

HOW THE SEPARATION ENDS

Ephesians 2.14-18: Message 17, God abolished the Law and preached the Gospel

We have come to a passage in Ephesians that shows us how God has brought about the great change we have in Christ Jesus.

- Remember: We who were dead in sins (v1) have been made alive (v5) in Christ... How? By God's grace appropriated through faith in Jesus Christ (v8-9).
- Now we are going to see that we who were in time past far off—separated from God by sin (v11-12)—have been made nigh to God in Christ (v13). How...?

God ends our separation by abolishing the Law (v14-16) and then by preaching the Gospel (v17-18).

- This morning we are going to take some time to talk about the Law and how Christ abolished it all.
- And then we're going to also see that in order to apply this work of Christ to the individual lives of sinners, the Gospel (that work of Christ) had to be preached.
- We begin with the Law, and will spend most of our time here because this is crux of the matter...

I. (v14-16) Peace is established when the Law is abolished.

A. Observe here that the focus is somewhat on Jew and Gentile at first.

1. The “both” that are made one in v14 are the “twain” of v15 and the “both” of v16.
2. (v11-12) Since Paul spoke of the Gentiles being far off and the Jews being closer by promise and covenant, he makes it clear that both are in need of peace and both are now made equal in Christ.
3. (v14) The example Paul gives is the *middle wall of partition* that existed between Jew and Gentile.
 - a) In the temple of Jesus' (and Paul's) day—the temple built by Herod for the Jews—the outer court was divided and the Gentiles were given space to enter.
 - However, their space was the outer portion of the court; no Gentile could come near to the Holy Place or the Most Holy Place, into the inner court (reserved for the Jews).
 - b) Paul says that now that middle wall in the court is broken down and those that were far off can now come nigh (near).
4. But, we should note also that even though the Jew could draw nearer to God than the Gentile, he too was separated from God!
 - a) Even though the Jew was brought closer to God than the Gentile, the veil still separated every man from the Creator (a picture of the separation caused by sin, which is common to all).
 - b) And here is where the Law comes in...

B. The Law is equated with the enmity between God and sinful man.

1. (v15) Christ abolished the enmity, even the law. Paul used *enmity* and *law* are as synonyms.
2. The law is what resulted in our enmity with God.
 - a) (Rom 4.15) If there were no law, then there would be no transgression and therefore no wrath.
 - b) (Rom 5.13) This why we believe babies and small children are held as innocent until they can discern right and wrong: Until there exists the ability to discern between right and wrong (i.e., a law), sin is not imputed to the child.

- c) (Rom 2.14-15) The law can be the commandments written to the Jews on tables of stone, or it can be the commandments of God written to all men and the tables of our hearts.
 - d) (Rom 7.8-9) Without law, sin is dead and we are alive (because death comes as the wages of—punishment for—sin, and the law is what defines what is sin and what it is not).
3. (Rom 7.7-12) The problem: When the law enters, sin abounds and we are placed under the sentence of death.
- a) The law is holy, just, and good. Therefore it reveals all that is unholy, unjust, and bad: Us!
 - b) (Rom 3.19-20; 5.20) Therefore, when the law enters, the enmity between God and sinful man is revealed. And sin abounds! (Don't think it is a small matter of a just a few sins.)

C. (v15) To abolish the enmity, then, Christ had to abolish the law.

1. Abolish: [def] To do away with; to put and end to; to make void (e.g., to abolish slavery is to end it, to stop, to make it not exist anymore).
2. (Mat 5.17) Christ did not come to say, “Opps, sorry... the law really didn't work, so we'll just forget about it and try something new called grace...”
 - a) Rather, in order to abolish the law, Christ had to fulfill the law—all of it!
 - (1) (John 8.46) Christ lived the sinless life we could never live—He actively obeyed the law, all of it.
 - (2) (John 19.30) And then He willingly submitted to the death required by the law—He passively submitted to the punishment required by the law (suffer and dying in our place).
 - b) That's why, at the moment of His death on cross, He could say, “It is finished.” He did it all. He fulfilled the law—all of it (it's commandments and it's punishment)!
3. (Heb 7.18-19) And this is why now the law of commandments that could never make us perfect (it could only reveal our wickedness and enmity with God) has been disannulled (it has been made void, annulled completely... abolished!).
4. (Heb 10.5-10) Christ, in His body (by His sinless life and His substitutionary death) “taketh away the first” (the law) so that He can “establish the second” (the New Testament).
5. In order to abolish the enmity caused by the Law, Christ had to abolish the law by fulfilling it for us.

D. We are therefore now free from the law of commandments, free from the enmity with God that the law revealed.

1. Here we see a very common mistake (especially among the “me-centered” culture of the modern churches): Many misunderstand our freedom from the law, taking it to be freedom from all laws and therefore a license to sin and live the way “I want.”
2. (Rom 6.14-22) Our freedom from the law (our new life in Christ by the grace of God) means that we no longer serve sin, but rather we serve righteousness.
 - a) The person who used our “liberty in Christ” as a license to sin is still the servant of sin because he still serves sin—he does what sin wants him to do rather than that which is righteous.
 - b) This person, by his works, is simply revealing that his conversion is more than likely false (he has not become a servant of righteousness; there has been no turning from sin to to the Lord).

- c) Our freedom from the law is not freedom from all law. It is rather freedom from the law's consequences.
- (1) Example: A police officer pulls you over and rightfully accuses you of breaking the law. However, when you show him proof that your fine has already been paid in full, you are “free from the law”—you can go free because the law has no “power” over you.
 - (2) But, you are free to go and obey the law, not to go and break the law.
3. (1Cor 9.21 cf. Rom 7.22, 25) Our freedom from the Law simply means that we are now under a new law. We are no longer servants of sin but rather servants of righteousness.
- a) Think of it this way: When Christ died on the cross, the Old Testament laws were erased from the whiteboard. He fulfilled all the law and therefore abolished it all.
 - b) With the whiteboard clean, God wrote down some new rules: **The Law of Christ** (Gal 6.2).
 - (1) You see, God's character never changes, therefore His moral law (and expectations) never changes either.
 - (2) It is very insightful to observe that nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated as commandments (law!) for Christians in the New Testament. For example:
 - (a) (Eph 4.22-24) God commands (it is a law!) Christians to stop doing certain things and to do certain other things.
 - (b) (Eph 4.25) Thou shalt not lie, but rather speak the truth in love.
 - (c) (Eph 4.26) Thou shalt not kill, even in your heart (hatred is murder of the heart).
 - (d) (Eph 4.28) Thou shalt not steal, but rather get a job.
 - (e) (Eph 5.3) Thou shalt not commit adultery, or even come close enough that it could be named among you (i.e., avoid even the appearance of sexual immorality).
 - (f) The only commandment of the Ten that is not mentioned (that we are told specifically that we do not have to keep) is the fourth: Keeping the Sabbath (God gave the Sabbath specifically and only to Israel as the sign of the Mosaic Covenant: Exod 31.12-17).
 - c) One big difference between the “Law of Christ” today and the “Law of Moses” before:
 - (1) The Law of Moses revealed the enmity between God and man; it condemned men to death.
 - (2) The Law of Christ is a “law of life”: It is meant to show us how to live in Christ now that we have been freed from the power of the law—how we are to live now that our fine has been paid in full.
 - (3) And that is why Paul says in Romans 6 that we are now servants of righteousness: We are still under a law (we do not live lawless): God expects us to read the Bible and obey it.

E. [Review: v14-16] How did God end the separation?

1. How did God end the separation between the Gentile (in the outer court, outside the middle wall of partition) and the Jew?
2. How did God end the separation between Himself and all sinners (as pictured by the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place).
3. He abolished that enmity by fulfilling, and therefore abolishing, the law (and that is why when Christ died, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom).
4. (v15-16) We are now both made one: There is now no difference (no separation) between Jew and Gentile in Christ because God has reconciled them both in one body. Both are brought near in Christ, through His work of abolishing the law through a perfect life and a substitutionary death.

II. (v17-18) Peace is established, therefore, because of the Gospel.

A. (v17a) The Gospel is the Good News that Christ “came”!

1. He came to earth, born as one of us—a man.
2. He came to live the life we could not live: Perfect obedience to the law of God.
3. He came to die the death that we all deserve: Suffering the wrath of God the law demands.

B. (v17b) But the Good News of the Gospel must be preached in order for the work of Christ to be applied to individual sinners.

1. (Rom 10.13-17) God has established the preaching of the Gospel as His chosen and ordained method of saving sinners today.
2. Very practical application: We need to be about the preaching of the Gospel to the lost.
 - a) (1Tim 1.8-11) According to the Paul, our Apostle, that preaching must include the law—the preaching of God's moral law to the lost (in order to bring about a knowledge of sin).
 - b) Then obviously that preaching must also include God's grace in Christ for the repentant sinner.
 - c) (Acts 20.20-21) This is the only way to call sinful man to repentance and faith: ***Law to the proud, grace to the humble.*** No other method of preaching the Gospel is biblical.

C. (v18) Why did God do all of this...? To make nigh those of us who were far off, separated from God by our sin. And that brings us to our application this morning...

Conclusion: Our application this morning is simple, though it may sound a little harsh...

Here is what we know: (Eph 2.11-18) God wants us nigh and has done His part to bring us nigh unto him (the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ).

- Now, through preaching, He allows sinful man to choose what he will do...
- (John 3.19-20) Sadly, most do not want the change that God offers them in Christ:
 - ✓ Most lost sinners reject the salvation God offers them through the preaching of the Gospel.
 - ✓ Most professing Christians reject the sanctification to which they are called in the Gospel.
- (John 3.21) Let's be different.
 - ✓ Let's make choices that will lead to our salvation and sanctification in our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - ✓ God has done His part (Christ has abolished the enmity, even the law of commandments), and now He calls us to do our part:
 - If you are lost: God calls you to salvation through repentance of sin and faith in Christ.
 - If you are saved: God calls you to sanctification... read the Bible and do what it says.