

Are We Preaching “Another” Gospel: A 31-Day Journey toward Rediscovering the Gospel of the Grace of God

by C. D. Hildebrand, 24-7-365 Version 2026

Day 14

PIVOTAL MOMENT OF TRUTH

How shocking it must have been for the Jews who always separated themselves from the Gentiles, seeing them as unclean, to witness that God was extending salvation to them as well! To some, it might have been a wonderful marvel, but to others, something repugnant and abhorrent. Yet, one of the most glorious truths of this New Covenant is that God made both Jew and Gentile one, based on faith in Jesus.

Ephesians 2:14-18

*For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the **law of commandments contained in ordinances**, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. ¹⁷ And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.*

The shock of this union is easy for one to overlook if one lives in a culture that is predominantly already accepting of different races, cultures, and religions, but we need to take into account the wall that divided Jew and Gentile for so many centuries, so that we can begin to perceive that this brought about some major disputes in the early church. One of those crucial clashes pertains to the question of whether or not the Ten Commandments are essential for believers.

Imagine the scene recorded in Acts 15, for example. Certain Jewish believers from Judea insisted that, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved,” referring to the Gentiles who were already believers. Of course, we wouldn’t hesitate to repudiate such nonsense, as we are convinced that circumcision is not required for continued salvation. This demand brought about “no small dissension” between them, and Paul and Barnabas. After no resolution to this dispute, the elders “determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.”

Along their way, as they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, they

told the Christians there about the conversion of the Gentiles. This “caused great joy to all the brethren.” When they came to Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas were received by the church, apostles, and elders, and they told them of what God had been doing among the Gentiles. Yet, not everyone was pleased.

Acts 15:5-11

*But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, **and** to command them to keep the Law of Moses.”*

*⁶ Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. ⁷ And when there had been **much dispute**, Peter rose up and said to them: “Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. ⁸ So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, ⁹ and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? ¹¹ But we believe that through the **grace** of the Lord Jesus Christ we **shall be** saved in the same manner as they.”¹*

In verse five, we read that this was not only about circumcision, but as to whether or not the Gentiles needed to keep the law of Moses in its entirety. Just as Paul wrote, he who is circumcised must keep the whole law.

Galatians 5:3

*And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the **whole** law.*

“Much dispute” followed, much like it does today when this topic is discussed. If we hold the commandments in such high regard, imagine how much more the Jews did. It’s the question at hand. Were believers then, and are believers today required to keep the whole law?

The “yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our father nor we were able to bear” was clearly the law of Moses. Peter stated that it is to “test God” to tell believers that they need to keep the law of Moses to be right with God. He made it abundantly clear that our hearts “are purified by faith” and we are saved (initially, continually, and ultimately) by the **grace**

¹ Notice again grace as opposed to the law of Moses.

of God.

At this point, the multitude that gathered to consider this issue kept silent as they heard of the many miracles God had worked among the Gentiles. Then James came to this conclusion in verses 19-20.

Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God,²⁰ but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood.

Then, a letter was written to the Gentile brothers to confirm the decision of the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:23-29).

*The apostles, the elders, and the brethren,
To the **brethren** who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings.*

*²⁴ Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised **and** keep the law" —to whom we gave no such commandment—²⁵ it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,²⁶ men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.²⁷ We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth.²⁸ For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:²⁹ that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.*

Please consider the following question. **If keeping the Ten Commandments is required for believers, why didn't the council simply admonish the Gentiles to keep the Ten Commandments at this very crucial point in church history?** The first three instructions they gave would have been covered by the first commandment, and the fourth by the seventh.

The most logical answer to this query is that the elders understood the significance of the question at hand and the consequence of their response: Was something beyond faith in Christ necessary for the Gentile disciples (those who were already Christians) to be right with God? Going back to verse 8-10, we see that both Jew and Gentile are saved by the grace of God through faith in Christ, not by following the law of Moses. To have asked the Gentiles to keep the Ten Commandments would have been to say yes, keeping the law is *also* necessary for continued salvation.

Our salvation is by God's grace alone through faith in Christ alone. There is no law necessary to be saved, nor is there a law needed for our continued or ultimate salvation. Even the "necessary things" they listed were not given as conditions for salvation, but only that they would "do well" by abiding by them.

This truth cannot be minimized.

The New has not *merged* with the Old. It has *replaced* the Old.

New Covenant righteousness is based on **faith** in Jesus. Old Covenant righteousness was based on **keeping** the law—the entire law. Right-standing with God is based on believing instead of doing—can you see this?

Yet we, the church, have created a mixture of the two. This mixture is what Paul is warning the Galatians to forsake, who were adding law to grace.

Many in the church today teach that we are saved by grace through faith, but that after that our relationship with God is maintained and improved by keeping laws, not only the Ten Commandments, but many other traditions and "disciplines" which **we** have developed. This heresy of adding law to grace is as old as the Early Church, and I believe that we are far worse now than then because we've had two thousand years to add on and refine more and more and more expectations so that now it is almost impossible to even be born again without adding requirements beyond faith.

Take, for example, the idea that in order to be saved one must, as we say, "make Jesus the Lord of your life". Paul had no such thought in his mind when he wrote Romans 10:9-13.

*If you confess with your mouth **the** Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one **believes** unto righteousness, and with the mouth **confession** is made unto salvation. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Whoever **believes** on Him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. ¹³ **For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."***

Paul does not say that we need to confess Him as *our* Lord, but as *the* Lord. There is a big difference. The trouble with the former is that it would be to say that something in addition to faith is necessary for salvation and **this is clearly not the case** (Eph. 2:8-9). Yet before the sinner has his foot in the door, we have burdened him down with the law of making Jesus the Lord of every aspect of his life. Paul is not asking the penitent heart to

promise God that Jesus will be the Lord of His life from now on *in order* to be saved, but rather to believe that Jesus is *God*.

The name “Lord” is Kurios which in the Greek version of the Old Testament is used for the august name “Jehovah,” and by its use, implies deity. Thus, to confess Jesus as Lord includes a heart belief in His deity, incarnation, vicarious atonement and bodily resurrection. Robertson says, “No Jew would do this who had not really trusted Christ, for Kurios in the LXX² is used of God. No Gentile would do it who had not ceased worshipping the emperor as kurios. The word Kurios was and is the touchstone of faith.”³

Do we, the church, have so little faith in the grace of God that we feel we must do this preventative intervention before someone is even saved? Do we think that if we can get them to the point of being at least willing to make Jesus their personal Lord, then after salvation, they will have this in mind and have a better chance of living right? Or even worse, do we actually *believe* that something beyond faith in Christ is necessary for salvation? God forbid!

Yes, it’s true, at salvation, Jesus is our Lord, but salvation isn’t based on us *making* Him Lord, but on us *believing* He is *the* Lord. If this is not true, then none of us are yet saved. **Have we made Jesus the Lord of every area of our lives yet—every thought, every word, every deed?** How long have we been serving Him? If our answer is, “Well, I’m working on it,” or “I mean that I’m *willing* for Him to be the Lord of every area of my life eventually,” then we haven’t made Him our Lord yet, and we aren’t saved yet; that is, if making Him the Lord of our lives is required for salvation.

When we read through the book of Acts, we don’t see this concept of confessing Jesus as “our” Lord being mentioned even once. There is no recorded “sinner’s prayer” either. People simply put their faith in Jesus Christ, and they were gloriously saved and baptized. Surely today, such a salvation experience would be considered “easy believism”.

The Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They simply replied, “Believe on **the Lord** Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household,” (Acts 16:29-30), and they were saved.

Even confessing the exact words, “Jesus is the Lord,” was not a set formula. For example, after hearing Philip explain what he’d been reading,

² The LXX is the Septuagint version of the Old Testament which is the Hebrew Bible translated into Greek.

³ Wuest’s Word Studies—Wuest’s Word Studies – Volume 1: Word Studies in the Greek New Testament.

the Ethiopian eunuch asked, “Here’s water. What hinders me from being baptized?” and Philip responded, “If you **believe** with all of your heart, you may.” What does he then say? “I believe that Jesus is the Son of God,” and then Philip baptized him without telling him he needed to make Jesus his Lord, without asking him to confess his sins, and without adding any admonishment to keep the law (Acts 8:36-38).

Ephesians 2:8-9

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the **gift** of God, ⁹ **not** of works, lest anyone should boast.*

Clearly, we are born again by heart belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and confession that He is *the* Lord, and not by making Him “the Lord of my life”. He *is* the Lord, the Lord God! When we confess Him as *the* Lord, we are made new creations, and gradually, by His love’s wooing, by His grace that teaches us, He becomes the Lord over our lives.

The Early Church set the precedent at the Jerusalem Council for whether or not believers are required to keep the moral law. The burden which they and their forefathers were not able to bear is not ours to carry either. We are free from law—all of it, so that we can serve in newness of life.