

Paul's Rule for All Churches

Although we only have one Law in the New Covenant,¹ there are protocols and rules that need to be put in place to bring order to the *ekklesia*. There are also what could be called 'rules' that are part of sound doctrine which have the purpose of highlighting to believers their importance. These do not correspond to the Ten Commandments or the Torah, nor are they generated for legalism. These rules are for believers to remain true to the Kingdom foundations so they don't drift off course or into legalism.

Sound confusing? Let me give you some examples from the Jerusalem leaders to the gentile believers:²

- Abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood³.

This is not legalism, even though men turn it into legalism. The Jerusalem council added the following qualification to their advice (rules): “If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well”⁴. This set of rules are not compulsory, but are valuable to assist all believers in staying true to God's way of behaviour – i.e. to live righteously.

Paul also set up a important rule in every church:

1 Corinthians 7:17-18 (AMP) – *Only, let each one live the life which the Lord has assigned him, and to which God has called him [for each person is unique and is accountable for his choices and conduct, let him walk in this way]. This is the rule I make in all the churches. Was anyone at the time of his calling [from God already] circumcised? He is not to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called while uncircumcised? He is not to be circumcised.*

The reason for this rule was to prevent gentiles from thinking they had to become Jews. This was because a faction of Jewish Christians (known as “Judaizers”) hounded Paul and insisted that Gentile believers must be circumcised.

The rule makes it clear, that believers aren't to become Jews or to take up Jewish traditions – feasts, dress, customs, meals, etc. Gentiles are to remain who they are when they came into the Kingdom. This is very pertinent today for those Christians who are introducing Jewishness into their lives thinking it makes them more spiritual and pleasing to God.

Paul used this same thinking in some of his other advise to the churches regarding remaining alive⁵, marriage⁶, slavery⁷ and circumstances⁸. This mirrors John the Baptist's advice to remain content.⁹

Godliness with contentment is very beneficial to every believer.¹⁰

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1 – James 2:8 (John 13:34)

2 – Acts 15:20

3 – The consumption of blood. (AMP) [See also: Genesis 9:4-5; Leviticus 17:10-14]

4 – Acts 15:29

5 – Philippians 1:24

6 – 1 Corinthians 7:8-9

7 – 1 Corinthians 7:19-24

8 – Philippians 4:11; Hebrews 13:5

9 – Luke 3:14

10 – 1 Timothy 6:6