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Through the Law I Died to the Law 2: 17-21

Through the Law I died to the Law DIG: How does Paul turn the tables on his rule-keeping opponents? How did Paul rebuke Peter? Does legalism offer a remedy for sin? What is the purpose of the 613 commandments of Moshe? What does it mean to be crucified with Messiah? What did Paul mean when he said, "I have died to the Law?" How was Peter being hypocritical?

REFLECT: Is Messiah's death everything to you? What difference does this make to your love for Him and your actions in life? How would you explain "justification by faith: to someone who has never been to a Messianic synagogue or church before? How would you explain the difference between being moral and being a believer to someone who thinks being good makes them acceptable to ADONAI? What "additions" to faith might outsiders perceive in your friends who are believers regarding what they should do to be approved? How can you help break down these barriers? In what ways is your old self dead, crucified with Christ? Have you taken off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self? Or are there some old practices still hanging around your neck that continue to give you problems? What can you do this week to remedy that noose around your neck?

In Galatians 2:11-21 the scene changes from Yerushalayim and the council there to Syrian Antioch, where the first Gentile church was established. Paul and Barnabas served as spiritual leaders, with help from three other men (see the commentary on **Acts, to see link click Bn – Barnabas and Sha'ul Sent Out from Syrian Antioch**)**. The remaining verses of Chapter 2 develop the inconsistency between Peter's behavior and his beliefs. At the same time they form a superb transition and introduction to Chapters 3 and 4 which Paul defended his salvation equals faith-plus-nothing gospel.**

In typically rabbinic teaching fashion **(Romans 10:14-15), Paul** anticipates an

objection **the Judaizers** might make (**to see link click Ag – Who Were the Judaizers**). The objection is two-fold. First, and easily disposed of is **Messiah an agent of sin**? **Their** reasoning was, if turning away from the yoke of **the 613 commandments** is **sin**, since we have to do that to become believers in **Yeshua Messiah**, then **Messiah** is **an agent of sin**, because that would be exactly what **Paul** would be asking **them** to do. Turning away from **the 613 commandments of the Torah**, and turn by faith to **Yeshua Messiah**. In theory, if that were **a sin** (which of course it is not), then **Yeshua** would become **an agent of sin Himself** (which of course **He** is not). **But if, while seeking to be justified in Messiah, we ourselves also were found to be sinners, is Messiah then an agent of sin?** In other words, does becoming a believer mean that we forsake **Torah**? Is eating and fellowshipping with **Gentiles** really a **sin** against **Torah**? The answer in Greek is very forceful: **May it never be (2:17)!**

The second part of the objection might be stated by **the Judaizers** like this, "You have been seeking to be **righteous** before **God** by uniting yourself with **Yeshua**; but instead of attaining **righteousness**, you end up being a **sinner**, just like the **Gentiles**, because you do not obey every single one of **the 613 commandments of Moshe**! But **Paul** answers this objection by declaring: **Indeed, if I build up again the legalistic bondage which I destroyed, I really do make myself a transgressor (2:18 CJB). Paul** is really referring to **Peter's** action of declaring the **Levitical** commandments regarding the eating of food, null-and-void when **he** ate with **the Gentiles**, and then declaring it valid when **he** turned around and withdrew **his** fellowship from **them**. But **Paul** tactfully puts **himself** into the picture and supposes a hypothetical case. **His** argument is that instead of committing **sin** by abandoning **legalism** for **grace**, one becomes a **transgressor** by returning to **the 613 commandments** for salvation, which **he** had previously abandoned.

It was as if **Paul** was saying to **Peter**, "If **you**, of all people, caused a sharp division between **Jew** and **Gentile** by removing **yourself** from the table of fellowship with **Gentiles**, you are rebuilding **the wall of separation (Ephesians 2:14)** that you originally tore down. If you are now putting **it** back up, then **you** are admitting that **you** were wrong in the first place, and thus, proving to have been living in **sin** and **transgression**."

Paul then distinguished **himself** from **Peter**, contrasting what **he** did with **the Torah** with what **Peter** did with **the Torah**. **For it was through letting the Torah speak for itself that I died to its traditional corrupted, and legalistic interpretation, so that I might live in direct relationship with God (2:19 CJB).** Obedience to **the 613 commandments of Moses** is not our master; **ADONAI** is. It is not our relationship to **the Torah** that saves us, it is our relationship with **ADONAI (Romans 7:1-2** and **4)**. **Paul's** attempt to fulfill **the 613 commandments of Moshe** perfectly for salvation revealed **his** own inability to meets **its** demands, and **its** inability to make **him righteous**. As a result, **he** abandoned **it** as a means of **justification** and accepted salvation by **grace in Messiah**. **He** found that while **the 613 commandments of Moshe** did reveal **sin**, **they** provided no remedy for **sin**, but rather condemned **him** hopelessly, for no one could fulfill **its** requirements. Obedience to **legalism** for salvation exercised a double power over **him**, for it made **him** a **sinner** and then punished **him** for being **one**![63]

How does one **die through the Law**? Because **legalism** convicts the breaker of **the 613 commandments**, and then executes the punishment. Bondage to **legalism** kills. **The Law** did two things. First, it revealed **sin**. It told us what **sin** was. But secondly, it provoked **sin**. As **Paul** writes in **First Corinthians 15:50-55,** the power of **sin** is **the Torah** because our **sin** nature cannot operate unless it has a base of operation, and **the Torah** is **sin's** basis of operation. As soon as **the Torah** says, "You shall not," our **sin** nature says, "Oh, yes I will." It suddenly has a base of operation to make us **sin** *more*. The problem was not **the Torah**, the problem was our **sinful** human nature. This is taught at length in **Romans**, especially in **Romans 3:19-31, 5:12-21,** and **7:1-25**.

When **Messiah died** on the cross, by positional truth, we were **crucified with**

Him. **Do you not know that all of us were immersed into Messiah Yeshua were** also **immersed into His death? Therefore, we were buried together with Him through immersion into death, the death** required for failing to perfectly obey all of **the 613 commandments of the Torah** perfectly (not because of **His sin**, but because of ours) **– in order that just as Messiah was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life (Romans 6:2b-4ff).**

And, like **Isaac**, who knowingly and willingly permitted **Abraham** to bind **him** to the altar of sacrifice, so **the Lord Yeshua** willingly suffered and **died** for us. **I have been crucified with Messiah (Galatians 2:20a; Second Corinthians 5:15; Romans 6:10-11; Colossians 2:20; Second Timothy 2:11).** We are saved by faith, but our faith goes all the way back to the cross. It was at the cross that **Yeshua** paid the price for my sin. When **the Father** looks at us **He** doesn't see our sin, **He** sees **His Son** because we have been covered by the blood of **the Lamb**. We are **justified**, we are **in Messiah (Ephesians 1:1, 3-4, 9-10, 12).** We are saved by grace through faith in **Yeshua Messiah**. It is what **Yeshua** did that saved me. My faith is accepting and believing that, and even **this is not from [ourselves], it is the gift of God – not by deeds, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).**

And it is no longer I who live but Messiah lives in me (Romans 8:9). Now something has changed. After salvation **He lives in me**. A mother took her young daughter to the pediatrician for a physical and he took an ear scope, and to make the child feel comfortable, he told her what he was going to do, and he looked into her ear he said, "I wonder if I can see the Cookie Monster in here." She just smiled. He went to the other ear and said, "I wonder if I'll see Big Bird in here." She just smiled. Then he took a stethoscope and put it on her chest and said, "I wonder if I can hear Barney in here." But she pushed his hand away and said, "No way! **Yeshua** lives in my heart. Barney is on my underwear!" She knew where **Messiah lived**. And you need to know where **Messiah lives**. **In** us! This fact gives us the ability to live out life as a believer. We cannot do this on our own. We can't. And anyone who has been a believer for more than 48 hours knows that you can't live a righteous life. You try to live a good life. You try to live a moral life. You try to live an honorable life in your own power, you are going to be very frustrated. Salvation is when we are **in Messiah**, but the ability to live out the life of a believer is when **Messiah** is **in** us.

Therefore, **Paul** was telling those Gentile believers that to go back and try to live up

to **the 613 commandments of the Torah** would be to cancel one's union with **Messiah's** sacrifice on the cross and therefore go back under **sin**. Having **died to legalism, the old self** is **dead**, **crucified with Christ**. **You have taken off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self that is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of the One who created you (Colossians 3:9-10).**

And the life I received by **trusting in Messiah**, **I** now **live by trusting in Ben-Elohim – who loved me and gave Himself up for me (2:20b).** The Greek verb behind **live** is in the perfect tense, indicating a past completed action that has continuing results. When we **trust Yeshua** for salvation we spiritually participate with **the Lord** in **His** crucifixion and in **His** victory over **sin and death**. Therefore, **Messiah's death** and resurrection (the atonement) satisfies every claim of **HaShem's** holiness and justice so that **God** is free to act on behalf of **sinners**. Once **crucified with Messiah**, because we are **in Him (Ephesians 1:3, 7, 11-13),** we are no longer under the power of **the legalism**. What **Paul** was saying to **Peter** was, in effect, "As **Jews**, we are free from **the Law** for salvation, we have **died to legalism**, and we have no reason to go back to it, consequently, we have no right to expect the **Gentiles** to obligate **themselves** to **it**."

Summing up **his** case against **Peter, Paul** declared: **I do not nullify the grace of God -for if righteousness comes through legalism, then Messiah died for no reason (2:21)!** If it were possible to be saved by **legalism** then **Messiah** did not need to **die**. But it *was* necessary for **Him** to **die**, because no one (besides **Messiah Himself**), could perfect obey **the 613 commandments of the Torah**. Our **sin** nature would not allow it.[64]