

There was a struggle in the early church figuring out what was required of new converts.

Certain people ...were teaching the believers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.” This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. ...When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.

Acts 15:1-2,4 (NIV)

Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses.” The apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: “Brothers... Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.” ...When they finished, James spoke up. “Brothers,” he said, “listen to me. ...**It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.** Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood.”

Acts 15:5-7a,10-11,13,19-20 (NIV)

Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

Romans 14:13-14 (NASB)

If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy someone for whom Christ died.

Romans 14:15 (NIV)

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

Romans 15:7 (NIV)

Robinwood Church

The Real Deal

The Only Thing That Counts (Part 2)

by Henry Marquiss

Don't let anyone tell you what you must eat or drink. Don't let them say that you must celebrate the New Moon festival, the Sabbath, or any other festival. **These things are only a shadow of what was to come. But Christ is real!**

Colossians 2:16-17 (CEV)

Galatians 5 (NIV)

v1: It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

☞ *Christ died so that you could be free. So live in that freedom.*

☞ *“do not let” Like in Colossians 2:16 Paul places responsibility on the hearers to stay out of the slavery of rules that don’t count or matter.*

v2-4: Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

☞ *If you could be saved by keeping a set of rules then you don’t need Christ. If you believe that you are saved by rule keeping then your faith is not in Christ it is in yourself and Christ is “of no value to you at all.”*

☞ *“fallen away from grace” Gift Card vs. Discount Card.*

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23 (NASB)

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works,

Ephesians 2:8-10a (NASB)

v6: For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. **The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.**

☞ *You can replace “circumcision” with any non-love based rule you would like and it doesn’t count.*

☞ *Instructions that prepare us for love.*

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8 (NIV)

v7-8: You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth? That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you.

☞ *Who “cut in” on you? People think their standard is truth, but in reality non-love based rules “keep you from obeying the truth”.*

☞ *Non-love based rules negatively effect running “a good race” because they move the focus away from loving God and loving people to gaining the approval of the people promoting the rules.*

☞ *The rules themselves become important as opposed to the result they were trying to accomplish being important. They became the ends instead of being the means to an end. They become the identifying badge instead of Christ defining our identity.*

Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Mark 2:27 (NASB)

☞ *Even if you preach their Savior, but you don’t preach their rules, they would rather have their family be at a bar than come to hear you preach.*

the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.

What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, Philippians 1:17-18 (NASB)

☞ *The promoter of the non-love based rules wasn’t/never is Jesus!*

v9: “A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.”

☞ *You can’t let any in because if you do it will become the defining essence of the church’s culture. The rules become the touch stone of their righteousness instead of Christ’s righteousness and our faith lived out through Christ’s defining ethic of love.*

☞ *A little slide toward legalism will ruin the gospel outreach.*

No one pours new wine into old wineskins. The wine would swell and burst the old skins. **Then the wine would be lost, and the skins would be ruined.** New wine must be put into new wineskins. Both the skins and the wine will then be safe. Matt. 9:17 (CEV)

v10,12: I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion, whoever that may be, will have to pay the penalty. ...As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

☞ *Ouch! That’s a painful thought!*

☞ *Demonstrates Paul’s like Jesus’ intensity to keep the law thinking out of the church.*

You Pharisees and teachers are show-offs, and you're in for trouble! You give God a tenth of the spices from your garden, such as mint, dill, and cumin. Yet you neglect the more important matters of the Law, such as justice, mercy, and faithfulness. These are the important things you should have done, though you should not have left the others undone either. Matthew 23:23 (CEV)

v13-14: You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

☞ *The rule of love, simple but not easy.*

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Philippians 2:3-4 (NIV)

☞ *4 Examples*

➤ Adultery ➤ Hair

➤ Stealing ➤ Modesty

☞ *HWJL*

But I am giving you a new command. You must love each other, just as I have loved you. If you love each other, everyone will know that you are my disciples. John 13:34-35 (CEV)