

but have NO direct Scripture to support their false doctrines. They will often offer their opinions and twist the Bible in an attempt to validate their views.

Jesus promises **REST**... these false teachers stir up **RESTLESSNESS!**

They Subvert Souls

The legalistic doctrines of these believing Pharisees led to the subversion of souls.

The Greek word translated “subverting” is defined as a sense of “**reversal**”. It is from a root word that means essentially to “**pack your bags**” (baggage).

Thus, these new converts had “moved in” with Jesus... they had brought their luggage and were at REST with Christ.

However, the false doctrines of mandating “law keeping” were upsetting their faith in Jesus to the point of “reversing” their choice to follow Jesus.

How Were They Subverting Their Souls

Legalism!

These believing Pharisees were destroying faith in Jesus by teaching that converts must be circumcised AND they must keep the Law.

The circumcision that God requires has always been the circumcision of the heart. The circumcision of flesh has always been symbolic of what God sought from our hearts. We see this in

both the Old and New Testaments.

“Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.” (Deuteronomy 10:16)

“But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.” (Romans 2:29)

As for keeping the Law, legalists seek to enslave people to perform that which ONLY Jesus has ever been able to accomplish... keep the Law. If no person COULD keep the Law, why do legalists mandate others to do so?

This kind of teaching causes the shipwreck of one's faith.

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ...” (Galatians 2:16)

Which Yoke Will You Take?

The yoke Jesus tells us to take... **His REST?**

Or

The yoke of the Law... **Unbearable WORKS?**

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“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. (30) For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

“But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. (10) Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?” (Acts 15:5, 10)

A yoke is normally a wooden crosspiece that is attached via the necks of two animals that enables them to WORK more efficiently and effectively.

A yoke is designed for LABOR and hard work. A yoke is NOT normally associated with REST.

Jesus' Yoke = REST

Being yoked together with Jesus is at odds with the normal usage of a yoke (within the limited understanding of the human mind.) A yoke is used to produce **WORK**... but Jesus says His yoke gives us **REST!**

Wouldn't it make more sense if Jesus would say,

TWO YOKES

“...I will give you rest. Take my **BED** for yourself...”?

We should not be surprised by the fact that God's ways are not in alignment with our way of thinking. After all, He tells us...

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. (9) For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”
(Isaiah 55:8-9)

The Yoke of the Law = WORK

Contrast the “yoke” Jesus offered with the “yoke” that the apostles recognized being mandated by the believing Pharisees.

In Acts 15:5, we see believing Pharisees mandating circumcision and keeping the Law of Moses.

Five verses later, in Acts 15:10, we see the apostles respond to this command sought by these legalistic believers. The apostles identified the notion of “keeping the Law of Moses” as:

- * Tempting God
 - * A Yoke - to put on the necks of the disciples
 - * An Unbearable Yoke - which neither these Pharisees nor their fathers could handle
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The Apostles Gave No Such Commandment

“Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:”
(Acts 15:24)

It is vitally important to correctly understand Acts chapter 15. This chapter in no way disparages the Law or any part of God's Word. Rather, it **elevates Jesus to superiority** over all.

Many times in the New Testament we read that the Law is good... but this is always in the proper context. For example:

“But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.” (Galatians 5:18)

When we are led by the Spirit... then we are not under the Law.

The following are some of the apostolic observations noted in Acts 15:24

Attempted Legitimacy

The first thing noted by Luke in Acts 15:24 is that these legalists were part of the apostles' group... they were with the apostles and went out from the apostles.

This appears to be an attempt by the Pharisaic believers to add legitimacy to their teachings. It would likely be unnecessary for the apostles to mention that they went out from their group, if these false preachers had not tried to validate their ministry by proclaiming that they were from the church in Jerusalem.

This was not uncommon during the Bible times. Paul

mentions a letter “as if it were from him”, but it was not. Often preachers and teachers would legitimize their ministry by associating with those who taught them.

Here is the example from Paul mentioned above...

“That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.” (2 Thessalonians 2:2)

They Used Words To Insight Restlessness

Acts 15:24 tells us that these legalists “troubled” the new converts with their “words”.

In all likelihood, these were skilled wordsmiths. When they spoke, they came across as well educated and knowing the subject that they were delineating. However, the Bible WARNS us of these types of preachers and teachers...

“These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. (18) For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.” (2 Peter 2:17-18)

Acts 15:5 tells us that these were believing Pharisees. They were well educated in the Law and most assuredly were very convincing in their presentation of a need to “keep the law”.

New converts could easily be swayed to ADD works to FAITH in Jesus. It is “logical”... it makes sense... and it is even biblical... but only in the PROPER CONTEXT.

Beware of those that wax eloquent with words,