what the tithe is, and you will likely get an answer that differs from that of Scripture.

The biblical tithe that is found in the old covenant law, was a tenth of the increase of produce and/or livestock. What the biblical tithe never was, was a tenth of one's increase based on wages. Wage earners under the law never tithed on their wages.

One of the last people I pointed this fact out to in turn asked me to show them where tithing was not assessed of one's wages! In other words, where does it say we do not tithe on our wages? Does the reader see the problem with that question? One of the rules of proper logic states that you cannot prove a negative, and yet those who are caught up in false belief systems require proof of a negative all the time. Example:

Where does it say in the Bible we are no longer required to keep the sabbath?

It not only requires us to prove a negative; it is also a loaded question, which is yet another of the many methods employed in deceptions.

The biblical definition then of a tithe as required under the old covenant was a tenth of the increase of produce and/or livestock, or something made from produce, such as wine. When confronted with this factual definition of tithe, rationalizations result. Rationalizations are also a method of deception. In this case, it is rationalized that we are to make allowances for changes that occur over time, or that it is the principle that matters. These responses are typical, and those who hold to tithing are invariably the same ones who claim, reading Matthew 5:17-18, that the law of the old covenant remains intact and inviolate even down to jots and tittles. So, if the law of tithing, like all else, cannot be altered even down to the strokes of the letters of the tithing law, how is it they now claim the law of tithing does indeed change way beyond jots and tittles?

Can we truly alter the meaning of Scripture, as well as alter the application of Scripture? We are dealing with the “Word” of God here. Jesus confronted the religious of Israel in this regard by telling them that they made the word of God of no effect through their traditions. In other words, they were trying to keep the law, not as God had commanded, but rather through their traditions. If God commanded something be done, or observed, He also commanded the manner in which it was to be done. Teaching people therefore to tithe of their wages constitutes a perversion of Scripture and its application.

It is the false teachers and false ministers who teach deceptions. Jesus warned that these people were wolves in sheep’s clothing, preying on flocks. Altering the tithing law, and applying it to Christians, both contrary to that law, serves the wolf perfectly. You can justify anything through principle and rationalization. Rationalizations, inferences, and assumptions can be, and usually are, common methods of deception.

I had hoped to cover the proper methods of biblical scholarship in a separate chapter, but it is most difficult to cover the methods of deception without touching on the proper methods for determining truth. Sometimes, in order to expose a deception, you need to demonstrate what the truth of the matter is. Can we then discern whether tithing is valid for Christians? The best way to start is to look for evidence in the new covenant writings that apply to Christians. Often, you see deceivers look for evidence in the “new testament” but what they end up doing is citing “evidence” from the gospels where and when the old covenant was still in force with those people. The new testament/covenant (this is the same Greek word) began upon the death of Christ, and not before. The old covenant came to an end upon that same death. Covenants and testaments have also undergone redefinition within the false belief systems.

Do we find a “thus saith the Lord” for Christians to practice tithing? No. Do we find any of the new testament writers claiming Christians are to tithe? No. Do we find an example of Christians tithing in the new covenant? No. Do we find any evidence to the contrary (which is a proper method of scholarship)? Yes we do. Paul makes mention that those who preach the gospel are entitled to support as a result of preaching the gospel. He does not however use tithing as a justification, but rather cites the example of not muzzling the ox that treads out the grain. Critical thinking would have us see that, if tithing were required of Christians, Paul would have said so, and used tithing as an example. If tithing were indeed required, then another puzzling thing happens in Paul’s writing about giving and supporting ministers of the gospel; he refused support from some churches. If tithing were indeed required, how then could Paul refuse tithes?

This whole topic regarding the use of deceptions cannot be over emphasized. Historically, church leaders used their positions as a means of dictating beliefs and enforcing them upon their members. Those who did not conform to the beliefs and dictates of their religious leaders could

find themselves condemned to death.

We now have an opportunity rarely open down through history; the ability to study the Scriptures and decide for ourselves what they mean and what they teach without the undue influence of religious leaders who all too often are motivated by other forces besides the gospel.

Rationalization, Inference, Assumption, Drawn out conclusions

It can take awhile to catch on when these are being used. It is an appeal to intellect when there is no Scriptural support for an idea or belief. If a belief is important, there will be proper Scriptural evidence to support it.

Claims that cannot be verified

These are usually in association with the deceiver, and not necessarily a false belief. The deceiver attempts to set himself up as a prophet of sorts, and so makes claims of personal revelation from God, or perhaps a spirit being. There is no way to validate their claims.

Transference or substitution theology

This is taking that which was commanded or required of one group or individual and applying it to another group or individual. God commanded the Israelites to keep a covenant law. The only provision in that covenant law for one not of Israel to come under that law was to undergo circumcision. Were Gentiles required to be circumcised in Acts 15?

Chapter 7

Dead to Sin; Dead to the Law; Living under Grace.

Another area of common confusion is in regards to the relationship between God and the believer. What is the believer's "position" in relation to God? Also, what was the relationship between God and an Israelite who was under the old covenant?

Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; ² But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. ³Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: ⁴But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, ⁵To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. ⁶And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. ⁷Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. – Galatians 4:1-7

Those redeemed are now sons, whereas the previous condition was that of a servant or slave. It is also a condition of being a child; immature in nature and under bondage to these "elements of the world." A child's life consists of living by a set of rules given to them by the parents. "Don't touch that!" "Eat your carrots." "Don't cross the street." "Come inside before it gets dark."

Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, ²¹(Touch not; taste not; handle not; ²²Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? ²³Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh. ¹If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. ²Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. ³For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. – Colossians 2:20-3:3

Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. ³⁵And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. ³⁶If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. – John 8:34-36

It is Christ who makes us free from sin, and no longer the servant of sin. It is in this condition we "abide in the house for ever."

God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? – Romans 6:2

What does it mean to be dead to sin? Likewise:

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. – Romans 7:4

For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. – Galatians 2:19

Being dead to sin, and dead to that law, means that neither has any power over the person any longer. One is freed from the law, and freed from sin.

For he that is dead is freed from sin. – Romans 6:7

Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. ¹⁹ I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. ²⁰ for when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. ²¹ What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. ²² But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. – Romans 6:18-23

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. – Romans 8:2

Sin all too often becomes a tool of control, wielded by ministers or a ministry for the sake of controlling their members. They are taught that, in order to avoid sin, they must abide by the instructions of their ministries, who define what sin is for them, and define for them how they are to live in order to avoid sin.

This should not be taken lightly. Historically, societies have been closely controlled, not only through civil governments, but by religious organizations also, often in conjunction with the civil authority. A person's very existence was controlled from birth to the grave, and any behavior, or even belief that strayed from the norm, could be, and often was, dealt with severely.

For the first time in history, people in the western civilizations have been freed from the “peer pressure” of their cultures. If a culture had embraced a false gospel and a false Christianity, and you were a part of that culture, you were forced to conform to that culture and belief system. Truly, the chances of you coming to an understanding of the truth of the gospel, and pure religion would have been remote. When and if a disagreement arose between groups of people in a particular culture, blood was likely to be spilled, and a prevailing belief was rarely based on the truth of Scripture, but rather by who controlled the greater power in that culture.

With the advent of printing came the ability for more people to read the Scriptures, with the resultant differences of interpretations. Differing groups sprung up, all wanting the ability to believe what they wanted without being persecuted by other groups, hence the migration of various religious groups to the Americas, where they set up their own cultures and promptly persecuted any and all within their environs who did not agree with their brand of Christianity.

Fortunately, in time, religious freedoms prevailed in the states and the Federal Constitution of the United States, where one was now free to worship God according to the dictates of one's conscience, as well as the freedom to not worship God according to that same freedom. A person no longer had to conform to the religious “norm” that rarely matched up with Scripture.

If those who desire power and control over others cannot achieve it through one venue, they will seek it in another. Religion is a very powerful venue; a cage people can be put in that has no bars other than the person's own fears and phobias. Jesus declared that the truth sets men free. Conversely, lies, deceptions, and false religions enslave.

Do you wish to be free? If so, then you must be ready to question everything and everyone. Nothing is above examination, and no one is above scrutiny. If a man tells you that to question him is to question God, then run and don't walk away from such a man. No man and no ministry is to come between the individual and Christ. Christ is the vine, and the believer is a branch connected directly to the vine, and not connected via some other man or church.

Jesus stated that you would know true believers based on whether they had love for one another, and by extension, love for all others. Jesus did not say you would know true believers based on their beliefs and doctrines. True doctrines, by the way, do not violate love and faith.

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. ⁵For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: ⁶Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. ⁷For he that is dead is freed from sin. ⁸Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: ⁹Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. ¹⁰For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. ¹¹Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. ¹²Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. – Romans 6:3-12

The old you died. The new you is a new creation. You are now a son (or daughter) of God whereas before you were a son or daughter of Adam with the inherent nature of Adam; a sinful nature.

Those who would resurrect you back to sin want power and control over you. Those who want to resurrect you back to the law also want to control you. They make a good argument that Christians are not free to sin, and even Paul makes such a declaration, but what kind of sin? Well, what did we just read above? That it is about sins related to lust; about sating carnal desires. Sabbatarians make the accusation that the carnal mind hates the sabbath, yet you can't make the case that one lusts in relation to the sabbath any more than they would circumcision.

The ultimate goal of dragging you back to sin and rules of conduct is to bring you under a false gospel, and the resultant bondage. Those who seek power and control over others cannot stand the thought of anyone being free of their control, which is what the true gospel accomplishes. You therefore must be ready to walk away from those who seek control over you, despite all the subtle and deceitful methods they may employ to have you accept them as an authority figure over you. It may even require some to abandon family.

And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, ³⁰But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. – Mark 10:29-30

Ministers of Christ are servants, and not masters. If they can dictate to you, and demand of you compliance of things, especially your support of them, then there is something fundamentally

wrong. If they can adversely affect your life, there is something dreadfully wrong. If they generate fear in people should they go against what they teach and demand, it is time to seek the nearest exit.

A Christian is not under the law. A Christian is under grace. A legalist will insist that, because we are under grace, we should be keeping that law; that grace is not a license to sin. Part of the problem is in the legalist's interpretation of sin being so much more than following the lusts of the flesh. Conversely, the legalist's interpretation is sin falls short of covering everything found in that same law they espouse as defining sin.

In order to cover the aspect of grace, I will incorporate the methodology of truth in this example.

First, we gather together the examples of Scripture that deals with the type of grace being examined, for the English word “grace” can mean a couple different, although related things. We are looking for examples of grace as the Christian condition in relation to God, where grace is unmerited favor and acceptance. In this context, we need to remember that a Christian's life is hid in Christ; that the Christian takes on Christ's righteousness, and not one's own righteousness. (Colossians 3:3; Matthew 6:33; Philippians 3:9)

John 1:16 And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

John 1:17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

[If grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, then grace and truth did not come by Moses or the law]

Acts 13:43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

Acts 14:3 Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

Acts 14:26 And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.

Acts 15:11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

Acts 15:40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

Acts 18:27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:

Acts 20:24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

[The gospel is about grace]

Acts 20:32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is

able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

Romans 1:5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:

Romans 3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

Romans 4:4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

Romans 4:16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

Romans 5:2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Romans 5:15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

Romans 5:17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

Romans 5:20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

Romans 5:21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

Romans 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

[For sin to have dominion, one must be under the law]

Romans 6:15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

Romans 11:5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

Romans 11:6 And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

Romans 12:3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Romans 12:6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

Romans 15:15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,

1 Corinthians 1:4 I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;

1 Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

1 Corinthians 10:30 For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?

1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

2 Corinthians 1:12 For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

2 Corinthians 4:15 For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

2 Corinthians 6:1 We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

2 Corinthians 8:1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;

2 Corinthians 8:6 Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.

2 Corinthians 8:7 Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

2 Corinthians 8:9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

2 Corinthians 8:19 And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind:

2 Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

2 Corinthians 9:14 And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.

2 Corinthians 12:9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Galatians 1:6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

[Another gospel removes you from grace?]

Galatians 1:15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,

Galatians 2:9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

Galatians 2:21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

[Grace is related to righteousness and Christ's sacrifice]

Galatians 5:4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

[Scripture shows we cannot be justified by the law, therefore is this a case of trying to be justified by the law? How do we define justified / justification?]

Ephesians 1:6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

[Our acceptance is related to God's grace]

Ephesians 1:7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

Ephesians 2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

Ephesians 2:7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Ephesians 3:2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

Ephesians 3:7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

Ephesians 3:8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

Ephesians 4:7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

Ephesians 4:29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

Philippians 1:7 Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

Colossians 1:6 Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:

2 Thessalonians 1:12 That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2:16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

1 Timothy 1:14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

[Grace is associated with faith and love]

2 Timothy 1:9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

2 Timothy 2:1 Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

Titus 3:7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 10:29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

[Could this be those who reject the new covenant that was instituted by the spilled blood of Christ; rejecting God's grace for another, earlier covenant?]

Hebrews 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

Hebrews 12:28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

Hebrews 13:9 Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

James 4:6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

1 Peter 1:10 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:

1 Peter 1:13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

1 Peter 3:7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

1 Peter 4:10 As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

1 Peter 5:5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

1 Peter 5:10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

1 Peter 5:12 By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.

2 Peter 3:18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

Jude 1:4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

In those Scriptures where grace is the topic of discussion, we need to examine the context so as to avoid treating the text eisegetically.

Romans chapter 4

What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? ²For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. ³For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. ⁴Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. ⁵But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. ⁶Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, ⁷Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. ⁸Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will

not impute sin. ⁹Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. ¹⁰How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. ¹¹And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: ¹²And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. ¹³For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: ¹⁵Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. ¹⁶Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, ¹⁷(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. ¹⁸Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. ¹⁹And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: ²⁰He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; ²¹And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. ²²And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. ²³Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; ²⁴But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; ²⁵Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. – Romans 4:1-25

What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? ²For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.

What is Paul saying here? That if Abraham's justification (being upright before God) were based on his own efforts, he would have something to glory in, but even so, God would be unimpressed? Is Paul stating that what God wants isn't someone who is perfect when it comes to following orders? Is there something else that God is interested in?

³For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Why was Abraham's righteousness before God a result of Abraham's belief / faith? Why did Abraham believe God? What was Abraham's motivation?

⁴Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. ⁵But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

What is this reward? In this context, it is about salvation. If salvation were achievable through “work” then grace would have nothing to do with it. One would receive salvation as payment for the work done according to the terms of the agreement. What agreement? Keeping the

commandments perfectly, and this idea has its evidence in what is written in Matthew chapter 19 in regards to the wealthy young man who asked Jesus what he, personally, could do in order to have eternal life. What was established there was the fact that neither this man, or any man, will ever be so justified. It is impossible for a man, given the nature he is born with, to fulfill the requirements of that law that reflects the perfection found in, and required of, God.

When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? ²⁶But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. – Matthew 19:25-26

In this context then, grace is related to justification, not through work or the efforts of the individual, but through faith/belief in God who, as a result of faith, justifies even the “ungodly.” A righteousness is imputed to the believer, which elsewhere is shown to be Christ's righteousness imputed to the believer, whose life becomes hid in Christ.

⁶Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, ⁷Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. ⁸Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

This then is the condition of one under grace; a condition where God imputes righteousness to us, and forgives our iniquities; covers our sins. There is one more aspect here that we tend to overlook: God will *not* impute sin to us. How often do you hear preachers/ministers make that declaration? If our lives are hidden in Christ, then wouldn't God have to impute sin to Christ in order to impute sin to us?

³¹Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: ³²Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: ³³But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, **and I will remember their sin no more.** – Jeremiah 31:31-34

⁹Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. ¹⁰How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. ¹¹And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: ¹²And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. ¹³For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was

not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: ¹⁵Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

These promises that were given to Abraham are not exclusive to those of the circumcision who later received the law. These promises, and righteousness through faith, predate that law. That law had nothing to do with righteousness through faith and these promises of inheritance. Indeed, if we attempt to claim those who are “of the law” are the sole heirs, faith is voided; vacated, and the promise becomes nothing, seeing as it can no longer be related to a promise. Why? Because the law produces wrath, and not righteousness. If the law were relevant, then these things; the promises; the righteousness by faith, cease to exist, having been supplanted by law where one has to keep the law perfectly in order to attain or acquire righteousness and salvation. Even Christ's sacrifice becomes an empty event. But if there is no law, there can be no sin. If there is no sin, there is no condemnation. If there is no condemnation. . .

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. – 1 Corinthians 15:55-57

Victory over what? Death, sin, and the law.

¹⁶Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, ¹⁷(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

Note how Paul switches between those of the circumcision and those of the law, showing that he is talking about the same people in this context. In contrast to these are those who are not of the circumcision, and also not of the law. Both categories have Abraham as their father in regards to faith and grace. The promise initially given to Abraham, is secure in this context outside the legalities of the law.

¹⁸Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. ¹⁹And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: ²⁰He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; ²¹And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. ²²And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. ²³Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; ²⁴But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; ²⁵Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. – Romans 4:1-25

Our faith and belief, results in our righteousness and justification – thereby coming under grace, is in regards to Jesus' sacrifice and His resurrection.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: ¹³(For until the law sin was in

the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. – Romans 5:12-13

If there was sin in the world prior to that law (“the” law), and sin is not imputed without law, then there was another law extant from creation that Adam and Eve violated. We can identify the law of faith, seeing as Adam and Eve's sin was about faithlessness, and we also see a “law” of conscience, as brought out by Paul:

Romans 2:14-16

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: ¹⁵Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) ¹⁶In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel. – Romans 2:14-16

Romans 6:1-23

¹⁴Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

This is a time span where the law, given through Moses, did not exist. Yet sin was extant, and death reigned. Sin was not a case of everyone eating of that forbidden fruit. All sin eventually comes back to faithlessness and unbelief. Something happened to the human psyche upon their sin, and it became a part of the human condition. We are the offspring of Adam and Eve with this Adamic nature.

¹⁵But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. ¹⁶And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. ¹⁷For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) ¹⁸Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. ¹⁹For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Paul contrasts Adam and Christ as being opposites in relation to humanity. Adam began the pattern whereby all came under condemnation. Jesus set the pattern for humanity to come under the gift of grace, resulting in justification. Each one's actions led to a totally opposite result.

²⁰Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: ²¹That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. – Romans 5:12-21

All the law did was cause the offenses to abound; to be greater in degree and severity. The law made sin “utterly sinful.” The law did not produce anything other than offenses. The law did

not, and could not, produce righteousness. The law is on the opposite side of the justification/offense equation.

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? ²God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? ³Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Here and elsewhere, Paul addresses the claim made by his adversaries that he was espousing an antinomian position; a claim that Christians would sin with abandonment. It is a case of claiming the only thing preventing Christians from wholesale sin is a written code! What then of the Holy Spirit a Christian possesses? Is the Holy Spirit seen by those who claim Paul was antinomian as being of no effect?

⁵For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: ⁶Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. ⁷For he that is dead is freed from sin. ⁸Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: ⁹Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. ¹⁰For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. ¹¹Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. ¹²Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. ¹³Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. ¹⁴For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Our “old man” is crucified with Christ. The Adamic nature is dead and buried; that nature that was subject to sin and law. The believer now lives a new life in Christ. The believer exists in a new state of being; a son of God whose life is tied to Christ's. In regards then to sin and Paul's observation, is sin seen as being a case of breaking a law that was added later, whose purpose was to make offenses abound? No, for there were requirements in that law that had nothing to do with lusts of one's mortal body. The Gentiles did not, through conscience, relate to things like the sabbath.

Also, the believer, having been rendered dead to sin and the law, is not left in some ethereal limbo state. The believer is in a state of grace. As a result of being in this state of grace, sin no longer has dominion. Grace has dominion. Death no longer has dominion; Grace has dominion. The law no longer has dominion; Grace has dominion.

¹⁵What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. ¹⁶Know 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? ¹⁷But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. ¹⁸Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

The rationalization a legalist resorts to is that, in order to not sin, one must keep the law. Never mind the believer is no longer under sin or the law. But the believer here obeys from the heart. If however one insists on keeping the law in order to not sin, there are two things that negate that thinking: 1. If you are obeying the law, then you become the servant of the law. You are no longer the servant of Christ. 2. You cannot obey the law anyway, perfectly, as required. Being the servant of righteousness is about living by faith, and not law.

¹⁹I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. ²⁰For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. ²¹What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. ²²But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. ²³For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. – Romans 6:1-23

Legalists attempt to marry grace and law. We have examined all the relevant Scriptures and find no support for that concept. What we have found is the exact opposite. One is either under law, or under grace. One is either under the consequences of a failure to keep law, which is in sin, or one is under grace. One is either under a death penalty as a result of sin, as defined by law, or one is under grace.

One last issue to address: Legalists redefine what it means to be “under the law” in an attempt to claim Christians should be keeping the law. I would remind the reader that redefining words and terms is common method employed in deceptions.

This redefinition of what it means to be under the law is to claim it is in relation to the condemnation that normally results from the law. It is a claim we can and should keep the law, but that we do not, as a result of transgressing that law, come under the condemnation of that law. This is like saying if you are in an automobile wreck, you will walk away from it unscathed.

Do we have any Scriptural support of this claim? No. Is there any evidence to the contrary? Yes:

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, ⁵To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. – Galatians 4:4-5

Jesus was made (born) of a woman, and made (born) under the law. If we define “under the law” to mean under the condemnation of the law, then we have a case of Jesus being born condemned from birth. Sounds more like a doctrine of demons.

When we apply critical thinking to this definition that we are not under the law's condemnation, but still obligated to keep that law, what happens then, according to those proponents of this concept, should be abandon law keeping? What happens to the one who quits keeping the sabbath, for example?

What is their answer? They revert back to the claim that to sin “willfully” is to commit the unpardonable and forfeit salvation. So there is condemnation with breaking that law after all. It is but another example of the double-speak; the cognitive dissonance inherent in false belief systems. What is of importance to us is the effect on our being under grace.

Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. ³For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. ⁴Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. – Galatians 5:2-4

Circumcision brought one under the law and obligated to live by that law. It was a “covenant” law, therefore every requirement of that law had to be complied with and met. Failure to keep one point resulted in the entirety being violated. Even James attests to this:

For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. – James 2:10

Being under the law means exactly what it says; being under, and therefore subject to that law.

I would attempt to impress on the legalist that the true “test” of your Christian character comes when you are confronted with a situation not covered in your never ending lists of “do this” and “don't do that” structured life. Awhile back it was popular for people to wear an arm bracelet with the initials, “WWJD” which stood for “What would Jesus do?” It was a way of trying to get people to think along the lines of the Spirit of faith and love. The legalist should wear a bracelet that says (WDTLS) instead as their guiding principle: “What does the law say?” Jesus worked on sabbaths, contrary to the letter of the law. You, the legalist, are in denial in this regard. You have been taught, and believed, that Jesus could not possibly have broken that law, for to do so is to sin, and He could not be the Savior of mankind as a result. It has been instilled into you as one of those immovable and immutable beliefs that blinds you to the reality of the True Christ and living by faith, under grace, apart from that law.

Jesus came as the Son of God and He lived a sinless life. How? By keeping that law? No. He lived a sinless life because He is God. It is His Nature to be righteous. It is our nature to be sinful.

I have an interesting analogy in this regard. When I was at Ambassador as a freshman, one of the many rules we had was that the male students were not permitted in the women's dorms without proper supervision. Yet I had a job on campus that required me to go into the women's dorms on a fairly regular basis and work unsupervised. When I mentioned this to my supervisor, he informed me, “we are not worried about you being in a women's dorm. We are concerned about these church kids going into the women's dorms.” After a bit more discussion over the matter, I understood the reasoning behind the rule and why I was “exempt” from it. They considered the church kids to be carnally minded when they show up as freshmen. I however did not come from a church family; I came from the outside and had a different perspective to begin with that was serious in nature. My motivation to be there was to learn what I believed to be God's way of life. These church kids were not necessarily there as a result of such a motivation. They knew from past experience who they could trust and not trust, and the average freshman coming from a church family was seen to have a more “carnal” nature. What is unfortunate in this regard is that they could not take this concept and apply it to their understanding of the law.

Who do you have to tell not to commit murder? Someone whose nature it is to hate another to the point they would murder. Who do you have to tell not to commit adultery? Someone who has a carnal nature that is prone to do so. Who do you have to tell not to worship idols and false gods? Someone who is likely to do so.

Works of the Law

There are those whose religion is all based on show. Jesus addressed this in regards to some Jews who would put on quite a show of their “devotion” through their actions.

Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. ³But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: ⁴That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. ⁵And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. ⁶But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. – Matthew 6:2-6

All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. ⁴For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. ⁵But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, ⁶And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, ⁷And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. ⁸But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. ⁹And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. ¹⁰Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. – Matthew 23:3-10

The sabbath is a point of bragging. It is an attempt to look righteous on the outside by observing the day. To sabbatarians, it is the true Christian distinctive. To them, those who do not keep the sabbath are the deceived and are false Christians (a negative judgment). Some of them go so far as to claim that if a “Christian” observes Sundays as a day of worship, they are worshipping the beast, and receive the mark of the beast as a result.

They point out with self-righteous indignation the practice of some churches that to call their religious leaders “father” violates the command of Christ, yet they too have “masters” over them in their churches who tell them what to do, and how to do it, while exempting themselves from even the sabbath commandment. Their members are put under the burden of tithing, contrary to the same law they claim cannot be altered even down to the strokes of the letters of the law. Such is the power of a deceptive system.

Section II ~ Advanced Christianity

Chapter 1: Holy Spirit : A “Person”

Legalists deny the Trinity as a belief and doctrine, using the methods of deception in order to make their case. Their first claim is that the word, “trinity” is not found in the Bible. Does this claim truly prove anything? Invariably, these groups have unique doctrines using terminology that is not located in the Scriptures either, so it becomes a case of hypocrisy in this regard. For instance, the SDA has a doctrine called, “The Investigative Judgment”.

Regardless, it was a long time before I understood what the true nature of the “debate” was in relation to the Holy Spirit. We do see in Scripture that there is God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The debate boils down to whether the Holy Spirit constitutes being a “person” or merely the force / power of God.

To settle the issue, using the proper methods of scholarship, we would examine all related Scripture where the Holy Spirit is referenced, and see whether they support the Holy Spirit being a person or a force of God, or perhaps both or neither. Also, we examine the evidence to the contrary offered by those who do not believe the Trinity or nature of God as three “beings” yet one “God.”

Scriptural evidence

Luke 11:13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Ephesians 1:13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

Ephesians 4:30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

Can a power or force be grieved?

1 Thessalonians 4:8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

Matthew 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

Matthew 1:20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

Matthew 3:11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

Matthew 12:31 Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

Matthew 12:32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

Matthew 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Mark 1:8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

Mark 3:29 But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:

Mark 12:36 For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

Mark 13:11 But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

Can a power or force speak?

Luke 1:15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

Luke 1:35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

If the Holy Spirit is a only a power, then isn't this being redundant?

Luke 1:41 And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:

Luke 1:67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,

Luke 2:25 And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

Luke 2:26 And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

Can a force or power impart knowledge?

Luke 3:16 John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:

Luke 3:22 And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.

Can a force or power have a bodily shape?

Luke 4:1 And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,

Luke 12:10 And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.

Luke 12:12 For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

Can a force or power teach?

John 1:33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

John 7:39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

John 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Here, the Holy Spirit is referred to in more anthropomorphic terminology.

John 20:22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:

Acts 1:2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

Acts 1:5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Acts 1:16 Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 2:33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 4:8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,

Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

Acts 5:3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

Can one lie to a power or force?

Acts 5:32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

This is key; The Holy Ghost is a witness. In the O.C. Inanimate objects could be a “witness” to an agreement but not in the legal sense of being an eye-witness when it came to discerning the truth or falsehood of a claim or crime. Jesus' detractors accused Him of being His own witness, thereby concluding His witness was false. This was not how the law worked. If you were the sole witness, it did not follow that your witness was false; it merely lacked corroboration by another, and was not enough in and of itself to make a determination of guilt or innocence, or fact.

Acts 6:3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

Acts 6:5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:

Acts 7:51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

Acts 7:55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

Acts 8:15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

Acts 8:17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

Acts 8:18-19 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, *Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

Acts 9:17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

Acts 9:31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

Acts 10:38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

Acts 10:44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

Acts 10:45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 10:47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

Acts 11:15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.

Acts 11:16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

Acts 11:24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

Acts 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

Can a power or force speak?

Acts 13:4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

Acts 13:9 Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,

Acts 13:52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

Acts 15:8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;

Acts 15:28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;

Hardly language one would use when speaking of a power or force.

Acts 16:6 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,

A command given by the Holy Spirit.

Acts 19:2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

Acts 19:6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

Acts 20:23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Acts 21:11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

Acts 28:25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,

Romans 5:5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Romans 9:1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Romans 15:13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Romans 15:16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

1 Corinthians 2:13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

1 Corinthians 6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

1 Corinthians 12:3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

2 Corinthians 6:6 By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,

2 Corinthians 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen. <<The second epistle to the Corinthians was written from Philippi, a city of Macedonia, by Titus and Lucas.>>

1 Thessalonians 1:5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

1 Thessalonians 1:6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

2 Timothy 1:14 That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.

Titus 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Hebrews 2:4 God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

Hebrews 3:7 Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice,

Hebrews 6:4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

Hebrews 9:8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:

Hebrews 10:15 Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before,

1 Peter 1:12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

2 Peter 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

1 John 5:7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

Jude 1:20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,

The evidence of Scripture supports the Holy Spirit being a person; having personage. The evidence to the contrary would be those passages of Scripture that appear to treat the Holy Spirit in terms of being a power, seeing as there is a reference to the Holy Spirit “falling” on people and being poured out on people, but these can be nothing more than literary devices.

Those who hold to the belief the Holy Spirit is not a person rarely appeal to Scripture for proof, but rather the methods of deception. For example, one common argument is that a trinity creates a closed God-head. It was never explained by any of these proponents as to “how” this was so, and even the relevance of this statement. When we subject the claim / statement to critical thinking, a few flaws erupt.

If three beings in the God-head produces this “closed” God-head, then what does two beings do? Do two beings in the God-head produce an “open” God-head? How?

It should be obvious that this rationale is nothing more than grasping at straws, unless your belief system believes in straw-grasping as an accepted form of scholarship.

We can also ask some “critical thinking” questions in relation to the Holy Spirit.

God (the Father) is omni-present. He exists outside of time and space, and in a sense, exists everywhere at all times:

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? ⁸If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. ⁹If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; ¹⁰Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. –
Psalms 139:7-10

God is omniscient. God can do anything. Why then do those who reject the concept of the trinity think God cannot exist in another “personage” whose purpose is to dwell with, and indeed in a believer?

To answer this question is to have the answer to why legalists reject the Holy Spirit as being a person. They reject the witness of the Holy Spirit and what the Holy Spirit represents in the life of a believer. By diminishing the Holy Spirit, the law is given the status as that which guides the believer, and not the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit to them is an ethereal power or force that is incapable of guiding or leading anyone. In essence, they bear false witness against the Holy Spirit, which, to a person in possession of the Holy Spirit, results in the unpardonable sin.

Jesus stated that the one “sin” that would never be forgiven was in relation to the Holy Spirit, and not against Him or even the Father. Therefore, in order to sin against the Holy Spirit, you have to be in possession of the Holy Spirit, yet those who reject the trinity do so thinking the Holy Spirit to be something less than God as a Person. This begs the logical question, would God give His Spirit to those who are in a condition of mind where they would so easily and quickly commit the unpardonable? No, therefore they are kept from understanding the gospel and this nature of God until such time God is assured the danger is passed for them to likely commit this great a transgression.

Look at the mentality behind those who insist the Holy Spirit is not a person. They see the Holy Spirit as being the force and power of God that is impersonal. The presence of the Holy Spirit in a person is perceived to be much less than what it truly is, and as such, an insufficient guide in the life of a believer, seeing as they believe they need the law as their only and true guide in their lives.