

## **Principles of Christian Living #2** ***“Let No Corrupting Talk Come Out”***

*Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (Ephesians 4:25)*

### 1.

*Speak the truth with his neighbor* ... when the lawyer stood up to test Jesus, he asked, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 10:25). Jesus answered with a question, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” (v. 26), and the lawyer summarized the Law as it is recorded in Deuteronomy (10:12-22) where Moses reminded the mixed circumcised [those who were born in Egypt] and uncircumcised nation that God loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing (v. 18). In Deuteronomy, God commands Israel to likewise love the sojourner (v. 19), the stranger within the nation, the person who would not seem to be a neighbor but a wanderer passing through.

Jesus told the lawyer that he had answered correctly, go and do and the lawyer would inherit everlasting life. But the lawyer came back with a question that indicted him: the lawyer asked, “And who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29).

The Apostle Paul said that his fellow countrymen had “pursued a law that would lead to righteousness” (Rom 9:31) if pursued by faith—this law is what the lawyer summarized, a law that, unfortunately, Israel pursued through the works of the nation’s hands and not by faith. Jesus told the lawyer to do just how the lawyer had answered and the lawyer would inherit life, but the lawyer did not go and do, but questioned the same law he had summarized. So to answer the lawyer’s challenge of the law, Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan:

A man was going from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the same place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, “Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.” (Luke 10:30-35)

Why would the priest cross to the other side of the road? The robbers had stripped the man of his clothing, so he was naked. Did the priest see that the man was not circumcised? Or was it the blood of the man’s wounds that caused the priest, not wanting to defile himself, to cross over to the other side of the road? Surely it wasn’t because the priest didn’t want his animal to step on the prostrate man.

The Levite crossed over to the other side of the road for probably the same reason the priest did. Both served as representatives of God to Israel, a nation that was no longer sojourning in a far land. The Samaritan was the sojourner ... was the injured man also a sojourner, the reason why the robbers had set upon the man? Again, was the victim uncircumcised as the Samaritan would have been? Did the Samaritan recognize the victim as his neighbor because neither of them was of Israel?

The lawyer realized why the priest and the Levite crossed the road: the victim was ceremonially unclean either through the showing of blood or the showing of being uncircumcised. The reason isn’t terribly important or the reason would have been given. What is important, though, is the recognition by the lawyer that Moses had commanded Israel to love the sojourner as Israel loved itself, that the

sojourner was every Israelite’s neighbor. So the lawyer had to betray his own prejudices when he answered Jesus’ question about who was the man’s neighbor: the Samaritan was, probably, through uncircumcision, truly the man’s neighbor, but the Apostle Paul asks, “So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision” (Rom 2:26). Paul goes on to say, “Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law” (v. 27). The lawyer, by answering Jesus’ question, convicted not only himself but the priest and the Levite of breaking the law—and at the beginning of the thought, Paul writes, “For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision” (v. 25). By his answer, the lawyer placed both the priest and the Levite outside the fellowship of Israel.

There is a tendency to treat how Jesus answered questions concerning the law as being under a *dispensation of law*, which was abolished at Calvary, with born of Spirit disciples since Calvary being under a *dispensation of Grace*, but there is no disagreement between Jesus and Paul, or for that manner between Moses who wrote of Jesus (John 5:46) and Paul. So in his epistle to the saints at Ephesus—saints who would leave Paul and abandon what he taught (2 Tim 1:15) while Paul was still a prisoner in Rome—Paul said for each one of them to speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another (Eph 4:25).

Each disciple is a member of the same Body of Christ ... does your stomach say that it is still hungry to your hand after your hand has worked for an hour delivering food to the mouth? Should the hand believe the stomach, or does the stomach lie? And if the stomach lies, what does the Head do? Tell the hand that enough is enough, ignore the stomach—isn’t this what dieting is all about? The Head overruling the stomach. Or does one member of the Body lie to another member, saying that the Law of Moses has been abolished, that every Israelite’s accuser (*cf.* John 5:45; Deu 31:26-27) has somehow been fulfilled and satisfied. Or worse, that except a person become physically circumcised, the person cannot take the Passover sacraments (Exod 12:48-49) of bread and wine.

What does Paul write to these saints at Ephesus who will shortly leave him even though he spent years with them:

- No longer walk as Gentiles (Eph 4:17).
- Put off your old self which belongs to your former life (v. 22).
- Be renewed in the spirit of your minds (v. 23).
- Put on the new self, created in the likeness of God (v. 24).

The above equates to putting away falsehood, which each disciple is to do as the precondition to speaking the truth to each other (v. 25). Now, following speaking truth, disciples are to:

- Be angry but do not sin (v. 26-27), and Paul points directly at where Jesus relates the different between the laws of God being written on stone tablets and being written on tablets of flesh (*cf.* Matt 5:21-22; Deu 5:17).
- Let the thief no longer steal, but rather, labor so that he will have something to give (*cf.* Eph 4:28; Deu 5:19)
- Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths (*cf.* Eph 4:29; Deu 5:20).

Bearing false witness against one’s neighbor, when every sojourner must be considered as *neighbor*, expands “no corrupting talk” to saying only those things that are good, that builds up as fits the occasion, that do not grieve the Holy Spirit, that do not reflect bitterness or wrath or anger—and the disciple has stretched across the epistles of Paul to reach James the Just, who wrote, “For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it” (Jas 2:10). Breaking the royal law in one point, in one precept, is breaking the law. The person who bears false witness is also guilty of murder. This person slays with his or her mouth.

In his instructions to the saints at Ephesus, the Apostle Paul does for the commandment not to bear false witness what Jesus did for the commandments against murder and adultery. He shows how the movement from an audibly uttered law of God entering into physically circumcised Israelites through the hearing of the ears—this law inscribed on two stone tablets placed in a wood ark of the covenant, housed in a temporary tent—becomes “magnified” when invisibly entering spiritually circumcised Israelites where it is inscribed by the soft Breath of God [*Pneuma 'Agion*] on hearts and minds housed in a tent of flesh.

Paul told Timothy to remain with the saints at Ephesus and to charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine (1 Tim 1:3) than the one received from Paul; so there was at Ephesus an inherent schism in the Body, for some tended to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies that moved disciples away from love coming from pure hearts, good consciences and sincere faith (*vv.* 4-7) ... the Circumcision Faction had made inroads at Ephesus, for Paul immediately goes on to say to Timothy, “Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane” (*vv.* 8-9). All of these things, plus his additions, are contrary to sound doctrine (*v.* 10-11), which foregrounds living by the precepts of the law since the difference made through circumcision by hands has been abolished (Eph 2:14-16).

Immediately following the Jerusalem Council (Acts chap 15), the Apostle Paul had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3), not because the circumcision made with hands was necessary—the determination of the Council was that only four things would be asked of Gentiles who had no knowledge of God or Moses—but because Timothy would not have been accepted by priests and Levites who would have crossed the road to avoid being spiritually defiled by an injured man. However, these same priests and Levites, when they professed that Jesus is Lord and believed in their hearts that God had raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 10:9), displayed faith comparable to that of the patriarch Abraham when he left Ur with his father Terah and journeyed first to Haran, then on to Canaan, the geographical representation of God’s rest (*cf.* Ps 95:10-11; Heb 3:16-4:11; Num chap 14). Believing that God had raised Jesus was belief comparable to Abraham’s when he believed God that an heir would come from his loins. And it was Abraham believing God about an heir that is the faith counted to him as righteousness (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:3).

Paul writes,

[Abraham] received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but *who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.* (Rom 4:11-12 — emphasis added)

The standard of faith for both circumcised and uncircumcised is the faith Abraham displayed before he was circumcised. There is no other standard, and this is faith shown through deeds. No other faith can save a person (Jas 2:14-17). For a profession of faith uttered with the mouth only exists as dead rhetoric until activated through action.

The crux of the Jerusalem Council’s determination is in what Peter said: *God has made no distinction between natural Israel and Gentile converts, having cleansed the hearts of those Gentile converts by faith.* Receiving a circumcised heart and mind requires faith of the magnitude Abraham displayed when leaving Ur and journeying to Canaan where he sought a city whose builder and designer was the Lord (Heb 11:8-10). Although the ruling of the Jerusalem Council was simplified in the letter sent out, the logic behind the letter was that the degree of faith necessary for a Greek living as a

Greek [or the Philippian jailer living as just another resident of Philippi — Acts 16:29-34] to turn to God, profess that Jesus is Lord, and cease living as a Greek, cease eating blood, cease eating meats that were strangled so as to retain the blood, cease eating meats offered to idols, cease frequenting prostitutes, and begin entering the synagogue on the Sabbath day to hear Moses read (Acts 15:21) was approximately the degree of faith comparable to the faith of Abraham who left home and kin to journey to Canaan, the Promised Land. And since Abraham needed to do nothing more than believe God, then Greek converts need to do nothing more to have their hearts cleansed by faith.

Since the ruling of the Jerusalem Council was that no stumbling block should be placed before Gentile converts, the Apostle Paul applied this same principle in Timothy's case: he had Timothy circumcised so that Timothy's physical uncircumcision would not become a stumbling block to Paul's fellow countrymen ... the same law was to apply to Israel and to the stranger within Israel, for this stranger was truly Israel's neighbor. The same standard of faith was to apply to Israelite converts and to Gentile converts. There is, with God, no distinction. And again, the acceptable standard of faith and belief is that of Abraham, the father of the faithful and a man who obeyed God's voice and kept his ordinances, commandments, statutes, and laws (Gen 26:5).

When hearts have been cleansed by faith and have had the laws of God written on them, then all falsehood within the person will have been put away. But as Paul observed, disciples are of flesh, sold under sin (Rom 7:14), the flesh consigned to disobedience (Rom 11:32), so that which the mind and heart wishes to do is too often thwarted by the flesh. The reason for this thwarting was a mystery that Paul confesses he didn't understand (Rom 7:15), for sin and death still dwelt in his flesh (*v.* 25). Therefore, discussion of the new life in Christ—of being imitators of God (Eph 5:1), of walking as Jesus walked (*cf.* Eph 5:2; 1 John 2:4-6)—is necessary for this new life is not under an old written code, is not under the *Decalogue* (Rom 6:14), but dwells in the same tent of flesh as dwells sin and death. So this new life wars with sin and death in a battle *to death*, and by striving against disobedience, this new life grows in maturity, in strength, in grace and knowledge.

After showing how the commandment about bearing false witness against a neighbor expands when moving from lifeless stone to living flesh, Paul merges in Ephesians chapter 5, the old written code's commandment against adultery with corrupting speech, then continues with honoring father and mother. The *Decalogue* only addressed what the hand and body did: a person could think about work all Sabbath day, but as long as the hand did nothing, the commandment was not broken. However, when this Sabbath commandment is magnified as Jesus magnified murder and adultery, the Sabbath doesn't move to another day, but moves inward to govern the thoughts of the mind and the desires of the heart on the seventh day in a manner directly analogous to what Paul reveals about how the commandment concerning speech is magnified.

The lawyer could correctly read the law, but within what has been recorded in Scripture, he lacked the faith to embrace the defiled person as his neighbor. He could read the law, but because his heart had not then been cleansed by faith, he couldn't grasp what he read. His understanding was limited to the depth of his flesh.

The person who has grown to physical maturity in a household professing that Jesus is Lord does not cleanse his or her heart by abstaining from blood, meat strangled, meat offered to idols, sexual immorality. Until this person journeys beyond where his or her parents' journey stopped, this person figuratively remains in Haran, halfway between Ur and God's rest. This person has not left home and kin and mentally journeyed into the Sabbath if the person remains in a fellowship that attempts to enter God's rest on the following day (Num 14:40-41).

Understand well the above: the young person who has grown to maturity in either a Catholic or a Mennonite household will not cleanse his or her heart by remaining in this spiritual household. Neither

beliefs are Jude’s *faith once for all delivered* (v. 3), for both attempt to enter God’s rest on the following day. Therefore, this young person is as Abram was in Haran, with the choice before the person to stay in Haran or to believe God, leave kith and kin, and journey into God’s rest while *the promise of entering His rest still stands* (Heb 4:1). At some point, the promise ends; the door into God’s rest mentally closes, not to open again for usually decades. The person settles into the spiritual household of his or her parents, and literally, dies there.

If the young person grew to maturity in a household that kept the commandments, then the person is as the rich young ruler was (Luke 18:18). This young ruler had also grown to maturity keeping the commandments, but he lacked the faith of Abraham; he lacked the faith to cleanse his heart. Therefore, he left under condemnation, having heard from Jesus what more was necessary for him to inherit everlasting life but being unable or unwilling to journey by faith to the mental territory of following Jesus by faith, without physical wealth.

The heart of the endtime young person who has grown to maturity in a Sabbath-keeping fellowship has not been cleansed by the habits or expectations of parents or of the spiritual household, as evidenced by the track record of retention of second generation disciples by Sabbatarian fellowships. Without the faith necessary to sell all and follow Jesus—faith that will require the young person to either profess that Jesus is Lord [if a circumcised Jew] or to serve as a missionary—this young person lacks the faith to cleanse the heart, with spiritual circumcision coming to that cleansed heart ... the Holy Spirit doesn’t circumcise a filthy or faithless heart.

For both circumcised and uncircumcised, it takes the belief of Abraham to hear Jesus’ words and believe the one who sent Him (John 5:24), thereby passing from death to life. For disciples who have come from a secular background, the journey into God’s rest—the weekly Sabbath being the diminutive form of this rest (Heb 4:9)—is directly comparable to Abraham trekking from Ur to Canaan. For most disciples who have a Judeo-Christian background, the journey into God’s rest is as Abraham trekking from Haran, where his father died, to Canaan, or from Egypt to Canaan, with Haran representing death and Egypt sin. God’s rest represents life. A person must leave sin and death and journey into God’s rest without stopping to bury the *old self* [let the dead bury the dead]. This journey will take the person into keeping the Sabbath.

What Paul writes about corrupting speech becomes the spiritual representation of *you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor*.

That which is physical precedes what is spiritual (1 Cor 15:46), and the visible reveals the invisible (Rom 1:20). The visible commandments of God, written first on stone tablets then on scrolls, reveals the invisible laws of God written on hearts and minds. Physically circumcised Israel dwelling in Egypt in bondage to Pharaoh reveals the spiritually circumcised nation of Israel dwelling in bondage to the law of sin and death. The *new self* is not in bondage to sin and death (Rom 8:2), but this new self shares the same tent of flesh with the crucified *old self*, which though raised up in death continues lingering on, corrupting the good speech of the disciple.

Each of us need to break the legs of our crucified *old self*—and those of us who are reluctant to do us risk being corrupted by what should have died long ago.

## 2.

The challenge that continually faced the Apostle Paul was two passages of Scripture from the Law and the Prophets:

If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of

the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. There shall be one law for native and for the stranger who sojourns among you. (Exod 12:48-49)

And say to the rebellious house, to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: O house of Israel, enough of all your abominations, in admitting foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, to be in my sanctuary, profaning my temple...No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, of all foreigners who are among the people of Israel, shall enter my sanctuary. (Ezek 44:6-7, 9)

The Apostle Paul told Timothy, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the [*messenger of God*] may be competent, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17). The Scripture to which he was referencing wasn't his epistles, but the Law, Prophets, and Writings; i.e., the Old Testament. He was, literally, referring to the above passages. And if the above passages are God-breathed, profitable for teaching, correction, and training in righteousness, then really, what argument against his own words does Paul have? Only that of revelation.

Revelation either occurred, or it didn't. Revelation is not something that can be tested by witnesses: who would know whether Daniel had a vision of four beasts or a second vision of a ram and a goat unless Daniel reported these visions. What test can be applied for both visions are about the end of the age? Thus, if Daniel had not had a fourth vision, it also sealed and secret until the end of the age, that seemed to have been fulfilled two centuries after being received, would Daniel's visions be given the prophetic weight that they have? Probably not. But because Daniel's fourth vision was sealed by its shadow—3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, & 5<sup>th</sup> Century BCE physical events that are a type and copy of endtime spiritual events—Daniel's visions received great credibility until a latter period of scholarship denied that Daniel wrote the book bearing his name.

In the days of Jeremiah, the prophet Hananiah stood up and announced good news to the people assembled in the house of the Lord, why? Did he believe that God had spoken to him? Did he not believe in God? What were his motives? For he bore false witness about God to the people of Israel [all that remained of Israel was the city of Jerusalem]. (Jer chap 28)

Likewise, the endtime criticism of the book bearing Daniel's name is a bearing of false witness against the prophet Daniel, for the unsealing of Daniel's visions has occurred. The prophesied war in the heavenly realm is happening. The spiritual *sar* of Persia did push against the king of Greece, who is presently battling against this spiritual prince of Persia ... this prophesied war is not a fight for geographical territory, but for the mental typography of humanity. Therefore, the false witness of both endtime criticism and of physically minded disciples who look for a united Europe to invade the Holy Lands is "corrupting talk" of a sort that greatly exceeds in negative worth the mindless chatter of busybodies, which ought not occur.

If Paul's epistles teach a doctrine or theology contrary to previously received Scripture, then, under the instructions of Moses, wasn't Paul to be killed, to be stoned (Deu 13:2-3, 6-10)? If Paul actually taught what he was accused of teaching (*cf.* Acts 21:17-26; Rom 3:7-8), that from sin will come righteousness, were not, then, attempts made to kill Paul in Thessalonica, in Jerusalem for what he taught justified? But James and the elders in Jerusalem seemed to understand Paul differently than how so many Jews and Jewish converts did. They heard Paul teaching the judgment of the Jerusalem Council. So is not Christianity, through the false witness and corrupting talk of Paul's contemporaries already divided before Paul is imprisoned? It would seem so.

What is wrong with the above picture? Scripture affirms that only one Body of Christ exists; yet two or more competing *Bodies of Christ* were in existence when Paul returned to Jerusalem. If by Paul's claim there is only one foundation laid (1 Cor 3:10-11), then one of these *Bodies* must necessarily be

built on a different foundation, and must be a synagogue of Jews that lies. James and the elders placed their “stamp of approval” on Paul. Peter said there are some things in Paul’s epistles that are hard to understand, things *which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures* (2 Pet 3:16). Peter goes on to warn brethren, “You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability” (v. 17).

The passage of a few years causes Peter to now list Paul’s epistles with *other Scriptures*—and all of Asia has left what Paul and the Apostles taught (cf. 2 Tim 1:15; Phil 3:18; 3 John 9-10), and have gone astray.

Again, understand well the significance of Asia leaving Paul: the majority of the fellowships Paul established were in Asia. The majority of the disciples, post 70 CE, were in Asia and lands to the west. The majority of faith left the teachings of Paul, Peter, and John in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century CE—and from whom comes the primacy of endtime Christianity beliefs and doctrines? From these same fellowships that left Paul, Peter, and John.

But the late 1<sup>st</sup>-Century failing to understand the teaching of Paul or to respect the authority of John does not come from the Circumcision Faction, to which Roman suppression of the Jewish revolt in 70 CE caused great harm, but from a second generation of Gentile converts that broadly applied (without understanding) the letter sent from the elders at the Jerusalem Council. It was these Greeks who twisted Scripture to their own destruction *with the error of the lawless*. It was these unstable teachers who caused disciples to lose their stability to the Platonic myths that underlay every aspect of Hellenism, and the Hellenistic culture of Asia Minor ... the endless genealogies of the Circumcision Faction, these genealogies still important two millennia later to the circumcised nation of Israel, had been replaced by the “wisdom” of Plato as the pendulum swung away from Judaism and toward the easy grace that has descended through time as a cancer in historical exegesis.

Again, what is wrong with this picture?

In his first epistle to the saints at Corinth, Paul writes,

I appeal to you, [brethren], by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment...Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? (1 Cor 1:10, 13)

But there were divisions among the saints at Corinth, with some saying that they follow Paul, some Apollos, some Peter, some Christ. Today, some say that are Catholics, some Orthodox, some Methodists, some Lutherans, some Baptists, and some of the Church of God. However, Paul’s question remains: is Christ divided? If He isn’t, then explain the schisms in the Body in any terms other than as disagreeing and often disagreeable parts of a human body that from one fertilized ovum has divided into independent twins, this division coming from the decision of the Jerusalem Council, this division creating a hated son and a loved [but deceitful] son.

*Corrupting talk* becomes speech that would twist Scripture, promote the error of lawlessness, continue the error of the Circumcision Faction, cause disciples to build on any foundation other than the one Paul laid in the heavenly city. This corrupting talk would be truly a form of bearing false witness against one’s neighbor, for the disciple of Christ Jesus is a witness for Christ.

The ultimate expression of *corrupting speech* is teaching a gospel that twists Scripture into the error of lawlessness.

In His sermon on the mount, Jesus said,

Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me,

“Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?” And then will I declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.” (Matt 7:21-23)

In older English translations, the Greek word /*ἀνομία*/ used in verse 23 is usually rendered /*iniquity*/ whereas modern translations render it as /*lawlessness*/, the condition or state of being without law either from ignorance or from willfulness. Jesus will deny knowing in their judgment those teachers of Israel who would twist Scripture (while doing mighty works in His name) into lawlessness, or the error of the lawless. And Paul is not one of these teachers although it is his epistles that are most often twisted by the lawless into the error of antinomianism (the apt description of what those who have contempt for the law teach). But equally wrong is the error of the Circumcision Faction—of observant Jews instead of Gentiles—who twisted Scripture to their destruction, with the Faction’s modern equivalent in Christian Sacred Names fellowships.

Not bearing false witness about Christ Jesus, now, means not teaching either the error of the lawless or the error of the Circumcision Faction or any other error that has silently slipped into the Body of Christ as a spiritual virus, or not so silently as in the production of another testament of Christ. Understand, if a person teaches error, the person bears false witness; the person is guilty of corrupting talk, of breaking the commandments, of being a false shepherd, false prophet, a deceitful workman, a minister of Satan. And this person probably has pure intentions, and relays only what he or she has been historically taught.

But what is the error of lawlessness that the Apostle Peter referenced? A.W. Tozer, in *Paths to Power*, defined the error this way:

Fundamental Christianity in our times is deeply influenced by that ancient enemy of righteousness, Antinomianism. The creed of the Antinomian is easily stated: We are saved by faith alone; works have no place in salvation; conduct is works, and is therefore of no importance. What we do cannot matter as long as we believe rightly. The divorce between creed and conduct is absolute and final. The question of sin is settled by the Cross; conduct is outside the circle of faith and cannot come between the believer and God. Such in brief, is the teaching of the Antinomian. And so fully has it permeated the Fundamental element in modern Christianity that it is accepted by the religious masses as the very truth of God. Antinomianism is the doctrine of grace carried by uncorrected logic to the point of absurdity. It takes the teaching of justification by faith and twists it into deformity. (citation recovered 19.08.06 from <http://www.montanaset.net/rickv/Antinomian.html>)

The Apostle Paul said, “God is one. He will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. Do we then overthrow the law by this law? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law” (Rom 3:30-31).

A heart doesn’t pump blood as a diaphragm pump does, but it wrings blood out of itself through twisting. Faith cleanses this heart, but it is the physical muscles of the disciple that twists the heart. It is the physically-mindedness of disciples that causes them to twist Paul’s epistles: it is the love of this world, the desires of the flesh, of the eyes, the pride of possessions that causes far too many disciples to twist Paul’s epistles into justifications for lawlessness.

### 3.

In his epistle to the Galatians, Paul asks, “You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? ... But if I, [brethren], still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed” (5:7, 11).

The subject of Paul's epistle to the Galatians is not keeping the law, but circumcision, of becoming a physical Jew before becoming a spiritual Jew. And Paul bluntly wishes that the person[s] teaching these Gentile converts to circumcise themselves would do more than clip the foreskin (Gal 5:12). For in *the offence of the cross*, disciples have freedom, but are not to use their freedom "as an opportunity for the flesh" (v. 13), but through love to serve one another. Paul then adds, "For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (v. 14).

Freedom to serve, in love, one another—isn't this the opposite condition from that prevalent in Judea when a priest and a Levite had to cross the road rather than help an injured man, for helping the man would have ceremonially defiled both? It certainly is. And this is why Jesus said that none of Israel kept the Law (John 7:19), for the law can be summarized through the precept of loving neighbor as self, with every person being neighbor. For with loving neighbor, a person shows love to God.

Keeping the commandments doesn't make a person righteous—the faith to believe God that the commandments should be kept in an irreligious society, though, is a faith comparable to that of Abraham. So keeping the commandments by faith becomes a little like which came first, the chicken or the egg. The answer is in the heart.

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