

8-17-23 Message to Roeh Israel Abilene

Torah Portion: Deuteronomy 3:23 – 7:11 *ve'Et'chanan* (and I pleaded)

Haftarah: Isa 40:1-26

Suggested Acheron K'tuvim: James 1:21-26

Under the Law – Part 14 – Justification and Sanctification - Introduction

Central question of this message: Can you see how some have blurred the line between justification and sanctification by errant theology?

We are in parasha *va'Et'chanan*, which is the second parasha in *Devarim*, also known in modern days as Deuteronomy. It receives its name from the first word in the Hebrew and the first three words in the English version of this passage.

Deut 3:23-26

23 "I also pleaded with the Lord at that time, saying, 24 'O Lord God, Thou hast begun to show Thy servant Thy greatness and Thy strong hand; for what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as Thine? 25 'Let me, I pray, cross over and see the fair land that is beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and Lebanon.' 26 "But the Lord was angry with

me on your account, and would not listen to me; and the Lord said to me, 'Enough! Speak to Me no more of this matter.

23

וְאֶתְחַנֵּן	אֵל-	יְהוָה	בְּעֵת	הַהִיא	לֵאמֹר:					
And I besought		the Lord	at time,	that	saying,					
2603	413	3068	6256	1931	559					

24

אֲדֹנָי	יְהוָה	אַתָּה	הִתְלִיתָ	לְהַרְאוֹת	אֶת-	עַבְדְּךָ	אֶת-	גְּדֻלָּתְךָ	וְאֶת-
O Lord	God,	thou	hast begun	to shew		thy servant		thy greatness,	and
136	3069	859	2490	7200	853	5650	853	1433	853

יָדְךָ	הַחֲזָקָה	אֲשֶׁר	מִי-	אֵל	בְּשָׁמַיִם	וּבָאָרֶץ	אֲשֶׁר-	יַעֲשֶׂה
thy hand:	mighty	for	what	God	is there	in heaven	or in earth,	can do
3027	2389	834	4310	410	9999	8064	776	6213

וְכַגְבוֹרָתְךָ: כְּמַעֲשֶׂיךָ

and according to thy might? according to thy works,

1369 4639

25

אֶעְבְּרָה-	נָא	וְאֶרְאֶה	אֶת-	הָאָרֶץ	הַטּוֹבָה	אֲשֶׁר	בְּעֵבֶר
let me go over,	I pray thee,	and see		land	the good	that	beyond
5674	4994	7200	853	776	2896	834	5676

הַיַּרְדֵּן	הַהָר	הַטּוֹב	הַזֶּה	וְהַלְבָּנוֹן:			
Jordan,	mountain,	goodly	that	and Lebanon.			
3383	2022	2896	2088	3844			

26

וַיִּתְעַבֵּר	יְהוָה	בִּי	לְמַעַנְכֶם	וְלֹא	שָׁמַע	אֵלַי	וַיֹּאמֶר	יְהוָה
But was wroth	the Lord	with me	for your sakes,	and not	would hear	me:	and said	the Lord
5674	3068	871a	4616	3808	8085	413	559	3068

אֵלַי	רַב-	לָךְ	אֵל-	תוֹסֵף	וַיִּבֶר	אֵלַי	עוֹד	בְּדִבְרִי	הַזֶּה:
unto me,	Let it suffice	thee;	no	more	speak	unto me	more	of matter.	this
413	7227	3807a	408	3254	1696	413	5750	1697	2088

Today is also called Shabbes *Nachamu*. *Nachamu* means “Console!” in the command voice. So, this is the Shabbes of consolation. Why is it the tradition of our people that we should be consoled today? Because the 9th of Av occurred this last Tuesday.

It is the tradition of our people that many calamities befell our people around this particular calendar date, to include both of the Temples of G-d being destroyed. Our people believe that both Temples of G-d were destroyed for the same reason – baseless hatred. This is a grievous sin and was worthy of G-d’s severe judgment against us. But that is not where the story ends.

The Haftara reading for today is from Isaiah 40, which begins with:

Isa 40:1-2

40 "Comfort, O comfort My people," says your God.
2 "Speak kindly to Jerusalem;
And call out to her, that her warfare has ended,
That her iniquity has been removed,
That she has received of the Lord's hand
Double for all her sins."

It is in this particular association between judgment and consolation, that we as a people see the connection between our being punished for sin, followed by our repentance/return, and then the restoration to a right relationship with G-d.

Before I get to the main topic of my message today, I wish to take a short detour to focus on a couple of things in today's parasha.

We see in today's parasha the words that have become the central statement of faith of our people for all time. It is the *Shema*. This is one of the first prayers we say each day.

Deut 6:4

4 "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!

There is something important in this passage. It doesn't appear in the modern printed books of Torah, but you can see it in every scroll.

Two letters in this verse are much larger. The *ayin*, the final letter in the Hebrew word *shema* is always written in larger script, and

שמע ישראל יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד

Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one

dalet, the final letter in the Hebrew word *echad*, is likewise written larger.

If you make a word from the enlarged letter *ayin* and the enlarged letter *dalet*, then you spell the Hebrew word *ad*, which means, “congregation” or “witness.”



In the ancient form of Hebrew, where each letter has a distinct meaning, the *ayin* stands for “eye” or “watch”, and the *dalet* means “door.”

When you make a sentence from these concepts you can say, “Keep your eye on the door”, or “Look at the door”. I believe it can stand for the idea that we should guard the doorways to our heart, because Satan is always trying to enter our hearts. Yeshua told us He stands at our doorways, knocking politely, and we should be eager to allow Him to enter. He spoke to us of this same process of discipline and punishment, leading to repentance, leading to restoration.

Rev 3:19-22

19 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be
zealous therefore, and repent. 20 'Behold, I stand at the
door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens
the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him,
and he with Me. 21 'He who overcomes, I will grant to

him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also
overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.
22 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says
to the churches.' "

And now, with this diversion being concluded, let's examine the
passage from today's parasha which leads me into the topic I wish
to address today in our "Under the Law" series.

Deut 4:1-3

4 "And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the
judgments which I am teaching you to perform, in order
that you may live and go in and take possession of the
land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving
you. 2 You shall not add to the word which I am
commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may
keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I
command you.

Given this warning, has the modern body of faith taken away or
added to Scripture's clear message? The "modified" theology
which has resulted from the adding or removal process has become

entrenched so firmly in the normative church, that it has now been recognized as having a stronger authority than the very words of the Bible to the contrary.

This last Sunday I heard an honored teacher in a large Christian church speak at length about the concept of sanctification. He spoke at length of “growth,” but he couldn’t define precisely in what way a believer was to grow. He asked the rhetorical question, “growth in what?”

He wondered where a believer might find how and in what way a believer should grow. He suggested there were many books on the shelves authored by Christians containing many types of personal growth suggestions. But in the end, his presentation lacked any real guidance to the people of a solid pathway.

What stood out to me in the presentation is that he never suggested that a believer resort to the Bible for the pathway for spiritual growth.

I recognized that the cornerstones of his presentation were in the center of fidelity to the normative doctrines of his denomination.

That presentation has energized me to address something that the normative church has removed from Scripture – the true significance of both justification and sanctification – and how that process was designed by G-d to work in our lives.

This topic is larger than I will be able to address in one message, so today I will endeavor to introduce the topic by illustrating a few theological problems in the doctrines of the normative church.

In biblical theology, a mere “belief in G-d” is not the wholeness of faith. Satan and his demons all believe in G-d.¹ We believe that once we have entered through the door of justification by faith by repentance (*teshuvah*), we look to the Torah for our guide in the pathway of sanctification.

So, let’s begin with an examination of how the normative Christian church’s rejection of Torah creates difficulties and even internal inconsistencies in its own theology.

For many generations the leaders and teachers in normative Christianity have taught some doctrines which the writers of the

¹ James 2:19

“New Testament” would not now recognize. I believe that if Paul lived today, he would be writing letters of rebuke to the Christian churches, urging them back to true faith and warning them of judgment.

One easy example of the inconsistencies is how normative Christians must find ways to explain-away much of what is found in the book of James. This is one such passage.

James 2:14-26

14 What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. 18 But someone may well say, "You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." 19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. 20 But are you willing to

recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? 22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. 24 You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone. 25 And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

The phrase that causes the greatest grief to the normative Christian theologian is “You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.”

I have seen many discussions in Christian websites trying to explain-away this phrase. The ones I have seen only do so by ignoring the difference between justification and sanctification, and in actually collapsing one into the other.

And when in the book of James speaks in positive terms regarding the Torah, Christian teachers spend long paragraphs trying to explain-away those words as well. Consider this passage:

James 1:21-26

21 Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does.

In the Hebraic understanding of this passage includes:

1. “Filthiness” and “wickedness” are what comes by violations of Torah, because Torah defines purity and holiness.
2. The “Word implanted” is when the truths of Torah are part of your lifestyle that saves your soul.
3. “Doers of the Word [Torah]” are those who don’t merely hear and understand, but actually live the precepts of Torah.
4. “Hearers of the Word [Torah]” are those who sit in the synagogue and listen to the teaching regarding the Torah, but walk out of the doors unchanged by what they have heard, thinking that sitting in the synagogue listening and nodding assent are sufficient for G-d.
5. The “perfect Law of liberty” is the Torah which, when brought into your life as your lifestyle, frees you from all the sinful things of the world which drag you down into slavery.
6. The blessings given to the “effectual doer” of Torah’s instructions are part of that lifestyle of freedom.

How does the normative Christian doctrine handle this passage?

The famous Presbyterian minister, J. Vernon McGee (1904 – 1988) gives the following explanation:

“‘The perfect law of liberty.’ This is not the Mosaic Law; it is the law of grace. James does not talk about

law here in the same sense that Paul does. When Paul talks about the law, he is talking about the Mosaic Law. When James talks about law, it is the law of faith. There is love in law in the Old Testament, and there is law in love in the New Testament."²

Note that he doesn't offer any scriptural support for why he says Paul means one thing and James means another when they use the same word. His strained explanation is based on what seems to be a normative Christian theological view:

1. "Paul's Law" is the Law of the "Old Testament" which he taught was done away with.
2. Since James is making a "positive" reference to a guiding and governing "Law," then this "good Law" of James can't be the same as Paul's "bad law," therefore it must mean something else. And they invent that new "something else" and call it "the law of grace."

² 14. *Thru the Bible Commentary Series, James*, J. Vernon McGee, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1991, p. 68.

Leaders in normative Christianity will point to certain "New Testament" verses to "prove" the Law has been abrogated. The Dean of Doctoral Studies of Dallas Theological Seminary, Charles Ryrie (1925 – 2016) wrote on the subject of "The End of the Law." In it, he makes three claims:

1. "The Jerusalem Council settled this matter early and clearly (Acts 15) ... Peter described the Law as an unbearable yoke ... they did not try to place the believers under the Law ... they realized the Law had come to an end."
2. "In 2 Corinthians 3:7-11 Paul even specifies that the part of the Law which was written on stone (the Ten Commandments) was done away. He dares to label the moral part of the Law as a ministry of death and condemnation, but thank God, this has been replaced by the New Covenant which brings life and justification."
3. "In Hebrews 7:11-12 ... if the Law has not been done away, then neither has the levitical priesthood, and Christ is not our High Priest today. But if Christ is our High Priest, then the Law can no longer be operative and binding on us."³

³ 15. *Basic Theology - A Popular Systematic Guide To Understanding Biblical Truth*, Charles C. Ryrie, 1986, SP Publications Inc., Victor Books, Wheaton IL, p. 304.

But if you were to interpret these same cited passages without Ryrie's anti-Torah bias, you would see them to speak quite differently.

In Acts 15, the Jerusalem Beit Din (led by Yacov – “James”) was called upon to rule regarding a flood of goyim who were flooding into the faith, and were bringing with them their pagan practices and mindsets.

The Beit Din⁴ considered whether circumcision would be the first evidence of this new faith, and rejected that. It seems that they followed the pattern set by Abraham, who began his progression by simply following G-d's simple directions to follow Him. The Beit Din then required these new believers, as a threshold showing of true faith, to adhere to only four commands of Torah, with the expectation that then these new converts would be accepted into the synagogue and would learn Torah through the weekly parashiot, and by being mentored by those in the synagogue who were mature in faith. It is clear that when the topic of circumcision was addressed in Torah, these men could also elect, but need not

⁴ What is called “the Jerusalem Council” was in actuality a Beit Din (a judicial court) convened to make a binding judgment upon an issue of faith and practice. The final judgment as issued then became binding *halacha* (walk) having the force of law in the Hebrew community.

do so, circumcision of the flesh signifying they wished to fully join Israel at that time, and be sealed in that covenant relationship with that “sign.” They could also remain uncircumcised and stay in the status of “G-d fearer.”

Acts 15:19-21

19 "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, 20 but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.⁵ 21 "For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

Why would this judicial decision identify four Torah commandments to place upon these new believers, and then commend them to continue in the synagogue where “Moses” (an idiom for Torah) is taught every sabbath? This makes sense only if

⁵ These are commands which prohibit the hallmark actions of pagan worship of that time, and which if observed by the new believers, would demonstrate to those in the synagogue that they are indeed serious about becoming one with the G-d of Israel. Thus, putting the other attendees at ease.

Torah was still a valid guide for a walk of holiness and sanctification. Ryrie misapplied this passage.

Now we can examine the next passage that undergirds his second theological point.

2 Cor 3:1-11

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you? 2 You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; 3 being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts. 4 And such confidence we have through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, 6 who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 7 But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the

face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, 8 how shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? 9 For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. 10 For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory on account of the glory that surpasses it. 11 For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.

Looking through this passage with the eyes of a Hebrew living in those days, we see the following:

1. Your lives and the changes in them are proof to those of the world that our message has value. This is because the Word is not merely seen, but brought into your lives and being lived.
2. The changes in your lives are what shows that G-d is working through us, even though we are inadequate to this task. G-d is adequate.
3. The wonderful part of the work of Yeshua is that although the violations of Torah are sin bringing death, the Spirit of G-d is moving through you to quicken you to a forgiven life.

4. The giving of the Torah at Mt. Horeb was one of great glory, but the work of the Spirit because of the work of Yeshua in this age has far greater glory.
5. The violation of Torah brings condemnation before G-d's throne, but the work of Yeshua as the perfect sacrifice paying for our sins, and the ministry of the Spirit urging us to live a holy life brings a better life.
6. The comparisons of the former and latter glory is so stark as to make the former diminish when compared with the latter.⁶

This passage, when viewed through Hebrew eyes, does not stand for the proposition that the “ten commandments were done away with.” Beyond that, doesn't the normative Christian church almost universally affirm that the Ten Commandments are the only commandments that still apply to the church?

We can now examine the third of Ryrie's theological statements in light of Scripture. He cites this passage in support of his assertion that the “law is done away with.”

Heb 7:11-13

⁶ This is a classic example of the Hebrew concept of Kal v. Homer (light and heavy).

11 Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron? 12 For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also.

Let's examine the ideas expressed in this passage through Hebrew eyes in that culture.

1. The Levitical priesthood as constituted at first served its purpose at that time - to cover sin, but was not as perfect as the work of the Messiah, which washed-away sin and provided perfect forgiveness.
2. King Messiah could serve as High Priest under the pattern of Melchizedek, who was a mysterious king-priest with no beginning and no end, who was not under the Levitical system for priests or the Davidic system for kings.
3. Since King Messiah has taken up His position as our new High Priest, the former instruction that only a Cohen could be High Priest, must be supplanted by this new order.

There is nothing in this passage which supports the concept that the Torah is completely done away with, even though there is a supplanting of an older form of High Priest by a new High Priest and King.

If Torah now means nothing in the instructions regarding the Levitical priesthood, then the office of High Priest also now means nothing, and so Yeshua could take no such office, it being gone altogether. Ryrie again misapplies this passage and creates a fatal inconsistency in his theology by doing so.

Ryrie finally admits that the application of Torah to Christians is problematic. He says,

The Law of Christ contains some new commands...
some old ones... and some revised ones.⁷

This likewise creates a bit of a problem. If Yacov (James) taught that Torah was an indivisible unit, Yeshua taught that not one

⁷ *Basic Theology - A Popular Systematic Guide To Understanding Biblical Truth*, Charles C. Ryrie, 1986, SP Publications Inc., Victor Books, Wheaton IL, p. 305.

stroke or mark would pass away from the Torah “until all is accomplished,” and Paul taught Timothy that “all Scripture is inspired by G-d and profitable for teaching,” then how can Christianity defend turning Torah into some sort of “cafeteria” where the believer can take some commands, and disregard the others that don’t suit him? G-d said that breaking one command is like breaking them all. Is any individual – or any denomination – above G-d so that they are able to determine what is right and wrong?

In the final analysis, the suggested theological positions of both McGee and Ryrie are tragically more aligned with Satan’s temptation in the garden (and in every generation since) which says, “you can be like G-d?”

In subsequent messages, we will explore the concept of justification. And once we have that cornerstone laid, we will then move into an exploration of the biblical concept of sanctification. That path is not a short one, and will take a number of messages to unpack. The normative church must rebuilt its theology upon this true foundation, so as to correct (and in the future avoid) the errant theologies expressed by so many today.