

Soteria Church, June 14, 2009
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Ephesians 2:14-16

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 and 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

These three verses are the beginning of the explanation of Paul's statement in verse **2:13**
But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ

How is it we are brought near to him and to other believers?

Because Jesus is our peace. He is the bridge.

How is Jesus our peace?

He has made us to be one, united in him

He is both the conduit and the meeting place

How did Jesus make us united?

He did away with the Old Testament standard of the Mosaic Law

This Law divided Israel from everyone else

The Jews took great pride that God had given the Law to them exclusively. This set them apart as God's chosen

And, the Jews took pride in being the only ones who "kept the Law"

The Temple walls that still stood while Paul wrote this was a physical reminder of the distance and separation that existed between Jews and Gentiles. The wall forced that physical separation, and it wasn't broken down until the Roman legions stormed into Jerusalem in AD 70

This Law proved that no one was capable of meeting the exacting standards of the Law, and everyone needed grace

Jesus did away with the Law by making it inoperative, ineffectual

Romans 10:4 *or Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes*

The Law, the spiritual wall between Jews and Gentiles was broken down by Jesus in about AD 30 or so

But is there a conflict with what Jesus said in **Matthew 5:17-19**?

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one iota, not one dot will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven

No conflict.

In the Sermon on the Mount the context is Jesus teaching about keeping the moral law. He was teaching the difference between the pious righteousness of the Pharisees and true Christian repentant righteousness, and that Christians are called to a radical obedience to God's moral standards

Paul's context in Ephesians 2 is the ceremonial Law

Circumcision of all males

Material sacrifices

Dietary regulations

Rules about ritual cleanliness that governed social relationships

Colossians 2:21-23 *If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations - Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch (referring to things that all perish as they are used) according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the Indulgence of the flesh*

But Paul is also indirectly referring to the keeping of any law being abolished by Jesus on the Cross. It is never what we do that saves us; it is the grace of God through Jesus that saves us

Colossians 2:13-14 *and you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross*

Jesus abolished both the regulations of the ceremonial law and the condemnation of the moral law

Both were divisive

Both were nailed to the cross

Jesus created "in himself one new man in place of the two"

"New" as used here means "new or fresh in character or quality"

In the Church Jews do not become Gentiles and Gentiles do not become Jews
Instead, Jews and Gentiles become Christians, thus forming the Church

Colossians 3:11 *here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, Barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all*

This is not to say that distinctions are removed. They are not

Men remain men and women remain women

Both remain in the image of God

Jews remain Jews and Gentiles remain Gentiles

Both remain in the image of God

But any inequality before God is abolished

Galatians 3:28-29 *there 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. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise*

Pastor and Theologian John Stott said it well

“We are all brought to the same level at the foot of the Cross of Jesus”

How else is Jesus our peace?

He reconciled both believing Jews and believing Gentiles to God

Through his atoning death on the Cross

He is the bridge between God and believers

Jesus broke down the distant relationship, this hostility between God
and humanity

and this hostility was mutual

God was hostile toward our sin

Ephesians 2:3 says we were “children of wrath”

In the death of Jesus on the Cross, the killed was also the killer

He killed the hostility, the distance between God and his chosen believers

Romans 5:10 *for if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, how much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life*

So what does this reconciliation to God and to other believers mean for us now?

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 *all this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of*

Christ, be reconciled to God

We enjoy our reconciliation and grow close to God
Loving Him in His Word and through prayer

We exhibit our reconciliation by practicing and modeling our unity

To each other

Speaking truth and exercising grace, all motivated by love for God

Appreciating being together, not blowing it off (as is the habit of some)

To the rest of the world

Consistency and integrity

This even impacts how we speak of our church

And any other church

We express our reconciliation by encouraging other people to also be reconciled to God

We use our words and make use of opportunities in conversations

And we display our own lives as products of Christ's reconciling work on
the Cross