

The Heavy Yoke of False Doctrine

Reasons for making separations

*"...a mixture may contain some substance that should be isolated from the rest of the mixture: this process of isolating and thus removing substances considered to be contaminants is called purification. For example, in the manufacture of synthetic drugs, mixtures containing variable proportions of several compounds usually arise. **The removal of the desired drug from the rest of the mixture is important if the product is to have uniform potency and is to be free of other components that may be dangerous to the body.**"*

- <https://www.britannica.com/science/separation-and-purification>

Why point this out in a church service? Because before anything was a scientific truth or principle it is first a biblical truth or principle. There are applications from this idea of extracting impurities from core truths that can apply to God's messages to us. When man decides to add his wisdom to God's wisdom on a core truth in scripture we are adding impurities to a pure message and there will be ramifications.

For example: If I tell you that salvation consists of believing that Jesus is the son of God, He died on the cross for your sins and if you will believe that His sacrifice and blood is enough for you to have eternal life AND you also need to do 5 cartwheels around this auditorium and you will be saved will you be saved? The answer is yes, you will be saved but not because of the cartwheels. You'll be saved because of the pure part of the message I gave you but unfortunately if you believed the impure part, the man's wisdom portion of the message you are going to struggle with legalism in the next part of your journey, the sanctification portion. You are going to forever believe that the cart wheels had something to do with your salvation when they didn't. We are going to see this morning that this will have a significant impact on your walk with Him after being saved and early church leaders fought against it:

Acts 15:1-2,4-5,7-11 (NASB) 1 Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved. 2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue...4 When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. 5 But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses...7 After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; 9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. 10 "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? 11 "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

1 Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved

These men from Judea were going to the believers in Galatia after Paul and Barnabas had witnessed to them and led them to Christ on Paul's first missionary journey and telling them what they had done to become believers wasn't accurate. They were going to need to be circumcised as well.

2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them,

We see here that what these men from Judea were saying to these saved Galatians caused not only a debate but “great dissension”.

This “great dissension” came because Paul and Barnabas knew the Galatians that these Men from Judea were trying to convince hadn’t been saved accurately **were in fact already saved!**

Why is this important to point out about this passage?

1. Teaching people an **incorrect message** of salvation was not something Paul was willing to let go **unchallenged**.
2. There are certain messages that we must **stand firm** on as believers and be **convinced in our souls as to why we believe them**. This does not mean we don’t treat others and each other with love. There’s nothing wrong with questioning and debating with the brethren when done appropriately. We see that it is beginning to move to dissension here in this passage though.
3. The idea of **teaching believers they didn’t believe accurately is a teaching** that Paul and early church leaders were opposed to.
4. As believers we are to know intimately the correct message of salvation and teach it and live it. We are to let the Holy Spirit deal with the convicting of people. When we start adding in things we can measure for salvation we put ourselves in a position that we don’t belong, it’s the Holy Spirit’s job to convict not you and I.

Paul didn’t question whether this group had come to belief:

Galatians 1:6 (NASB) I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;

Deserting Him - Paul is stating that this group is His. If not, the language doesn’t make sense. Deserting Him? How does one desert one they never belonged to?

Paul’s belief that these people are Christians is so firm that this entire debate in Acts 15 in Jerusalem really becomes, defending believers from being deceived into thinking they’ve either done it wrong or not completely.

For a different gospel - What was this different gospel that the Galatians were being pulled to? It was the gospel of the men from Judea. The gospel that says you must be circumcised in order to be saved. In other words it’s belief in Jesus + Circumcision.

From a spiritual stand point what is circumcision? It’s essentially an outward sign that you belong to Him. It could in some ways be connected to the way baptism is referred to today. An outward sign of inward change.

Paul would say this to the Galatians in chapter 5 of his letter to them:

Galatians 5:2-4 (NASB) 2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. 3 And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. 4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

What was Paul telling this group? If you believe that you need belief in Christ + circumcision (or anything else + for that matter) *when you've already believed* and been saved then "You have been severed from Christ."

Severed from Christ - have you ever taken the time to consider the gravity of this statement? I want to immediately take something off of the table that might plague some. This is not a statement claiming one can lose their salvation. Scripture is clear that we are secure in Him.

John 3:16 (NASB) "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

John 10:28-29 (NASB) 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 29 "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

If he isn't speaking of losing our salvation what is he speaking of? He is speaking of our harmony with Him.

Let's think about it in this way. A group of people are all trapped and going to die if someone doesn't save them. Your son jumps into action and saves all of them. The only way for each and every person to be saved your son knowingly must give up his life to save them. Heartbreakingly you watch as this is exactly what happens. Your son dies in the midst of saving everyone. Your son is a tremendous hero but as time goes on, people being people, a person or two that was saved begins telling people that your son's actions were heroic and tremendous and that if they hadn't also assisted him in some way as he was saving everyone that they all might not have made it. Now as the son's parent how would you feel about that person? You know for an absolute fact that your son had no help and couldn't have had help because the people who were getting saved were completely and utterly helpless. These people were either lying or deceived into thinking they had helped. If you approach them and assist them in showing them their error and they still won't accept it what is going to happen to the harmony in your relationship with those people? Severed!!

Let's take a moment and consider the gravity again of this statement:

Galatians 5:4 (NASB) 4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

How does a believer grow in Him if they are severed from Him? How does a relationship grow if there's no harmony? Can you see the gravity of what Paul is saying then?

He is saying: "How you believe you came to Him in salvation must agree with how He says a person comes to salvation. Because if it doesn't agree, if it wasn't an actual step in how you were saved, but you think it was you will be telling Him that you somehow helped His Son when He saved you. You will have no harmony with Him, you will be severed and you will not be able to grow in your walk with Him."

This is the gravity of this statement by Paul!

Acts 15:5 (NASB) But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.

Notice the passage says "***the sect of the Pharisees who had believed.***" These Pharisees had come to believe Jesus Christ was who He said He was. They were believers and the early church recognized them as that!

But notice that this group of Pharisees have some issues.

- They were believers but they made the mistake of thinking that they had come to salvation in a way that they had not.
- They were saying: ***"It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."*** Notice they've **added** already what's required, it started as circumcision but has now morphed to include being obedient to the Law. Let's **really dig into** what is being said here. What is being said is that in order for people to be saved they will need to know before hand that they will need to be obedient to the law if they want to be saved. In other words, they will need to "count the costs" so to speak before coming to Him. **That is not grace! Grace is an unconditional, free gift. "Counting the Costs" is conditional salvation.**
- **Here's a question:** Can someone become a believer and think there was something they did for salvation that had no bearing on them becoming a believer? YES! The answer lies right here with these Pharisees!
- **Here's another question:** Can someone become a believer and teach others the wrong way to become a believer? Again...YES! These Pharisees are showing us just that!

Let's be reminded again of what God's word says salvation is:

John 3:16 (NASB) "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

How would these Pharisees and men from Judea interpret this message?

John 3:16 (NASB) "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever (***is circumcised and is willing to be obedient to the Law of Moses - not in scripture added by me***) believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

This idea of getting people to add His word has been in Satan's game plan since the beginning:

Genesis 2:16-17 (NASB) 16 The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

Genesis 3:1-3 (NASB) 1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'"

You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die - What has Eve just done? She's added to His word! God only said that they shouldn't eat from it.

We should know this about Satan. He hates God & he hates His truth. Any chance he gets he looks to distort His Truth so that man won't *quite* get it.

John 3:14-18 (NASB) 14 "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; 15 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. 16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. 17 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. 18 "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Jesus lays out salvation. He uses the idea of belief 5 times (1x in verse 15, 1x in verse 16, 3x in verse 18) in His message for eternal life.

What is He telling us to believe?

1. Belief in His sacrifice (verses 14 & 15)
2. Belief that He is the Son of God and God gave Him up to be the sacrifice for us (verse 16).
3. If we believe in His sacrifice for us that we will not be judged and if we don't believe in this we've been judged already because we haven't placed our trust in Him for our salvation (verse 18).

So, there we have it salvation, right? Pretty easy? Yes! I don't believe His intent was to make it hard. I believe man in his fallen state is the one who tends to make it hard.

If John 3:14-18 is salvation and you are the enemy you now have a pretty big problem. Your job has become incredibly difficult. How do you keep people from coming to Jesus for salvation when He's made it so simple?

Then it hits you. I know how to do it! I can't make it difficult but I can deceive them into thinking it is. I'll just appeal to their nature. They have such a deep desire to want to be their **own judge**, to want to **control their own destiny**, to **rely on their own strength** I'll just deceive them into going **where it is they already want to go!** It worked great with Adam & Eve, they'll be no different.

I'll follow the same game plan. I'll make sure to wrap it in enough truth that I'll get them to misinterpret or add to His word just like I did with Adam and Eve.

And you know what he has. Instead of reading John 3:16 for how it reads many today interpret John 3:16 to say the following:

John 3:16 (NASB) "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever (**repents of their sins & wholeheartedly or genuinely - not in scripture added by me**) believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Peter has some very important words for this group of believing Pharisees:

7 After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe.

Peter is referring here to the conversion of Cornelius and his household. Notice Peter says that they would hear the word of the gospel and believe. So we see that this group became believers because of the gospel that Peter told them. It's important for our purposes then to see what exactly Peter said to them.

Here is an excerpt from Peter's message to this group:

Acts 10:38-44 (NASB) 38 "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. 39 "We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. 40 "God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, 41 not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. 42 "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.

43 "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins." 44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message.

Peter's message was an explanation to this Gentile family who had converted to Judaism, that the One they had heard about and been studying about and the prophets had all spoke about in scripture was Jesus of Nazareth. Notice what he says then is required for forgiveness of sins: **"everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."**

The people in the group believe this, as a matter of fact, they believe this before Peter is even finished speaking and they start receiving the Holy Spirit. Do you notice what is absent from Peter's message? There's no mention that they need to receive circumcision, no mention that they need to make Him Lord, no mention of repenting of sins. Notice too that Peter doesn't say "those who wholeheartedly believe, those who exercise a saving belief." Peter simply says "everyone who believes."

Again, there are no filters or modifiers that Peter uses to explain the salvation message. Simply belief.

Peter, just like Paul is wanting to stress heavily to this group that there can be no additional things added to the salvation message. Peter has a stern warning to this group if they decide that something needs to be added to salvation:

10 "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?"

Peter is saying, "If you tell someone who is already a believer (or an unbeliever for that matter) that they need to do something else along with belief in order for their salvation to be complete you will be putting a yoke on them that they all know didn't work for the fore fathers.

What happened to the fore fathers? The fathers were saved, the Passover happened and they were all delivered, they were all sealed as they all passed through the Red Sea but essentially none of them (only 2 out of 2 million or so) crossed the Jordan and into the deeper more fulfilling spiritual walk that He had for them on the other side of the Jordan river in Canaan (the abundant, spirit filled life). Almost all of them died in the wilderness.

They became saved people whose misunderstanding and mixing in of their own wisdom in His Word kept them from developing the Trust required to cross the Jordan river and into the spirit filled life He always intended for them.

11 "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

Grace - (charis) khä'-rēs - a gift. It costs a person nothing, it's free. If it costs anything then it ceases to be a gift. This is why Paul says in Romans:

Romans 11:6 (NASB) But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

It is not a work for a person to change their mind about who Jesus Christ is and trust Him to save them because of His sacrifice. I do believe that repenting of one's sins and saying one must wholeheartedly or genuinely believe in Him is adding something to His word that He did not intend. Much like agreeing that one must be circumcised and be willing up front to say that they are willing to count the cost and be obedient to the Law before salvation is now making His gift conditional and therefore no longer free so it's now something earned. This would be the definition of a work.

There's one last thing as we close: There's something that Circumcision, Counting the Costs, Repenting of Sins, Making Him Lord & Having a type of genuine or wholehearted "saving" faith all have in common. **They all bring the focus for salvation onto you.**

When we look at what Peter is saying there's a great, simple but very important point. Peter says here: **"But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus..."** What is Peter making Salvation about? He's making it about Jesus and making it about His gift to us. It isn't about me and it isn't about you. It always has been and always will be about Him.

When we add something to His gift, either intentionally or unintentionally, we are diminishing His gift and what He did. If we do that our hearts are going to tell us that some part of salvation is about me. If I believe that some part (no matter how small) is about me, I'm going to take that kind of thinking into sanctification. I'll listen to a deceitful heart that continues to try to convince me that sanctification is in some part about me and I will always carry a yoke and burden in my walk with Him. A burden that He desires for me to lay down for a different one:

Matthew 11:30 (NASB) "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

John 8:32 (NASB) and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."