**Christ Is Our Peace, Part 2**

**Ephesians 2:15**

**August 30, 2020**

1. Introduction
   1. We return this morning to Paul’s letter to the Ephesians Christians.
      1. We find ourselves once again in vv. 14-16, where Paul makes this profound statement: **For He Himself is our peace.**
         1. Christ Himself is our peace, peace for Jews and peace for Gentiles.
         2. And most importantly, peace with God for both Jews and Gentiles.
         3. We noted the importance of understanding that our peace is not a concept, and it is not found through humanly contrived means of reconciliation or self-reflection, but our peace is found in a person, the Lord Jesus Christ.
         4. The reason the world does not have peace is because the world does not have Christ.
         5. And the reason that the believer has peace with God and therefore when walking by the Spirit peace with others is because the believer has Christ dwelling in his heart by faith.
         6. Christ, then, is Himself our peace, and we look to Christ alone for peace, and we point people to Christ alone for peace.
      2. The first point that Paul makes to show that Christ is our peace is to remind us of what Christ accomplished.
         1. Christ is our peace because of what He has done at the cross.
         2. Paul notes two specific things Jesus did when He died on the cross:
            1. He made both groups into one.

That is to say, He made the Jews, who were one group, and the Gentiles, who were the other group, into one group.

We have not yet seen what that means or what this new group is, but we will get to that later.

The point Paul makes here is that the two have become one through the cross.

* + - * 1. He broke down the barrier of the dividing wall.

The division between Jew and Gentile was created by God through the Law.

God distinguished between Israel and the nations.

This separating wall was God’s intention under the Law of Moses, and we saw five reasons for that last time.

But now that those purposes through the Law had been accomplished, Christ came and broke down or destroyed this barrier that separated Jews and Gentiles.

* + - 1. Paul then explains how Christ did these things by noting a third thing Christ did: He abolished the Law, which is also referred to as the enmity.
         1. Christ brought the two together and destroyed what stood between them by abolishing the Law.
         2. And He abolished the Law, Paul says, in His flesh.
         3. That means that He abolished it through His death on the cross, which v. 16 states plainly lest we misunderstand what Paul meant in v. 15.
  1. When Paul says that Christ abolished the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, what does he mean?
     1. This statement is one of the most intriguing and confusing statements in the New Testament, and it is not only found here but other passages as well.
        1. The relationship of the Law to Christ and the church is a massive question in theology, and really, it’s a massive question for the believer who wants to live in obedience to Christ because we want to know what governs our life and how we know the will of God in this world.
        2. The believer has a longing to please God, which immediately makes the question of the Law of utmost relevance.
        3. If the Law is the perfect expression of the will of God, then we would as Christians certainly want to uphold and obey the Law as given to Moses.
        4. But here, Paul says that the Law has been abolished at the cross through the death of Christ.
        5. And the implications of saying the Old Testament Law is abolished are massive and potentially disastrous.
     2. People have therefore come up with a number of ways to understand this statement.
        1. Some have taken it to mean that the Law as a means of salvation was abolished, but the Law itself, with all of its practices and commands and rituals with the exception of sacrifices should still be obeyed.
           1. Such people require celebrating the feasts and festivals, observing circumcision, dietary laws, new moons, and so on.
           2. They would require keeping the Sabbath on Saturday, and for them, the only significant difference between old and new covenant is that the sacrifices are finished in Christ, not the Law itself.
           3. This position is not tenable, as we’ll see.
        2. Others interpret this to mean that Christ abolished the abuse of the Law.
           1. As we saw last time, that’s not what Paul says in the passage.
           2. And people continued to abuse the Law in Paul’s day, just as they do in our day, so clearly that has not been abolished.
        3. A quite popular interpretation is to say that the Law should be divided up into three parts.
           1. You have the ceremonial laws, with the sacrifices, feasts, offerings, circumcision, and all the distinctively Jewish ceremonies that separated them from Gentiles.
           2. And then you have the civil laws that governed life in society; these laws pertained to things like penalties for various crimes, building codes, laws about illnesses and quarantines, and so on.
           3. And then the last category was the moral law, which contained God’s commands for how His people were to live in relation to Him and one another.

The Ten Commandments generally go into this category.

Laws against sexual immorality, murder, divorce and remarriage laws, and so on find their way into the moral law of God.

* + - * 1. When Paul says that Christ has abolished the Law, this interpretation says one of two things:

Christ abolished only the ceremonial laws, so things like circumcision and other Jewish identity markers are no longer valid, but the rest of the Law is valid.

Or, Christ abolished everything except the moral law, so the ceremonial and civil laws no longer apply, but the moral law does apply.

* + - * 1. This interpretation sounds really good, and to some extent it makes sense because we can see the different kinds of laws in the Mosaic code.

But the question is this: Does the NT divide up the law this way?

Does Paul ever parcel out the law into various sections and say that some sections are valid and other sections are not?

Does Jesus divide the Law like this?

Is there biblical warrant to this system?

I will argue that there is not biblical warrant to divide the Mosaic Law into these parts and say that only parts of the Law have been abolished.

Rather, it is more appropriate to say that all of the Law has been abolished, and the Law must be taken as a unity, where you have either all of it in force, or none of it in force.

* + 1. Our goal this morning is to understand what Paul means when he says that Christ abolished the Law, and what are the practical implications of this statement for the Christian today?
  1. I submit to you that what Paul is saying is that Christ, through His death on the cross, rendered the old covenant inoperative and replaced it with a new covenant.
     1. This new covenant is in force and the old is no longer valid.
     2. And this work of rendering the old covenant, with the Law, inoperative, was total, not partial, so that none of the Law is in force today; we live under the new covenant.
  2. To understand this, we have to begin with…

1. The Tension in the Text
   1. We see within the NT teachings that create tension that the above interpretations have tried to solve, namely, some passages that say the Law will not be abolished, and some that say it has been abolished.
   2. There are at least three places in the New Testament where we read what appear to be very clear statements that the Law will not be abolished.
      1. Look at Matthew 5:17-18.
         1. This passage is a favorite of those who teach that the Law remains in force even after the cross because Jesus said He did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it.
         2. It’s important to recognize that the word translated **abolish** in v. 17 is not the same word translated **abolishing** in Eph 2:15.
         3. The word in Matthew 5:17 is closer to the meaning *destroy* than abolish.
         4. I also want you to notice that in this verse, Jesus includes the prophets with the Law.
         5. That is significant because it seems to indicate that He has more in view than the Law simply as the Old Covenant.
         6. The phrase *the Law and the Prophets* is shorthand for what we might call *the Bible*.
         7. Jesus is saying that He did not come to start a new program or a new religion or to throw away everything God said in the past but that He came in fulfillment of everything God said in the past in the Law and the prophets.
         8. This kind of statement is a direct blow to people who say that the Old Testament books are irrelevant for the church or have nothing to do with Christianity.
         9. There was an old heretic in the early church named Marcion, and he taught that the Old Testament revelation presented a different god than the new.
         10. He saw no value in the Old Testament of any kind, and it was really something that we should simply cut out of our Bibles.
         11. Jesus is saying that He did not come destroy what God had promised but to fulfill what God had promised.
         12. He did not come to overturn God’s righteous standards but to fulfill God’s righteous standards.
         13. It is possible, then, that the Old Covenant could be rendered inoperative without being destroyed.
         14. It would still have a use, but it would not be a governing covenant any more.
      2. Another passage comes from the lips of Jesus again in Luke 16:17.
         1. Here, the word **fail** is a different word from Matthew 5:17 and Ephesians 2:15.
         2. It literally means *to fall*.
         3. Jesus speaks of the enduring quality of the Law, and that nothing the Law says will fail to happen.
         4. The question, then, is can this be true if the Law is abolished?
         5. Wouldn’t abolishing the Law cause it to fail?
         6. We’ll keep that in mind.
      3. The last passage is in Romans 3:31.
         1. This passage is significant for a couple reasons.
            1. It was written by Paul, which means that he somehow sees what he wrote here and what he wrote in Ephesians 2:15 as compatible.
            2. It uses the same terminology for abolishing that Eph 2:15 uses.
         2. Paul has just finished explaining the doctrine of justification by faith apart from works of the Law.
            1. And this is the question that arises when that doctrine has been explained properly…
            2. Does the gospel abolish the Law?
            3. And the answer is, absolutely not!
            4. The gospel is not opposed to the Law, but the two work together in harmony.
            5. In fact, they are so in agreement that the gospel establishes the Law, or another way to render that would be it makes the Law stand.
      4. These three passages all present challenges to the idea that Jesus abolished the Law through the cross, and that creates some tension within the text of the NT.
   3. We also find several passages in the NT that assert the Law has been abolished
   4. In addition to Eph 2:15, I just want to highlight two others for the sake of time.
      1. Heb 8:13
         1. This passage is significant because it takes the Law in terms of a covenant, which is the necessary framework to understand this entire doctrine.
         2. And the writer of Hebrews plainly says that when God said through Jeremiah a new covenant, God was making the first covenant, the old covenant, obsolete.
            1. The word translated **made obsolete** refers to something that is now obsolete because it is past its date, because it is old.
            2. It would be the Greek word I would use for any leftovers that have been in the refrigerator more than 48 hours – they’re past their use by date.
         3. The very existence of a new covenant, Hebrews says, means that the old covenant is obsolete.
         4. He adds that it would disappear.
            1. He is speaking from the perspective of the passage he had just quoted from Jeremiah.
            2. In Jeremiah’s day, the old covenant was becoming obsolete and growing old, and it was ready to disappear.
            3. And now that Christ has come, it has disappeared.
         5. The Law, or the Old Covenant, is now obsolete, it is gone, it no longer is in force, it has been rendered inoperative according to Hebrews 8:13.
      2. Paul makes the same point in another passage besides Eph 2:15, 2 Cor 3.
         1. This passage is instructive because it specifically references the Law as a covenant.
            1. Notice vv. 7-8…

The ministry of death is with letters engraved on stones.

That is so important because it is a clear reference to the Ten Commandments.

The Ten Commandments, remember, are considered to be the moral law of God by those who want to divide up the Law.

But here, the Ten Commandments are not seen in abstract as just a moral code but as a covenant with Israel.

It is directly contrasted with the new covenant in v. 6.

The Law is clearly what is in view because it is contrasted with the Spirit in v. 8.

* + - * 1. The key verse for our purposes comes in v. 11…

This refers back to v. 7, where the glory on Moses’ face was fading away.

Paul says that the fading glory on Moses’ face was not just a physical phenomenon but had a spiritual meaning: the fading glory of Moses’ face was a picture of the Law itself, which would fade away when the ministry of righteousness, the new covenant, was established.

The new covenant would that which remains, while the old covenant is that which fades away.

What is so crucial to see here, and our translation does not bring it out, but the word translated **fades away** in v. 11 is the exact same word we find in Eph 2:15 where Paul says that Christ abolished the Law.

The old covenant was a covenant that from the very inception was designed to be abolished, to fade away, to be rendered inoperative.

* + - 1. This passage is one of the most important passages for understanding the nature of the Law and its contrast with the new covenant.
      2. The new covenant would render the old covenant inoperative, obsolete, null and void.
  1. There are so many other passages we could look at that say the same thing from different angles, and if I were writing this into a book, I’d do that.
     1. But at the end of all of that discussion, the conclusion would be the same: the old covenant was designed to grow old and be obsolete.
     2. It would be rendered inoperative by the Messiah who would bring a new covenant and a ministry of righteousness by the Spirit rather than a ministry of condemnation written on tablets of stone through Law.
     3. And what is so vital to see in these passages is that the Old Covenant Law is taken as a totality, not as part of a division of the Law into various parts.
     4. In 2 Cor 3 especially, we see that the new covenant did not just replace the ceremonial laws, but even the laws written on tablets of stone, the Ten Commandments!
  2. The question, then, is how do we resolve this tension in the text without violating either aspect of truth?

1. The Resolution of the Tension
   1. First, we have to understand that the old covenant came to an end at the cross because Jesus fulfilled it, not because He abolished it.
      1. Think about how Jesus fulfilled the Law as He died on the cross.
         1. First, He fulfilled the Law by being perfectly obedient to all of its commands.
            1. Throughout Jesus’ life, He never sinned, He never violated the Law of God, He lived a life of perfect righteousness.
            2. He was so righteous that not only did He live in perfect obedience to the Law’s commands, but He died in perfect obedience to the Father’s will.
            3. Phil 2:8 says that Jesus was obedient to the point of death, even the death of a cross.
            4. Not one command of God in the Law failed, not one was disregarded, not one was disobeyed in Christ.
            5. He perfectly fulfilled all the requirements of the Law.
         2. Second, He fulfilled the Law through the perfect sacrifice for sin.
            1. All of the sacrifices in the Law were pointers to Him.
            2. He was the true Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.
            3. Whatever the Law required for the forgiveness of sins, Jesus fulfilled in His death on the cross, achieving something that the blood of bulls and goats could not – the eternal forgiveness of the sins of all of His people.
            4. Not one sacrifice or one offering of the Law was left undone by Christ through His own self-giving on the cross.
         3. Third, He fulfilled the Law by bearing its curse.
            1. Because we are transgressors of God’s Law, the curse of God was upon us.
            2. But Jesus fulfilled the curse of the Law by taking its curse for us so that we would never face the wrath of God for violating His commands.
            3. Although we were covenant breakers with the curses of the covenant upon us, Jesus took that curse upon Himself, and He became a curse for us, Gal 3:13 says, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit.
         4. And then, finally, Jesus fulfilled the Law by securing all of its blessings for those who are in Him.
            1. Not one blessing or promise of God will fail because Jesus, through His perfect life and His sacrificial death, obtained every promise of God for His people.
            2. Not one word of the Law will fail, not one promise of blessing to those who keep the Law will be ignored for those who are in Christ.
            3. That’s one reason why Paul can say in 2 Cor 1:20, **“For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes.”**
            4. All of God’s promises are ours because we are in Christ, who merited the blessings of God by His own fulfillment of the Law’s demands.
            5. He is the covenant keeper, and so the blessings of the covenant are ours through Him.
         5. Jesus, then, did not abolish the Law by setting it aside, but He fulfilled it by dying on the cross.
      2. Through this fulfillment, then, He rendered it inoperative, He abolished it, He made it obsolete.
         1. He did not abolish the Law by ignoring it or by simply setting it aside, which would be contrary to what He had said in His teaching.
         2. He abolished it through fulfillment.
         3. When Jesus died, the Law had achieved its purpose and therefore was no longer needed.
         4. Romans 10:4 helps us understand Romans 3:31…
            1. By preaching the gospel of Christ, we are not abolishing the Law, we are establishing the Law for its true purpose.
            2. It’s true purpose has always been to point sinners to Christ for righteousness.
            3. The purpose of the Law was, in essence to expire, and to give way to Christ.
            4. That’s why Moses’ face had a fading glory, because God was indicating from the first moment of giving the old covenant Law that this Law was fading and would be replaced by a new covenant of grace.
         5. Jesus, then, did not act contrary to the Law by abolishing it through fulfillment, but He acted in accordance with a true and proper understanding of the Law itself.
   2. The implication of this, then, is that the Old Testament Law that governed Israel is void and has been replaced by the new covenant.
      1. This means the Law in total, not just parts of it.
         1. When the writer of Hebrews tells us in Heb 8:13 that the Law is obsolete, he means the entire Law as covenant is no longer in force.
         2. And then he spells this out for us in Hebrews 9-10, 12.
         3. In fact, in Heb 12:18-29, he tells us clearly that we have no come to Mount Sinai were Moses received the old covenant, but we have come to Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant.
         4. The new covenant is what governs us and our relationship with God, not the old covenant made with Israel at Sinai through the Law.
      2. That means that none of the trappings of the Law apply today.
         1. All of the Jewish identity markers are gone, including the dietary laws, the feasts, the new moons, the sabbaths, all of it.
         2. Circumcision is irrelevant.
         3. Paul wrote in Gal 6:15…
         4. What matters is the new creation, not circumcision, because the old things have passed away, and we now live under a new covenant.
      3. The new covenant and its commands are what govern the life of the Christian through the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God.
         1. In 1 Cor 9:20-21, Paul makes an interesting statement…
            1. He wants to make clear that he is not under the Law as a believer in the new covenant.
            2. But he also wants to make clear that he is not lawless, as if he has no commands from God, because he is now under the law of Christ.
         2. Sometimes I think we miss a key point in the Great Commission to help us understand this in Matt 28:20…
            1. What are we to teach people to observe as we make disciples?
            2. Not what Moses commanded them, but what Christ commands them.
            3. The focus has moved from the law through Moses to God’s grace through Christ.
            4. We have moved from the old covenant to the new covenant.
            5. And when we disciple someone, we don’t tell them to look to Moses but to look to Christ, to follow what He has commanded.
      4. The ceremonies from the old covenant have been replaced by new covenant ceremonies.
         1. The Lord’s Supper is one example.
            1. They did not eat the Lord’s Supper under the old covenant, but it is a celebration we are commanded to observe under the new.
            2. It is a distinctly new covenant feast, new covenant festival, new covenant celebration, and we even recognize the new covenant every time we participate in it.
         2. Baptism is another example of something that is a distinctly new covenant ceremony for those who are in Christ, both Jews and Gentiles.
      5. The Old Covenant, then, has been rendered inoperative as a governing covenant of our relationship with God because of the cross of Jesus Christ.
      6. But that doesn’t mean it has no value to the believer.
      7. Let me make one more point this morning.
   3. The Law as Scripture still is authoritative and useful.
      1. Here is a vital distinction we need to make, and it’s one that is made throughout the New Testament: The Law as a covenant arrangement between God and His people is abolished, but the Law as the Word of God is still authoritative and useful.
      2. Let me give you a couple examples.
         1. Think about the OT ceremonies, like the Passover.
            1. We don’t celebrate the Passover as Christians because, as 1 Cor 5 tells us, Christ is our Passover.
            2. Does that mean we should take some scissors and cut out everything in the OT that teaches us about the Passover?
            3. Clearly, the commands to celebrate the Passover no longer apply as they did to Israel under the old covenant.
            4. So why bother keeping it in the Bible?
            5. Because the teaching about the Passover is still instructive, useful, edifying, encouraging, correcting, and authoritative as Scripture.
            6. It teaches us about Christ, it teaches us about our sin, it teaches us about God’s mercy and God’s judgment.
            7. There are principles about God’s holiness and character in the old covenant law that are timeless and necessary for us to understand, and what Scripture says about God in those passages is inspired and authoritative for us today.
            8. Now, we celebrate the Lord’s Supper instead of Passover, but that doesn’t mean Passover is irrelevant.
            9. We just have to understand that we are not under that covenant any longer as we study those passages to see how they apply to us today and what God has for us to learn about Him from those passages today.
            10. In fact, in 1 Cor 10:11 we learn that the things in the OT are written for our instruction as believers in Christ because they are all there to help us understand God and our salvation and the blessings we have in the new covenant and to warn us of God’s judgment that comes on those outside His covenant.
         2. In 1 Cor 9:8-10, Paul says something very interesting…
            1. Paul is speaking of financially supporting pastors and missionaries, and he refers to the Law for support.
            2. Well I thought the Law wasn’t in force!
            3. It’s not as a covenant that governs our relationship with God, but as Scripture it is still instructive for how God wants us to think and to live.
            4. In fact, note that Paul says this law about oxen was written for our sake!
            5. God isn’t concerned about oxen.
            6. This law was to be in force in ancient Israel, but as a Christian we read this and see a timeless principle that reflects God’s character: the one who works should benefit from his labor.
            7. That is the will of God at all times, and we learn this from the Old Testament Scriptures.
         3. One more, children and parents in Eph 6:1-3.
            1. Paul directly quotes the Ten Commandments!
            2. How can he do this when he said in chapter 2 that the law is abolished?
            3. And not only does he quote it, he reminds these Christians of the old covenant promise that tied Israel’s possession of the promised land to obedience to parents!
            4. Paul can cite this as a new covenant mandate because obeying parents is a timeless principle, something that is always God’s will, built into the authority structure of creation.
            5. And it’s so important that under the terms of the old covenant Israel’s wellbeing in the land was directly tied to this command.
            6. The point for the new covenant believer is not that we’ll get to live a long time in the land here on earth if we keep God’s command to honor our parents, but to recognize the significance of this command for God’s people at all times.
            7. The old covenant command is highly instructive to us as we seek to understand God’s will about authority and obedience in this world as members of the new covenant.
            8. And we see that God’s will for people under the old and new covenants is that they would submit to His ordained authorities, in this case, children to their parents.
      3. Look at Romans 8:4.
         1. Christ’s work and the Spirit’s presence do not set us at odds with the Law, but they ensure the requirement of the Law is fulfilled in us as we walk by the Spirit.
         2. The gospel does not teach people to break God’s Law; to the contrary, through Christ’s work and the Spirit’s presence the Law is fulfilled for us and in us.
         3. The principles and the purpose of the Law is upheld by the gospel through the cross.
         4. And because Christ has fulfilled it, we now relate to God as His new covenant people in Christ, led by the Spirit as we live under grace.
2. Conclusion
   1. That’s why the work of Christ was so effective in Eph 2:14-15, because as long as the covenant people were under the old covenant, the two could never be one, and the dividing wall would stand.
      1. But now that covenant has become obsolete, and we have a better covenant, with a better mediator, enacted on better promises, with a better priesthood.
      2. Everything that separated Israel from the Gentiles externally as a unique people has been abolished in the new covenant so that the ethnic boundary lines have been erased.
      3. This is what Christ accomplished in His flesh on the cross.
      4. Next time, we’ll see the results, or the fruit of this work in vv. 15-16.
   2. Potential pivot to the gospel here, depending on time and response