

# A Debt Paid

## Colossians 2:14

*Compiled by Rachel Cory-Kuehl, April 9, 2014*

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*Scripture is from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.*

Matthew 18:23-35 “Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.

And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.

The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.

So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.

Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’

And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”

In the passage, trespasses are presented as a debt owed. We still use the expression today. He has paid his debt to society, or his debt to the law. We mean that the person has completed his sentence in prison.

When someone sins against us, they owe us. When we sin against others, we owe them. We also owe God, because He feels the pain inflicted upon our victim. When we forgive others, we are dismissing the debt, and will no longer seek any “payment” or revenge. The slang expression, “Payback’s a -itch,” expresses the idea that repayment was extracted involuntarily, and with some element of suffering.

Galatians 5:1-3 “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that **he is a debtor to keep the whole law**.”

IMPORTANT:

1. Before a Gentile could become an Israelite (a Jew), he had to undergo circumcision.
2. Before he could be circumcised (by an approved Rabi) he had to take **the Vow of Obedience**, also called “the vow of circumcision.” He would vow to keep “**the whole law**,” which included both the written Torah of Moses and the Oral Torah of the Pharisees. This is so important! Paul is telling the Galatian believers, “If you take that vow, you are obligated to keep the Oral Torah traditions of the Pharisees.” I absolutely take from this, that the Oral Torah traditions of the Pharisees were “the yoke of bondage” in the Acts 15 argument made by Peter to the Jerusalem Council. See our study: “**The Yoke of Bondage**.”
3. Before he could take the Vow of Obedience, He had to complete two years of instruction with an approved Rabbi.

Vows were taken very seriously in the Ancient Middle East. They were not to be taken lightly. This was a vow to Yehovah God. Violations of Torah (oral or written) after this point were said to incur a “debt” to the Law. Sin offerings would then be needed to receive “atonement.” Sacrifices could only be made at the Temple on the Mount at Jerusalem. Only circumcised men could enter the Court of Sacrifices, at that temple.

Though there were Jews living in Roman cities, the Galatians were not Jews. They were former pagans. When Paul wrote, “do not become entangled again with a yoke of bondage,” he is comparing their bondage under paganism (with all its degrading rites) to “bondage” under the corrupted laws of Pharisaic Judaism. The original Law of Moses (given by Yehovah) had been intentionally and inextricably “entangled” with the Oral Torah “traditions” of the Pharisees.

**“You are trading one bondage for another.”** That was the message.

## THE ORAL TORAH

This collection of law and commentary (*according to the Pharisees*) had been communicated by Yahweh, to Moses, at Mount Sinai and during the wilderness wandering, but Moses never wrote it down. According to the Pharisees, Moses was never commanded to write it down. So they too, had not written it down. It was passed to each new generation of the Pharisees, orally. This Oral Torah explained and expanded upon, the Law that Moses had written down. The “Oral Torah” was also called “the traditions of the elders.” Problem was, portions of the Oral Torah, contradicted other portions.

*SIDE NOTE: To preserve these traditions after the dispersion, the Oral Torah was written down between 130-150 years after the destruction of the Temple in 70CE. Those collected writings are known as the Mishnah. (Picture all of the volumes containing the judicial rulings of the Supreme Court.) The Mishnah, together with the Gemara (a collection of later commentaries) are known as the Talmud.*

The critical factor was the weight given to this “Oral Torah.” The Pharisees of Christ’s day, held the Oral Torah to be above, and of greater authority, than the written Torah of Moses. I think you can grasp the potential for abuse. The ruling authorities could add laws for the people, and make laws to exempt themselves from the greater part of the burden, simply by “remembering” that these were part of the Oral Torah. Rabbis of Orthodox Judaism continue this tradition today, but the potential for additions is curtailed since the Oral Torah commentaries were collected and written down, in the third century.

*For more information look up “Oral Torah” in “[The Jewish Encyclopedia](#).”*

Matthew 23:1-4 “Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples saying: ‘The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat [ruling the people] . . . For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.’”

*They “lay them on men’s shoulders,” like a yoke.*

Mark 7:8-9 [Jesus] “For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men -- the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.’ He said to them, ‘All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.’”

Matthew 15:3 [Jesus] “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?”

Matthew 16:12 “Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

*NOTE: Karaite Judaism recognizes only the written Torah of Moses. Jews of this sect reject the traditions of the Oral Torah, supposedly spoken to Moses, but never written down. This sect emphasizes a direct interpretation of the scriptures, believing that all divine commandments were recorded in the written Torah without additional oral explanations.*

*Wikipedia Jewish Virtual Library*

### Can “works of the Law” ERASE a “debt to the Law?”

Short answer - No. Those who desired to be “under the law,” thought that by keeping all the rites and ceremonies of the Law, they could be “justified” (*declared righteous*) in the sight of God (*Gal 4:2*). But they couldn’t. They had sinned against God, and no amount of law-keeping could set things right again. They would have to keep the Law perfectly, which no one does, or ever did. No one has ever been justified by law-keeping (*Gal 3:11*).

Hebrews 10:4 “It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”

Galatians 3:11 “. . . no one is justified by the law in the sight of God.”

Sacrifices were worthless, so far as cleansing the conscience. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews, called them “dead works” (*Heb 9:14*).

### WHAT WAS NAILED TO HIS CROSS?

I’m going to quote the same verse from six different translations.

Colossians 2:14 “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;” (KJV)

Colossians 2:14 “. . . having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, nailing it to His cross.” (NKJV)

Colossians 2:14 “having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out that way, nailing it to the cross;” (ASV)

Colossians 2:14 “having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. (NIV)

Colossians 2:14 “having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” (NAS)

Colossians 2:14 “erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross.” (NRSV)

If all your sins have been blotted out and forgiven, and you stand justified before God - why would you need to present an animal sacrifice for a “sin offering?” You wouldn’t!!

In the church I attended many years ago, they used to teach that God wrote the Ten Commandments by hand (*Deut. 4:13*), but Moses wrote down the “ordinances.” So we have to keep the Ten Commandments, but everything else is now obsolete. I think that was a complete misunderstanding of this passage! I no longer believe that Colossians 2:14 has anything to do with keeping the Ten, while discarding the rest. I believe the “debt” to our Father God, is forgiven, for those who acknowledge and praise Him for the sacrifice of Yeshua Messiah, to buy our redemption.

See our studies: “[The END of Sacrifices](#)” and “[The Change of the Priesthood](#).”

## THE RECORD OF OUR DEBT

I think you can tell from the ASV, NIV, NRSV and NAS versions, that the charges, or the debt, or the “bond,” or the record of our transgressions (according to the law) - THAT is what was “nailed to the cross.”

In the eyes of Heaven, OUR DEBT was posted over His head.  
He paid OUR DEBT.

Isaiah 53:6 “All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (NKJ).

It was common in the Roman Empire, to post a placard over the head of the accused at his execution, which listed **the charges**. Paul is referring to this custom. The charges against Christ were posted over His head - nailed to His cross. “King of the Jews” it read. The Sanhedrin tried to get Pilot to change it, to “He said king of the Jews,” but Pilot refused.

As “king,” Jesus could pay the debt **for His people**. This was something commonly practiced in the Ancient Middle East. Newly crowned kings could forgive the debts of their subjects.

Jesus is “the anointed King” - “the Son of David” - and the rightful heir to David’s throne. For those who choose to serve Jesus as their king, the certificate of our debt, was nailed to His cross!

*We pray this study will prove a blessing to you.  
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