

## Speak the Truth in Love: Each Must Be Convinced in His Own Mind

By Jeff Quackenbush ([jeff@hallel.info](mailto:jeff@hallel.info))

Hallel Fellowship (<http://hallel.info>)

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Our friends, family, co-workers, acquaintances and fellow believers may not be at the same place we are in understanding all of God's words, that we are part of Israel, the body of Messiah, with all the promises and responsibilities that goes with that kinship. We must be humble enough to admit we may not understand everything either. Therefore, we must approach our teaching with utmost humility, patience and compassion, because it is God Who in His timing changes hearts and writes His Torah on them. The following is an exploration of the need for this sensitivity, as taught in Deut. 10:12-22, Eph. 4:1-16, Rom. 14:1-23 and Acts 15.

**Deut. 10:12-22** — 12 “Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to keep the LORD'S commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good? 14 “Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. 15 “Yet on your fathers did the LORD set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day. 16 “So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer. 17 “For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe. 18 “He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing. 19 “So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. 20 “You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name. 21 “He is your praise and He is your God, who has done these great and awesome things for you which your eyes have seen. 22 “Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons in all, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven.”

- God calls who He wants to join His family.
- God delivered us from selfish lifestyles (symbolically, Egypt), and He will do likewise with others.
- In return, God seeks our fear (awe), obedience and service motivated by our emotions and desires, which need to be re-aligned to God's direction.

**Ephesians 2** — 1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

- All of us have been delivered from our selfishness.
- God makes us holy, sets us apart for Himself, as a testimony to His character.
- Doing God's will doesn't make us holy. Good deeds are what God foresaw as hallmarks of our new identity, people who were once wretched but are now obedient.

11 Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “Uncircumcision” by the so-called “Circumcision,” which is performed in the flesh by human hands — 12 remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. 17 **AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR ;** 18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

- Those who were previously ignorant of God and the deals He made with Israel are now adopted members of the family, building material for the house of God.

**Ephesians 3** — 1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles-- 2 if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; 3 that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. 4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; 6 to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, 7 of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. 8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; 10 so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the <assembly> to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ

Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him. 13 Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory.

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, 21 to Him be the glory in the <assembly> and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

**Ephesians 4:1-16** — 1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

- The driving characteristic of God's people are their humility in remembering where they came from, akin to remembering the temporary structures of wandering Israel during the Feast of Tabernacles.

4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. 7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN." 9 (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) 11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. 14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together \* by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

- God decides who gets what gift for doing this or that.
- Goyim who accept Messiah become part of Israel. Those who become part of Israel need to be assimilated gently and with patience.

**Romans 14:1-23** — 1 Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.

- We must get along with people who don't agree as we do and not just do so for opportunities to change their minds.
- We must also get along with people who still are children in their relationship with God, such so that attacks against their misconceptions of God could harm their belief in Him.

2 One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only.

- A common interpretation is that this refers to Jews in the Diaspora who became vegetarians because they couldn't find a kosher butcher and didn't want to eat the same meats prepared by a goy butcher.
- Rabbinic judgments on kosher butchers had superseded Torah instructions for selecting and cleaning the animals.

3 The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him. 4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

- The role of brothers and sisters in Yeshua is to help guide new believers toward deeper relationships with God.

5 One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.

- Different sects of Jews observed fast days on different days of the week for different reasons.
- God set certain appointments with His people, so these are not opinions of one day over another.
  - At least three major appointments a year were to be kept at the temple.
  - The temple was to be a house of prayer for all nations.
  - Thus, the appointments were for all nations and not just the physical children of Abraham.

6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.

- Don't look down on those who aren't fasting when you're fasting.
- Isaiah 58 cautions against fasting on the Day of Atonement just for commandment-keeping's sake.

7 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether \* we live or \* die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord

both of the dead and of the living. 10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. 11 For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD." 12 So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God. 13 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. 14 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.

- The discussion is about food sacrificed to idols and fast days.
- Paul himself earlier in Romans writes that he wouldn't have known what sin was without the law.
  - Romans 3 — 19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; 20 because by the works of the Law no \* flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. 21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; 26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. 27 Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. 28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, 30 since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one. 31 Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.
  - Romans 5 — 6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. 12 Therefore \*, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because \* all sinned -- 13 for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. 15 But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. 16 The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. 17 For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. 18 So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. 19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. 20 The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. | Romans 6 — 1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?
    - If we learn about sin from the law and thus our need for a Savior and we are not to continue living in sin, which is defined by the law, are we to disregard that same law in our daily lives?
- Messiah Yeshua said that He didn't come to destroy the law or the writings of the prophets nor rewrite any of it.
  - Matthew 5 — 17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. 18 "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. 19 "Whoever \* then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever \* keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 "For I say to you that unless \* your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.
- In that context, food is what the LORD says is food, and that is listed in Leviticus 11.
  - The LORD lifted up some meat as clean as He lifted up Israel from more prominent nations.
- Under rabbinical interpretation, clean food would be unclean if dedicated to idols.
  - Food with blood in it would be unsuitable to eat because of the important teaching of life in blood.

15 For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. 16 Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil;

- Remember this discussion started with worries about eating food sacrificed to idols.
- Thus, "what is good" would be any meat that God considers to be food, because false gods have no power of themselves. God has jurisdiction over all "principalities of the air."

17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

- Remember, that Paul in Romans writes that he wouldn't have known what sin was without the law.
- The law teaches righteousness, and it teaches salvation through Messiah.

18 For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. 19 So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. 20 Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. 21 It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles. 22 The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. 23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever \* is not from faith is sin.

How is this insight into the interplay of faith and observance essential in our interactions with fellow believers concerning the Torah?

How should it play into our interactions with people who don't believe in God?

**Acts 15:1-29** — 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."

- The issue here, which must be kept in sharp focus, is circumcision as a barrier to faith in Messiah Yeshua as God's salvation.

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. 3 Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren. 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."

- Here, again, this group wanted to put the "fruits of the Spirit" — a circumcised and obedient heart — ahead of receiving God's Spirit.

6 The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. 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?"

- Like Abraham, these new believers, who were coming out of idolatrous ways like Abraham did, were "brought near" to God by their faith in Messiah Yeshua.
- Was that "yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear" the Torah? We will see shortly from the rest of this chapter.
- The following commentary on the reason for the rebellion of Korah during the exodus of Israel from Egypt might give you a hint as to what the yoke referred to here is. This was told in Yalkut Simeoni, part i. fol. 229, in the Midrash Shochar:
  - "There was," said Korah, "a widow in our neighborhood who had two orphan children: she had one field; and, when she began to plough it, one came and said, 'You shall not plough with an ox and a donkey together.' When she went to sow it, he said, 'You shall not sow your field with diverse seeds.' When she began to reap, and to gather the sheaves together, he said, 'Leave a handful and the corners of the field for the poor.' When she prepared to thresh it, he said, 'Give me the wave-offering, and the first and second tithes.' She did as she was commanded, and then went and sold her field, and bought two ewes, that she might clothe herself and family with the wool, and get profit by the lambs. When they brought forth their lambs, Aaron came and said, 'Give me the firstlings, for the holy blessed God hath said, "All the first born, whatsoever open the womb, shall be yours."'" She yielded to his demands, and gave him two lambs. When shearing time came, he said, 'Give me the first fruits of the wool.' When the widow had done this, she said, I cannot stand before this man; I will kill my sheep and eat them. When she had killed the sheep, Aaron came and said, 'Give me the shoulder, and the jaws, and the ventricle.' The widow said, 'Though I have killed my sheep, I am not delivered from this man; I therefore consecrate the whole to God.' Then Aaron said, 'ALL belongs to me, for the holy blessed God hath said, "Every thing that is consecrated in Israel shall be his," i.e. the priest's.' He therefore took the whole carcasses, and marched off, leaving the widow and her orphan daughters overwhelmed with affliction."
  - What is wrong with this picture? The widow and orphans were the ones the Torah said should be the recipients of the benevolence of Israel.

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

12 All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

13 After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me. 14 "Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. 15 "With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written,

16 `AFTER THESE THINGS I will return, AND I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID WHICH HAS FALLEN, AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I WILL RESTORE IT, 17 SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD, AND

ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME,' 18 SAYS THE LORD, WHO MAKES THESE THINGS KNOWN FROM LONG AGO.

19 "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, 20 but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. 21 For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

- Thus the beginning rules for new believers would be:
  - Stay away from food and things dedicated to or "set aside" for idols.
    - The Torah teaches that we aren't to mingle worship of the LORD with worship of false gods.
    - Apostle Paul later would argue that since false gods are really nothing at all, mercy toward those who don't know better in serving you food dedicated to those gods should guide your actions.
  - Do not fornicate.
  - Do not eat meat from an animal that was strangled to death, in other words, it still had all its blood in it.
  - Do not eat blood itself, which was part of the worship of some gods.
    - These two are part of the dietary laws of Leviticus 11.
- Why are these the only four requirements? Why not the Big 10? The "because" is in verse 21: Moses is preached each Sabbath everywhere.
  - "Moses" is a catchword for the Torah, or the first five books of the Bible.
  - The new believers would be meeting on Shabbat, walking through the Fourth Commandment each week.
  - Anything else from the Torah would be learned week by week.

22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas--Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, 23 and they sent this letter by them, "The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings. 24 "Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with their words, unsettling your souls, 25 it seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 "Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves 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 essentials: 29 that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell."