

Misunderstood Teachings of Paul

Paul, Saul, Shaul, Ole Whats his name.....Hebrew of Hebrews, the author of the majority of the New Testament. Which name did he really go by, what is a Hebrew of Hebrews and why are his letters so hard to understand at times?

Paul, Paul, Paul...Why have you perplexed us with your writing style?

Paul is both brilliant yet challenging at the same time.

His words convict us.... yet they give too much room to be misused.

Would we have been better off without his writings?

You can allow your mind to go a million directions with the New Testament but yet we know that confusion is from the enemy and not from the Father. There is no confusion in the New Testament..... that comes from the Father. So we have to admit from the start that any so called confusion is our own misunderstandings and not the Fathers lack of inspiration.

So before we delve into Paul's teachings and how and why they are misunderstood..... we have to delve into Paul himself.

Today, we have some fringe groups and individuals that deny the New Testament is Scripture.

I strongly say they are wrong and the New Testament IS SCRIPTURE ...but we will discuss it anyway. And just as a teaser.....I do believe the entire New Testament is inspired and accurate with two very important caveats.

- 1) It was accurate in its original given form and language.
- 2) The reason I believe it is inspired will differ from why most people think it was inspired and we will discuss that in detail later.

There are even other fring groups that embrace the New Testament but reject the book of Hebrews. The reason for both of these groups is they simply don't understand Paul & the other writers and if you don't understand what better way to alleviate the problem than tossing it out altogether? After all, isn't that what most of us have experienced in the past? ***Don't understand it so let's toss it!***

Isn't that what the most religious institutions have done with the Old Testament? Don't understand it so let's toss it? Except the parts we need. When it is convenient we will hold on to the parts that serve our goals and purposes well.

That will not happen here at House of Scripture, as we will endeavor to study and learn all the books we were given in our Bibles to better understand the character of God and what He requires of us his kids.

Today will be primarily an introduction to Paul and hopefully we can address many of the things that will then allow us to study his words more accurately, and from a 1st century perspective.

One last thing. Once we start the Misunderstood teachings of Paul we are not studying every book he wrote verse by verse. We will go book by book in order but we are going to focus on primarily the difficult teachings contained within those books and skip over the milk and cookies so to speak. In order to do this efficiently and provide you, the body with the most comprehensive study we can, I need your input.

At least a full week ahead if not more I need you to be willing to share with me some of the more challenging teachings we should address. Even if you have come to understand them through study.... If you think it would benefit others please let me know.

Secondly, I am going to ask the Elders, Mark and Elling, and one of our primary teachers, Jim Datillo, to be studying these chapters ahead of time. The reason is when we go into Midrash to answer questions I want it to be a group effort and not just me giving my thoughts on a subject. In fact, you can ask any of us questions directly, and we should all be comfortable enough in our own skin to pass on the question to someone else if we are not sure about the meaning.

Ground rules fair?

So Paul, where did you come from and who taught you to be so confusing in your writing style?

Paul gives us his background in many places in his writings and its important to put them together rather than look at them isolated.

1 Timothy 1:16 “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Messiah Yahshua came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.”

If Paul can be saved anyone can be saved and Paul understands just how merciful God was to call him as an ambassador to the gentiles.

Romans 1:1-2 “Paul, a servant of Messiah Yahshua, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures.”

Paul knew his role & knew that an Apostle is nothing more than a servant of Messiah Yahshua. He states this in the majority of his letters.

1 Corinthians 15:9 “For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Assembly of God.” He says the same thing in Ephesians 3:8

You could say that Paul is humble in saying this and you would be right, but perhaps he is correct.

Because of his past he knew he was the least of all and he knew that it was only by God's mercy that he could be forgiven of such grave sins which included murder. Paul quickly learned that all of his value was found in Messiah Yahshua and in God's amazing mercy towards him.

Over in Galatians 1 – He outlines once again that he once persecuted the assembly of believers in Yahshua, but God in His mercy, revealed His Son to Paul, which we all know was on the road to Damascus.

It also says he went immediately to Arabia..... then returned to Damascus and after three years went up to Jerusalem and to Peter. • How many times have you heard that Paul was being taught in Arabia for three years?

Either way, it's important to read things closely for proper context. We simply have no idea how long Paul was in Arabia, why he was there or if he indeed was at Mt. Sinai at all. It only says he was in Arabia then went to Damascus and then..... after three years.....

Point is when things are taken out of context we create a big mess that did not need to be there in the first place.

In the infamous words of Joe Friday.... Just the Facts Ma'am!

In Philippians 3 Paul makes a case for his background and even brags just a bit. He states we should put no confidence in the flesh..... but if you want to go down that road I have more confidence in the flesh than you do....

5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the believers; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. 7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Messiah.

Paul is laying down credentials that don't matter in the Kingdom, but did give credibility to those he was writing to in Philippi.

- He was circumcised – in covenant with the Creator
- He was of the people of Israel – not a convert
- Of the tribe of Benjamin – he knew his heritage and his identity
- Hebrew of Hebrews – He followed Judaism completely and fully
- A Pharisee – identifying his belief in the resurrection
- As to Zeal – Persecuting the assembly was zealousness in this day
- Righteousness – Blameless under the law of Judaism – Talmud

***Yet all of that? Doesn't amount to a hill of beans.

Counted as loss for the sake of Messiah. Why?

Judaism in this day had twisted and perverted the law of God found in the Torah and the Prophets and instead replaced the importance and focus on the Oral Traditions. Remember, at this time, there is no written Oral Law or Traditions. It is only what they were taught as hear say. The written version won't come for a couple hundred years.

At the time of Paul it is all passed down through Oral Tradition, but one Rabbi wrote that you can be forgiven if you break the commandments of YHVH, but if you break the commandments of the Rabbi's you will have no part in the Kingdom of God.

Whether that tradition or belief was going on back in Paul's time is something we can not prove, but if you disobeyed the Rabbi's you were excommunicated from the synagogue in this day and Paul would have known all of these traditions as we will discuss shortly.

We are also told in **Acts 22:28** *The tribune answered, "I bought this citizenship for a large sum." Paul said, "But I am a citizen by birth."*

It was quite common to buy into Roman Citizenship to receive the benefits of being part of their empire. However, Paul says he was born into it. That would most likely mean his parents were already citizens when Paul was born.

- How they earned it is not relevant, but Paul is born a citizen giving him rights that those outside of citizenship do not enjoy.

Acts 22:2 And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew language, they became even more quiet. And he said: 3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day.

This should dispel the theories that the common language was Aramaic or Greek in Israel in that time. Yes the highly educated may have known them, but Hebrew was something all the educated people of Israel would have spoken and here Paul specifically speaks to them in Hebrew.

It's also important to remember that the reading of the Torah and Prophets in Synagogue had to be done in Hebrew.

Finally, Paul was born in Tarsus, but brought up in Jerusalem, educated in the Harvard of the day, the feet of Gamaliel, and in the strict manner of the law of our fathers, which would have been Torah and the Oral traditions, and he says I am zealous for God just like you are zealous for God.

This summarizes the things Paul writes about himself and really the only place you can learn about this man who wrote most of the New Testament for us today.

So what do we have in Paul? Who was this man?

- A Roman Citizen but a Jew who was Faithful as a Hebrew
- He was a highly educated man
- He knows the Torah and Prophets inside and out
- He knows the Oral Laws and traditions inside and out
- He was zealous to attain righteousness in God's eyes
 - *And perhaps more zealous to attain righteousness in the eyes of his peers.
- He becomes very humbled on the road to Damascus
- He has to relearn the true message of the Scriptures, which were only the Old Testament, that points to Yahshua as the Messiah
- He is called by God to be an Apostle to the gentiles.

The part that we are left a little in the dark about is his education under Gamaliel. What did he mean educated at the feet of Gamaliel?

Well, the saying "Sat at the feet of" was common with disciples or students. At the feet of indicated you were sitting before them and learning. It also indicates a closeness that comes from more of a personal relationship with the teacher. Often this involved long days together and often many days in a week and sometimes daily.

It is said that to become a disciple of someone is to learn how they breathe, eat, sleep, act, worship, all of that.

The disciples would learn to pray the way their teacher prayed. Worship and learn the Scriptures the way the teacher worshipped and taught. One of the greatest honors for a teacher is when the student imitates or mimics the teacher in life and actions.

So to sit at ones feet meant you were fully devoted and committed to your teacher. The Disciples were fully committed to Yahshua. When Yahshua says “Come, Follow Me”. He is saying coming sit at my feet!

John the Baptist had disciples that sat at his feet and they followed his teachings explicitly. In fact, Yahshua’s disciples said “Teach us to pray as John taught his disciples to pray. Luke 11:2

Paul would have been fully devoted to Gamaliel in his teachings, prayers and worship habits. He would have imitated his teacher.

We also know that students started learning very early in life.

The Babylonian Talmud Baba Bathra 21a:6 says, *“Before the age of six do not accept pupils; from that age you can accept them, and stuff them with Torah like an ox.”*

Stark contrast to our day and time isn’t it? Stuff your children with the word of God OR..... give them a video game and tell them to leave you alone so you can get rest?

It is also interesting that the higher education of math and life skills came AFTER learning the Torah. They had their priorities right and Paul was part of this learning system. Other than that we don't know much about Gamaliel's teaching methods.

I have heard it said that a student of Gamaliel was expected to memorize the Torah, but I have struggled to find any proof of that. Rather you find ample proof that his students had to memorize the Pharisee's positions on the Torah.

When we do read about Gamaliel's actions as the Nasi or head of the council of the Jewish leaders, we find he was not as hard line as you may think. His grandfather, Hillel, was the primary house of teaching for Pharisees. Hillel was much more moderate than his counterpart or competition at the House of Shemai, which was far stricter.

Many of Gamaliel's Halacha, or oral law decisions as the leader, made it easier on women and common people to keep God's laws, lessening the burden of the Oral Traditions in more than a few circumstances.

Gamaliel became such a highly respected individual that the Mishnah says of him: "When Rabban Gamaliel the elder died the glory of the Torah ceased, and purity and saintliness [lit. "separation"] perished."— Sotah 9:15.

It is this same Gamaliel that was the head of the San Hedrin in 50 AD where we have the letter he penned adding a 13th month to the year proving how the calendar was reckoned by Israel at this time. Just a little food for thought.

So to be taught by Gamaliel was a great honor and would assure you a place of high standing in the religious community of Jerusalem.

So what else can we know about Paul before getting into his teachings or really his writings as I don't believe they were intended to teach as much as they were to address situations and to remind the recipients of what had already been taught to them through the Holy Scriptures when Paul was with them.

One of the most important things we have to understand about Paul is found in his writing style.

When an Oxford professor drafts a letter to his peers and colleagues, despite the fact that it may be written in English, it could be very challenging to understand or follow for us common folk.

When an Australian friend of mine asked "What do you have under the bonnet"? I thought... a pretty dagum sharp mind but don't call it a bonnet Aussie, it's a ball cap! I had no idea a bonnet was literally a car hood. They are both English, butnot MY English.....

For Paul, he was around highly educated people most of his upbringing and young adult life. The way they communicated was a little upper crust of the day so to speak and his writing style is also that of a highly educated man.

What else do we know about Paul's writing style?

Peter states in **2 Peter 3:...**¹⁵ *Consider also that our Lord's patience brings salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom God gave him. 16 He writes this way in all his epistles, speaking in them about such matters. Some parts of his epistles are hard to understand, which unlearned and unstable people distort, as they do the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.*

Peter is clear that Paul writes from the wisdom that God gave him. That alone should make us all the more anxious to study his writings to better understand God's ways and His wisdom.

Peter says Paul writes this way in ALL his letters. Some parts of his letters are hard to understand. This Peter concedes. Peter is not saying only the ignorant or unlearned struggle understanding, but rather they could be hard for anyone to understand.

So struggling to understand some of Paul's writings should be considered normal.

BUT..... He goes on to say that the unlearned and unstable people go one step further. They distort the true meaning of Paul's writings and they also do this with the Scriptures, which will lead to their destruction.

**Quick side note.... We tend to look at this just as people twisting the New Testament when Peter is clear they have also been twisting the original Scriptures as well and it leads to destruction. Most of the New Testament was not written at this point and Paul's letters were not wide spread either.

So if the twisting of Paul's true intent or the Original Testament's true intent leads to destruction.....

- Don't you think we should be serious about this study?
- Should we not study to show ourselves approved?
- Should we not work out our own salvation with fear and trembling?
- And should we not be careful in our understanding of Paul?

So let's remember, Paul's writings include "Some difficult things to understand for everyone". And we don't want to twist any of them and find ourselves fighting against our Creator and God's true intent and reason for inspiring Paul to write these letters.

Yet....another issue is the actual writing style. I could not find in my research the name of the writing style Paul uses but I did find there are two things about this writing style that “Could” for some people, make it hard to understand that may or may not have been what Peter was referring to.

1) Paul often spider webs or rabbit trails a subject and brings it around full circle when he is good and ready. He does it to make a point but the result is you have to look at the full context and sometimes that can be an entire chapter or more.

2) Paul often writes in opposites then contradicts it to make a point.

Romans 6:1 *So then, are we to say, "Let's keep on sinning, so that there can be more grace"? 2 Heaven forbid! How can we, who have died to sin, still live in it?*

Paul will discuss grace and the role of the law (in chapter 5) then he opens chapter 6 with a contradiction. Let's keep on sinning so that there can be more grace???

Then he trashes the contradiction as if to say ***“are you crazy”?***

No way. If we have died to sin how can we still live in it?

These contradictions to make a point are evident throughout his writings and are meant for a clear-cut point he is trying to make.

But with the advent of Chapter and verses (*in the middle ages*) it has often separated verses that were intended to be read together in context.

So more important than anything else I need you all to raise your right hand and repeat after me. I, Tom Eubank, will never take Paul out of context again!

The end result is we have a brilliant man, highly educated, with a brilliant writing style that would have been far easier to understand in Paul's time, but more importantly, it would have been far easier to understand in its original language, which we do not have.

- So why do we call the New Testament inspired by God?
- Because the Church of Rome, that was around before Messiah said so?
- Why would we listen to the men who abandoned all things the Messiah taught us to follow?

I will answer that by going back to the original question... "Why I believe the New Testament is inspired by God"?

Because the problem is there is only one book in the New Testament that states "***it was inspired by God***", and that is Revelation. But what if the writers were receiving the words to write through the Spirit inside of them and yet they did not know at the time these would be considered Scripture? YES.

But the most important reason.... Does what they write... line up with the original Scriptures of Torah, the Prophets and Writings that we were told **ARE** the inspired Word of God? ***The answer is YES!***

I believe it does when we study it from a 1st century perspective and look at everything in context. That is why I believe the New Testament is inspired. It teaches nothing new, but rather it teaches what possibly had been forgotten from the time on Mt. Sinai. It teaches where the Rabbi's had gone wrong and why God's original instructions are so beautiful. It teaches to follow Yahshua in love.

Yahshua taught the truth of God's word the way it was originally given on Mt. Sinai. He taught that God's word was to be shared in love and He clearly taught that the man-made precepts of the religious leaders violated God's instructions, and were placing a burden on people that no one could bear.

So let's close with a couple things about understanding Paul's writings from within this framework we have just laid down.

A) - This was a day and time where if people were truly teaching against the Torah & the Prophets they were stoned to death quickly. Even the perception of wrong teaching was met with cruel beatings.

So, if it sounds like his writings may be changing God's law... they would have killed him instantly, in most situations, if that were true.

The anti-Torah institutions all claim Paul brought a new gospel. We have to understand that this is impossible in every way and even the New Testament itself is witness to this in dozens of places and most importantly by Messiah himself.

B) When we come across some of these teachings that are hard to decipher and they appear to contradict Torah, we have to fall back on the words of Messiah himself when he said "Until heaven and earth pass away not one jot or tittle of the Torah will pass away".

C) If we still arrive at a spot where we feel Paul is "Changing" the way we do things..... You have to ask. Who is Messiah? Paul or Yahshua?

As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, Was Paul crucified for you? NO

So as we go through this study and we come across, what may look like a contradiction in English, we have to remember these things.

Paul was a brilliant man and he was a great servant to the Father and his master Yahshua, but at the end of the day he is just a man like you and I. Paul struggled just like you and I. But Paul also remained faithful to the end, a goal that you and I should embrace.

2 Timothy 4:6-8...6 *For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 From now on the crown of righteousness is laid up for me, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but to all who crave **His** appearing....*

Lets close in prayer.....

Announcements –

May 5th Sunday – Sewing Club is Meeting Here.

United in Worship May 10th and 11th. ***Unitedinworship.org***

Please sign up asap so they can get a count.....

- We are going to purchase two vendor tables at the conference so if you have items to sell the booth will not cost you anything.

July 4th Picnic – Lake Alatoona Picnic Pavilion

Thursday July 4th at Noon till whenever.....