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The Pauline Paradox Series – Part 5: Ephesians

Welcome to the section on Ephesians in the Pauline Paradox Series. We expect that there may be two types of persons interested in watching this teaching.

The first type might be one who does not understand or agree that those in the faith should be observing the Torah, or the whole Law of God. To those that fall in this group, we strongly recommend that you start at the beginning of the Pauline Paradox Series, as there is a lot of foundational material included in prior parts of this series that we will be using in this teaching on Ephesians.

The second type of person watching this teaching might be one who already understands that we are to be observing the Torah, but still wants to be able to better understand and explain the difficult words of Paul. To those in this group, we still recommend beginning at the start of the [Pauline Paradox Series](#), however, we do not consider it to be absolutely necessary.

At a minimum, it is also recommended that the teachings [The Lost Sheep](#) and [What is the Gospel](#) have been watched, as that material is critical in order to effectively understand Ephesians 2.

You may also find that we move quite quickly in this teaching. As a result, we will not be dwelling too long on any of the points or material. Because of that, you might find value in watching the teaching more than once to better absorb and test the presentation.

The goal of the Pauline Paradox Series is to call the whole Body of the Messiah back to the whole Word of God, this is what we believe the ministry of Yeshua (Jesus) was all about, apart from his actions on the cross or torture stake.

To do this effectively, we feel that showing how Paul’s letters are consistent with the same message of the Messiah is very important.

Because we intend on only covering verses that appear to challenge torah observance in the faith, we will be focused on covering Ephesians 2.

...specifically Ephesians 2, verses 14 and 15:

Ephesians 2:14-15

For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace.

These two verses are often pointed to in order to express the understanding that our Messiah abolished the law of God, also called the Torah in Hebrew.

In such an interpretation, the Law of God was a dividing wall between Jew and Gentile. In such a reading, the Law of God is portrayed as hostile.

The casual reading of these two verses do indeed portray such a perspective as valid.

Before we adopt a position stemming from casual readings and preconceived doctrines, we should first consider that Ephesians is a letter. Letters are never intended to focus on one sentence, or even two, but allow the context of the whole letter to bring understanding to each and every sentence.

As it is often said, context is everything.

So let's start in chapter 1.

Ephesians 1:1-10

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus (Messiah Yeshua) by the will of God,

To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus (Messiah Yeshua):

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Messiah Yeshua).

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Messiah Yeshua), who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ (Yeshua Messiah), according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

Here Paul speaks of what was our Creator's from the beginning, to adopt us as sons through Messiah Yeshua. Through this plan, we have redemption and forgiveness according to YHWH's grace. In verses 9-10, Paul refers to this as the "*mystery of his will*" and it extends to all people in the faith, of all time.

Ephesians 1:11-14

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is

the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Through this adoption, we are promised an inheritance. This promise has not yet been fulfilled, and we are still eagerly waiting for it.

Ephesians 1:15-23

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus (Yeshua) and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ (Messiah Yeshua), the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Continuing on to Ephesians 2.

Ephesians 2:1-3

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Please note, Paul makes mention that the Ephesians were once dead in their sins. They walked and followed after the adversary like the rest of the world. He specifically calls such a condition the “sons of disobedience.”

Sin and disobedience is defined as breaking the law of God.

1 John 3:4

Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.

So, here’s our point, if Paul is referencing sin and disobedience, which is the breaking of the law of God, it follows that there still must be a law of God to break.

Continuing on...

Ephesians 2:4-10

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—**by grace you have been saved**—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Messiah Yeshua), so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (Messiah Yeshua). **For by grace you have been saved through faith.** And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus (Messiah Yeshua) for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Paul states we are saved by grace, not by works. But, in verse 10, he makes mention that we were created for doing works. Thus, we do good works not for our salvation, but because of our salvation. God prepared these good works beforehand, that we should walk in them. But, what are these good works that we are to walk in that were created so long ago?

Well, the Bible defines that for us.

Deuteronomy 8:6

So you shall **keep the commandments** of the LORD (YHWH) your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him.

Deuteronomy 13:4

You shall walk after the LORD (YHWH) your God and fear him and **keep his commandments** and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him.

Deuteronomy 28:9

The LORD (YHWH) will establish you as a people **holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD (YHWH) your God and walk in his ways.**

“...holy to himself, as He as sworn to you...**if we keep the commandments and walk in his ways.**”

Do you recall Paul stating something similar in Ephesians chapter 1? Let's look at verse 4.

Ephesians 1:4

...even as he **chose us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be **holy and blameless** before him.

Paul is referencing Deuteronomy 28:9 in Ephesians 1:4 and Ephesians 2:10.

Here are some other verses that define walking in the good works created long ago:

Deuteronomy 30:16; Joshua 22:5; Judges 2:17; 1 Kings 2:3; 1 Kings 3:14; 1 Kings 6:12; 1 Kings 8:58; 1 Kings 11:38; 2 Kings 23:3; 2 Chronicles 17:4; 2 Chronicles 34:31.

We encourage you to look at these verses and test them out for yourself.

This understanding is everywhere in the Bible.

Paul, in Ephesians 1:4, states that we were chosen before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless...meaning, this has been the plan all the way from the beginning of time. In chapter 2 verse 10, we learn that these good works were created for us beforehand.

Being holy and blameless, and walking in the good works established from the beginning are not just concepts from the Old Testament that Paul is referencing. Such has always been true, and always will be true.

Luke 1:6

And they were both righteous before God, **walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord.**

2 John 1:6

And this is love, that **we walk according to his commandments**; this is the commandment, just **as you have heard from the beginning**, so that you should walk in it.

Let's summarize what we have read so far in Ephesians:

- 1) It is the Creator's plans from the beginning that we were to be adopted as sons through Messiah Yeshua, called the "*mystery of His will*."
- 2) Yeshua was also the mechanism used to extend redemption and forgiveness through YHWH's grace, which makes this adoption possible.
- 3) As adopted sons, we are promised an inheritance and is still due to us.
- 4) The Ephesians once followed the adversary and disobedience, but now follow our Messiah, and have entered into this plan.
- 5) Like us, the Ephesians are saved by grace, not works.
- 6) As adopted sons because of this extended grace, we follow good works that were established from beginning. We are to walk in these ways which has always been defined as the commandments of God.

After Paul says all of that, verses 14-15 seem to state that the commandments of God are abolished, and to some, this is an absolute fact.

So, let's continue.

Ephesians 2:11-13

Therefore remember that at **one time** you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—**remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise**, having no hope and without God in the world. **But now** in Christ Jesus (Messiah Yeshua) you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

This is where we really need to start asking questions to understand the first century Hebraic context.

Who were the "*circumcision*" and "*uncircumcision*" found in verse 11?

In the first century, the "circumcision" was often referred to as the Jews. The "uncircumcision" were often considered to be unbelieving Gentiles.

Notice that at "*one time*" they were called the "*uncircumcision*."

If I was to say that at "one time" I played for the St. Louis Cardinals.

Does that mean I still play for the St. Louis Cardinals?

No, it doesn't.

It would mean though, that at one time I did play for the St. Louis Cardinals.

Or, if I was to say, at “one time “I was President of the United States”, does that mean that I am still President of the United States?

No, it doesn't.

It would mean though, that at one time I was president of the United States.

Likewise, when the Gentiles were at “*one time*” called the “*uncircumcision,*” does that still mean that they are still the “*uncircumcision?*”

In the same way, the answer would be no.

At one time the Gentiles were of the “*uncircumcision,*” but now they are of the “*circumcision.*”

Paul goes on to say that in verse 12 that at “*that time,*” when they were called the “*uncircumcision*” they were “*separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise.*”

So according to Paul, when they were of the “*uncircumcision*” they were not “*citizens of the commonwealth of Israel.*”

Did that change?

Yes it did.

Ephesians 2:13

But now in Christ Jesus (Messiah Yeshua) you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Now the believing Gentiles are of the “*circumcision*” and brought “*near,*” being “*citizens of the commonwealth of Israel.*”

This is far different than how mainstream Christianity understands this.

To state that the Gentiles entered into “*circumcision*” and became “*citizens of the commonwealth of Israel*” is a completely foreign concept to most modern doctrines in Christianity.

Most in mainstream Christianity would not consider themselves to be citizens of Israel.

Yet, Paul says it right here in Ephesians 2.

Also, pay particular note to the language of “*having once been far off, but now having been brought near.*”

That is prophetic language specific to the lost tribes of the House of Israel having become “*far off,*” and were prophetically destined to someday become “*brought near.*” If you have watched our teachings “[The Lost Sheep](#)” and “[What is the Gospel](#)” as recommended in the beginning of this teaching, then this connection likely more immediately understood and powerful.

Mainstream Christianity will teach that Gentiles have replaced Israel, either forever, or temporarily. However, this is not what Paul just taught.

It is believed that Christ came to abolish something called Judaism, and start a new religion called Christianity.

Again, this is not what Paul just taught.

Read it again...the Gentiles were once of the “*uncircumcision*” but now are of the “*circumcision*.”

Remember, circumcision was defined in the first century as to be the believing Jews.

The Gentiles were once not citizens of the commonwealth of Israel, but now are citizens of the commonwealth of Israel.

God’s people never changed.

It is those that are in covenant with God that are God’s people.

For more on that, we would recommend the teachings “[What Was the Mixed Multitude](#)” and “[What is New About the New Covenant?](#)”

Israel has always had a purpose.

Israel was always intended to be a light to the nations.

Isaiah 49:6

I will make you as a **light for the nations**, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

Isaiah 60:3

And **nations shall come to your light**, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

But, what is “*light*?” We need to define Biblical metaphors using the Bible.

Our Messiah also talked about light:

Matthew 5:14-16

You are the **light of the world**. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, **let your light shine before others**, so that they may see your **good works** and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Again, what is “*light*?” Our Messiah stated that the light is metaphorically the “*good works*.”

More specifically, good works is obedience to the Law of God, and the law of God is light...at least, that is what the Bible says.

Proverbs 6:23

For the commandment is a lamp, And the law a light; Reproofs of instruction are the way of life,

Isaiah 8:20

To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

So then, what does it mean that Israel is to be a light for the nations?

Israel is intended to send out the Law of God to the nations.

What is the word for “*nations*” in the Hebrew language?

It is *goyim*...Goyim means Gentiles in Hebrew.

Strong’s often translates Goyim as nations, heathen, gentiles, and people.

The Greek word for Gentiles is *ethnos*. A few hundred years before our Messiah, when the Old Testament was translated into Greek from the Hebrew, the Hebrew word *goyim* was translated into the Greek word *ethnos*, which again, means *gentiles*.

The job of Israel was always intended to bring the Law of God to the Gentiles.

Sadly though, that did not happen. Our Messiah had to show up and re-teach the Jews the purpose of Israel.

The first century leadership of the Jews messed up.

The Jews made the process for the Gentiles to come into the light (the Law of God) so difficult, that it was a barrier.

The Jews and Gentiles did not get along. The Jews were oppressive to the Gentiles.

The Jews created a wall, a wall of hostility. The law of God was rendered powerless through the doctrines of the first century Jewish leadership.

For example, our Messiah said to the Pharisees:

Mark 7:8-9

“You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.” And he said to them, You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!”

Because the Jews were so hostile to Gentiles, few Gentiles even wanted to understand the Law of God, or the Torah. And when Gentiles were as so brave to approach the mainstream leadership of the Jews in the first century, they made the process unnecessarily complicated.

This in effect, rendered the law of God powerless with the Gentiles. Remember that as we continue in Ephesians.

Another example of this can be found in Acts chapter 10. In this chapter, Peter was shown a vision that he should not consider it unlawful to associate with Gentiles:

Acts 10:28

And he said to them, “**You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation**, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.

The reason that Peter thought it was unlawful was not because of the Law of God, but because the Pharisees taught such in their oral law and traditions. Peter mistakenly believed and followed the Pharisees teachings on this matter. For more on this, we would recommend our teaching [Acts 10: Peter's Vision](#).

The Jewish leadership effectively put up a spiritual wall between Jew and Gentile. Also remember that as we continue in Ephesians.

Not only did Jewish leadership put up a spiritual wall between Jew and Gentile, they actually put up a literal wall as well in the temple courts.

In the first century, there existed a wall, called the “middle wall of separation” that separated the Jews from converted Gentiles in the temple court.

It was a physical wall that literally separated Jew and Gentiles.

So, Jew and Gentile were literally and spiritually separated because of the actions of first-century Jewish leadership.

This leads us into the next section of verses, the two verses often quoted to show that the Law of God is supposedly abolished.

And here is where the mess happens.

Ephesians 2:14-15 (ESV)

For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility **by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances**, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

Perhaps you noticed verse 15. In the English, verse 15 appears to state very clearly that our Messiah came to abolish the law of commandments expressed in ordinances. Thus, the dividing wall of hostility is in effect the law of God, which is why the Messiah supposedly had a need to abolish the Law of God.

This is how mainstream Christianity typically understands this verse. We cannot fault them for that, because that is how the verse was translated in English. It makes complete sense that the verse would be understood in that way.

However, it does not make sense in the context of the whole Bible. This verse only makes sense in isolation, when pretending the rest of the Bible does not exist.

We just went over several verses showing that the purpose of Israel was to bring the Law of God to the nations, meaning the Gentiles.

However, Paul, in Ephesians 2, seems to be suggesting that the Law of God was a wall of hostility between Jew and Gentiles, and thus our Messiah had to abolish the law of God to make peace, and bring Jew and Gentile together.

How in the world can it be the purpose of Israel to bring the Gentiles the Law of God, yet the Law of God be the problem between Jews and Gentiles.

That makes no sense whatsoever.

And, it is also not true.

Our Messiah did not come to abolish the law of God even though Ephesians 2:15 seems to state that our Messiah did come to abolish the law of God.

How do we know?

Our Messiah told us:

Matthew 5:17

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets...

That is rather clear, and apparently completely contradictory to Ephesians 2 where it says:

by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in the ordinances

Even Paul said that the law of God was not abolished:

Romans 3:31

Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

Romans 7:22

For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being

Romans 7:25

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ (Messiah Yeshua) our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

And John said the same:

1 John 5:2-3

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

1 John 2:3-6

And by this we know that we have come to **know him, if we keep his commandments.** Whoever says **“I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar,** and the **truth** is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we

may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

As we just saw, the way in which we are to walk is defined as the commandments of God. So, we simply have to examine what commandments our Messiah kept.

What happens to those that our Messiah does not know?

Matthew 7:23

And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

So how do we make sense of verse 15 then, since it seems to clearly state that the law of God is abolished?

Well, to be fair...verse 15 was a difficult verse to translate...especially if one is not applying the context of the first century culture.

Ephesians 2:14-15 (ESV)

For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by **abolishing (katargeō) the law of commandments expressed in ordinances**, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

The answer to this question is in the Greek, and the context of the first century culture that we examined earlier.

Let's review:

- 1) The purpose of Israel was to show the law of God to the Gentiles as a light.
- 2) Israel failed at showing the Gentiles the law of God. Instead, they were oppressive to the Gentiles and were hostile to the Gentiles. So much so, that this hostility created a spiritual wall between Jew and Gentile, and even to the degree of building a dividing wall in the temple courts expressing this sad mentality. This rendered the law of God powerless with the Gentiles, meaning the law of God had no influence or power with the Gentiles.
- 3) Our Messiah showed up, and in Matthew 5 he reminded Israel that they are to be a light to the Gentiles, showing them the good works that they are to do.

The primary definition for the Greek word translated as "abolished" in verse 15 means to render powerless, to deprive of strength and force, influence, and power. "Abolished" is the secondary or less common definition. So, why didn't translators go with the primary definition of the word? We cannot state for certain, but most translators are biased into believing that our Messiah did indeed abolish the Law of God.

However, the primary definition offers a slightly different spin on the particular Greek word used in Ephesians 2:15.

Strong's - katargeō

1. to render idle, unemployed, inactive, inoperative

- A. to cause a person or thing to have no further efficiency
- B. to deprive of force, influence, power

And in case for some reason Strong's appears biased to you. We offer an alternate Lexicon as well:

Thayer's Greek Lexicon - katargeō

1. to render idle, unemployed, inactive, inoperative, to deprive of its strength, make barren. To cause a person or a thing to have no further efficiency; to deprive of force, influence or power.

Again, the first definition. "To render idle, unemployed, inactive, inoperative, to deprive of its strength, make barren. To cause a person or a thing to have no further efficiency; to deprive of force, influence, or power." Basically saying the same thing as Strong's.

So, in applying that primary definition for the word, here is what happens.

Let's read Ephesians 2:14-15 again with this information.

Ephesians 2:14-15 (ESV)

For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ~~by abolishing~~ **rendering powerless** the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

Do you see how that fits?

The law of God was not hostile to the Gentiles. That would be absurd, would it not? The Law of God is not hostile to those who come into the faith. Read Psalm 119 for example.

The Messiah came to bring Jew and Gentile together. That was a purpose of our Messiah's coming. Not the only purpose mind you, but a purpose in his coming. Again, please consider the teachings "[*The Lost Sheep*](#)" and "[*What is the Gospel?*](#)" related to this particular purpose of our Messiah's coming.

Our Messiah abolished the hostility between Jew and Gentile, he did not abolish the Law of God.

The hostility between Jew and Gentile was rendering powerless the law of God for the Gentiles, defeating the purpose of Israel, which was to bring the law as a light to the Gentiles.

The Gentiles were to not be strangers or aliens and subject to the hostility of the Jews, but citizens of the commonwealth of Israel. They were to be made one together.

Ephesians 2:17-22

And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

So in conclusion, Ephesians 2:14-15 does not state that the Messiah abolished the law of God. It simply states that the law of God was rendered powerless for the Gentiles because of the spiritual, and literal, dividing wall of hostility raised up by the Jews. Our Messiah came, bringing Jew and Gentile together, abolishing the hostility, and enabling Israel to finally fulfill her purpose in being a light to the nations by sending out the Law of God, or Torah to the Gentiles.

We hope that this teaching has blessed you, and remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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