

Ephesians 2:8-22 (The Enmity)

Ephesians chapter two, as well as many other portions of Paul's letters, has been misinterpreted and misunderstood almost from its beginning. Although I believe the LORD has given a small bit of revelation to me about these Scriptures, I in know way want to leave the impression that I've "learned it all" and "have all the answers". The LORD opening my eyes to this portion of Scripture was a huge milestone in my walk with Him and it came during a Bible college course that was teaching a dispensational perspective of this very text. So, as you read bear with me, and go to the Father to see if He doesn't confirm this in your heart.

⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is the gift of God,* ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Paul begins this section by establishing a solid foundation for Biblical salvation. True salvation from God is BY grace. The Father extends His grace to us. This grace is simply the ability to choose to walk in faith according to His covenant. The second part of this formula is the faith just mentioned. There are many in the church today that would shout GRACE, GRACE! But they miss the true definition of grace as well as its symbiotic relationship to faith. Grace is faith in action. God gives us His grace that we might trust Him to work His covenant out through our lives. We are, after all, His Body. And so we see Paul using the term THROUGH. It's BY grace and THROUGH faith. The two are inseparable! The next thought seems so natural; it is a gift of God. God made a promise that He would write His Word on our hearts and then cause us to walk in it. This leads us to the next point...it's not of works, and if it was; we would boast. God is the Initiator and Finisher. He's the one working in us. The purpose of His working is "for good works". There are some who would say that God sent His Own Son to die on the cross for our sins so that we could simply call ourselves "Christians". Not so! We were re-created in Christ Jesus so that we might walk in the Word of God which brings glory to our Creator.

Establishing the context is paramount for a proper understanding of the following verses. Primarily, we must remember that Paul is speaking to the church in Ephesus. History tells us that the believers in Ephesus were predominantly Gentiles. This single fact enables us to correctly understand the context.

¹¹Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—

"Therefore"...based upon what Paul has taught us so far regarding the salvation that is a gift from God, BY grace and THROUGH faith. Gentiles were, and are, identified by the fact that the males are not circumcised and not natural descendants of Abraham. The Jews of Paul's time were the Circumcised.

¹²that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Paul gives us a great key to understanding this portion of Scripture when he shares with us the timeframe in which these Gentiles existed. He says, "At that time". What time? ... the time that they were uncircumcised and identified as such by the Jews. The Gentiles knowing nothing of God's covenant or plan of salvation were aliens from the covenant that God made with Israel. They knew nothing of the promises and blessings of the LORD. This IS a hopeless place to be!

¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

“But now in Christ Jesus”...possibly the greatest words in the Bible! This is in contradiction to the hopelessness and alienation that the Gentiles were in the midst of. Take note that Paul identifies these Ephesian Gentiles as being “in Christ Jesus” and not “in Israel”. In Yeshua the distance that was between the Gentiles and the Father has been removed. This came at a great price though. The very blood of the Messiah filled and removed this chasm.

You may already be weary of this article and be ready to put it down...please don't. We're about to jump into the real heart of it.

¹⁴For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,

Paul has already been speaking of two parties, the Jews and the Gentiles. In Messiah, these two entities have been made one. In Messiah, there is no Jew or Greek.

1 Corinthian 12:13...¹³For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

Paul also says that the “middle wall of separation” has been broken down. What? What is this middle wall of separation? Specifically, there was an actual wall that separated the Jews and Gentiles worship. There is no place in the Scriptures that we can find God commanding His people to erect such a wall. In fact we see the opposite. As we'll read, the wall was only a physical representation of a “wall” of rules and regulations that the Jews had created to keep the Gentiles from the Father. At the time of the writing of this letter a well established practice was the ritual of joining oneself to God. The Jews defined this as being circumcised, being baptized, and thus BECOMING an Israelite. Their focus and hope was in their heritage rather than the saving work of the coming Messiah. We need to take a slight detour to establish this Biblically. Let's look at a few portions of Scripture that will show us the existence of this wall of separation. We'll be picking on the “foot-in-mouth” disciple...Peter.

Acts 10...¹There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, ²a devout *man* and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. ³About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, “Cornelius!” ⁴And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, “What is it, lord?” So he said to him, “Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God. ⁵Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter. ⁶He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do.” ⁷And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually. ⁸So when he had explained all *these* things to them, he sent them to Joppa.

It's a known fact that Peter, as well as the rest of Jews, viewed the Gentiles as unclean, unfit, and completely unable to have a relationship with God in their current state. Peter probably saw the Gentiles in the same light that he saw a swine on the side of the road...vile creatures destined for destruction. This is where the creation of the middle wall of separation and the rite of a proselyte came from. The Jews believed that the ONLY hope for

a Gentile was to BECOME a Jew! They could not be saved as Gentiles. So, with this in mind, how do you think Peter will respond to the messengers from the Gentile Cornelius? Let's keep reading...

⁹The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. ¹⁰Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance ¹¹and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. ¹²In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. ¹³And a voice came to him, **“Rise, Peter; kill and eat.”** ¹⁴But Peter said, **“Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.”** ¹⁵And a voice *spoke* to him again the second time, **“What God has cleansed you must not call common.”** ¹⁶This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

A quick read of this portion of Scripture and you may say, “Oh yes, this is when God rebuked Peter for trying to keep the food Laws and abolished them completely.” But a more careful examination and you'll see that God is actually challenging the middle wall of separation that Peter was accustomed to. This portion of Scripture begins with the LORD speaking to a Gentile. I believe that our Abba knew that Peter would need a serious “kick-in-the-pants” to receive the message that Cornelius's servants were bringing. And so the vision...

Throughout this vision Peter, in a sense, rebukes the LORD. The LORD continues to reveal His heart to Peter. And we get a real understanding of what the vision was all about when we continue reading and hear Peter's own interpretation of the vision.

¹⁷Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate. ¹⁸And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there. ¹⁹While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men are seeking you. ²⁰Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them.” ²¹Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, “Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?” ²²And they said, “Cornelius *the* centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you.” ²³Then he invited them in and lodged *them*.

Notice the underlined verse. Peter invited these Gentiles into his home. SOMETHING has happened to Peter!!! Let's keep reading...

On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him. ²⁴And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped *him*. ²⁶But Peter lifted him up, saying, “Stand up; I myself am also a man.” ²⁷And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together. ²⁸Then he said to them, “You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.”

Where is it found in the Torah that it is unlawful for a Jewish man to keep company with or to one of another nation? Search long and hard, you won't find it! So, we must conclude that Peter is speaking of another law...the only other law that Peter could be referencing is the Mishna and Talmud. Notice the word that Peter uses...“but”...but what? **But God**, in contradiction to the law just mentioned, **has shown me that I should not call any MAN common or unclean.** Wait a minute you might say...I always thought that God “freed” us from the burden of the dietary laws in the text. Not so, Peter clearly understood the purpose of the vision. He says clearly that God had shown him that he was no longer to call any MAN common or unclean.

had been abolished through Peter's experience, don't you think that's what he would have said? But instead, Peter begins to understand the true heart of the Father...and that's to include ALL who will approach Him by faith with open arms. Let's keep reading...

29Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?"

Again, notice that Peter **came without objection**. You see, without the revelation through the vision, Peter would have objected to the invitation based upon the standard of the Mishna and Talmud.

30So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,³¹ and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God.'³² Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.'³³ So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God."³⁴ Then Peter opened *his* mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.³⁵ But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.

Again, Peter gives us further clarification of his vision and his newly changed heart. Peter learned that God shows no partiality and receives those who **fear him and work righteousness**.

36The word which *God* sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—³⁷that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached:³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.³⁹ And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree.⁴⁰ Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly,⁴¹ not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, *even* to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.⁴² And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God *to be* Judge of the living and the dead.⁴³ To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.⁴⁵ And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.⁴⁶ For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered,⁴⁷ "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *have*?"⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

The Father affirms the words of Peter by placing the Holy Spirit upon the Gentiles. Notices, those of the circumcision were astonished. Why were they astonished? Because previously they didn't believe that the Gentile could experience the covenant without **FIRST** becoming a citizen of the nation of Israel. This is the very wall of separation that Paul is speaking of in Ephesians 2.

To further establish the existence of the wall of separation, we must consider a few more portions of Scripture.

Acts 11:1-18... ¹Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. ²And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, ³saying, “You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!”

The apostles and brethren bring a railing accusation against Peter based upon the Mishna and Talmud. Peter has some explaining to do if he hopes to get out of this one.

⁴But Peter explained *it* to them in order from the beginning, saying: ⁵“I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object descending like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came to me. ⁶When I observed it intently and considered, I saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. ⁷And I heard a voice saying to me, ‘**Rise, Peter; kill and eat.**’ ⁸But I said, ‘Not so, Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth.’ ⁹But the voice answered me again from heaven, ‘**What God has cleansed you must not call common.**’ ¹⁰Now this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven. ¹¹At that very moment, three men stood before the house where I was, having been sent to me from Caesarea. ¹²Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house. ¹³And he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, ‘Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, ¹⁴who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.’ ¹⁵And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. ¹⁶Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, ‘**John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.**’ ¹⁷If therefore God gave them the same gift as *He gave* us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?” ¹⁸When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.”

After reading this there is no way that we can look at Acts 10 as the proof text for the abolishment of the dietary laws. No, we must take it for what it says. God used a vision to communicate His heart for ALL people to His chosen people Israel. Somewhere along the line they had ignored critical portions of Scripture that spoke of the Father’s heart for ALL nations. Let’s consider some of those Scriptures briefly.

Exodus 12:49... ⁴⁹One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you.

Isaiah 42:1-7... ¹“Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One *in whom* My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. ²He will not cry out, nor raise *His voice*, Nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. ³A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth. ⁴He will not fail nor be discouraged, Till He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlands shall wait for His law.” ⁵Thus says God the LORD, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, And spirit to those who walk on it: ⁶“I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles, ⁷To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the prison, Those who sit in darkness from the prison house.

How did they miss this? I suppose the Father will tell us one day. Let’s continue laying the Biblical foundation for the wall of separation. Just like you and I, it took Peter more than once to lay down his sin.

Galatians 2:11-16... ¹¹Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; ¹²for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; **but when they**

came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. ¹³And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. ¹⁴But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before *them* all, “If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? ¹⁵We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, ¹⁶knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

Why is Paul so upset? What did Peter do to incur such rebuke? A close look at this Scripture and we’ll see that Paul is rebuking Peter for leaving the impression that the Mishna and Talmud still had something to do with the salvation of the Gentiles. Again, the Mishna and Talmud both say that a Jew cannot eat with a Gentile. Peter was calling these Galatian believers common and unclean which was in direct disobedience to what God had shown him in the vision on the rooftop.

Why consider so many Scriptures? Why make such a big deal about this? Simple, we cannot properly understand Ephesians 2 without first accepting that the wall of separation was a reality during this time. So, now that we have a Biblical understanding of the wall of separation, let’s go back to Ephesians 2. Refer back to the first 14 verses if necessary. But, Paul had just told us that in Messiah those who were far away have been brought near.

¹⁵having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances,

Once again, this portion of Scripture is used to further an antinomian mindset. But after our considering the context it’s easier to understand what this enmity was. This enmity was the wall of separation...the disdain, the judgment, and exclusivity that the Jews burdened the Gentiles with. Notice that Paul even clarifies what law he’s talking about with the term “contained in ordinances”.

so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, ¹⁶and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. ¹⁷And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.

On each side of the wall of separation there was a people group who were rarely at peace. But, in Messiah, these two have been made one...it takes two to fight...so thus the peace that came from the union with Messiah.

¹⁸For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

This was GREAT news to the Galatian believer! Through faith in Messiah they too had access to their Abba. Despite what generations of Jews had been telling them, they had access too!

¹⁹Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²²in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

This holy temple that our Father is building is being made with Jewish stones and Gentile stones. And yet, when they come in contact with the rest of the building, their former identity is consumed by the Chief Cornerstone.

Yeshua! In these last days Abba is building a house for His great name! This house has not been, nor will ever be, built by the hands of men. No, the Spirit is writing the covenant of the Father upon the hearts of those who have chosen to believe and the Father is Masterfully building, building, building...building a place for His Holy Name!

John 10:14-16...¹⁴I am the good shepherd; and I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own. ¹⁵As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd.

Galatians 3:26-29...²⁶For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Romans 10:11-13...¹¹For the Scripture says, "*Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.*" ¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. ¹³For "*whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.*"