

BREAKING DOWN THE DIVIDING WALL

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We have written previously regarding the importance of being guided by the Holy Spirit in contrast to adherence to a set of moral principles. (See [“Law of the Spirit—Higher than the Moral Law”](#)). This is a matter of great consequence that has important ramifications that extend far beyond the personal lifestyle of the individual believer. In this brief article, we address the importance of the absolute Headship of Christ (in the form of the Holy Spirit) as it pertains to the relationship between Christ and His body, and between members of the body of Christ.

Paul states in Ephesians:

*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, **that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances**, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. (Ephesians 2:13-16; NKJV).*

These verses point to two important and related themes that we explore in this article. First, *the law is enmity between Christ and His body*; and second, *the law is enmity between members of the body of Christ*.

The Law is Enmity between Christ and His Body

Those of us who have grown up in the organized church have been subjected to the law. No matter how much the preacher preaches “grace,” or the theological tradition attached to the denomination (or NON-denomination) of which we have been a part, the church as an institutional structure can only survive by imposing external expectations on its members: LAW and the traditions of men. These expectations may have to do with paying a tithe. Possibly there are expectations for social outreach or supporting certain causes. There are, of course, those traditions that have long moral codes (written or unwritten) specifying do’s and don’ts for their members. These more fundamentalist churches practice what is commonly called “legalism.” But legalism in the broadest sense affects all church bodies from the most liberal to the most conservative, from the most “free” worship churches to those with highest liturgical forms of worship. All of these bodies practice a form of legalism insofar as they impose any expectation on their members beyond simply being faithful to the witness of the Spirit within them. They impose these expectations, by way of doctrines, creeds, regulations, books of order and Sunday morning pulpit pounding, so as to insure the smooth functioning of the organization that it calls the “church.” (See the article [“Bureaucrurch”](#) on this website.)

While we appreciate the felt need for “order” in the body of Christ, the problem is that such order that is imposed from without does not equate to, nor does it facilitate spiritual unity in any way. It is an externally imposed order that demands conformity if one is to be in good standing with the religious organization in question. This sort of order results in—or at least potentially results in—conformity on the part of adherents that is motivated by obligation, or even worse, by fear and intimidation. It also has the effect of elevating certain individuals—especially the paid clergy but others as well—to a position of dominance and control over laity so as to enforce this “order.” The result has been a highly sophisticated organizational system with well developed doctrines and creeds, polished worship productions and an increasingly well-educated clergy class which assumes a position of headship in local congregations that was

never intended by Jesus when He established His ecclesia. These paid (or unpaid) clergy are looked to as the spiritual heads of their flocks, as parishioners become ever more passive and dependent upon the leadership of these false heads. We use the term “false heads” very deliberately, because they are usurping the Headship of Christ when they function in the capacity of directing the spiritual life of a local body of believers. It is not that all pastors and lay leaders intentionally *want* to control their flocks through fear and intimidation. Many pastors are most benign and seek input and counsel from their parishioners. Indeed, many will tell you that they truly desire that their churches be Spirit-led. And many erroneously believe that because they allow for extended times of worship, or give room for an occasional word of prophecy from someone in the congregation, their church *is* a Spirit-led church. May we humbly suggest that just because a pastor or leader “allows” for a more free expression of worship or prophecy or anything else, this does not mean that Jesus Christ is truly the head of such a body. At the end of the day, because of the unique position that pastors hold in the organizational system that is called “the church,” they are ultimately expected to function in a capacity that God intends for the Holy Spirit alone. This is a topic that deserves much more attention than we are able to give here, but must be reserved for another time.

Can we see and hear the radical message that Paul is sending forth in this portion of his letter to the Ephesian believers? Christ Himself has broken down the middle wall of separation and has abolished in His very own flesh the enmity that divides believers from one another and from God Himself. No longer is there a necessity for a priest class, set apart through human ordinances, to mediate and interpret the Word of the Lord to a passive flock of listeners. The middle wall of separation has been broken down and Christ Himself has abolished the enmity that would require such an Aaronic priestly class (clergy) to mediate between God and man. (see endnote)ⁱ So what is this “enmity” that Christ has abolished? *Paul states unequivocally that it is the law itself!* This is not the only place, of course, that scripture makes it clear that the law is of no more effect to those who are in Christ Jesus:

- Jesus Himself said that *He* is the fulfillment of the law (Matthew 5:17).
- Paul elsewhere states that *Christ is the end of the law* (Romans 10:4). The Greek word for “end” here is *telos*, meaning completion, or culmination of. That is to say, the purpose of the law has been completed in Christ!

- Paul strongly avers that Christ has delivered us from the curse of the law. This is the theme of the entire book of Galatians, but see especially Galatians 3:13.
- Elsewhere Paul pronounces that we who are in Christ are *dead* to the law (Romans 6-8).

We, with Paul, recognize that the law had a very positive purpose—that being a tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, Paul says, we are no longer under the tutor of the law (Galatians 3: 23-25). This is no small matter with Paul. It is nothing less than a declaration of the very costly freedom which Christ purchased for us by way of the cross, breaking our slave chains to become full status heirs as sons of the Most High. The fact of our death to the law, or the breaking of this bondage, is absolutely central to our union with Christ. Let us look once again at Paul’s word to the Ephesian Christians quoted above:

*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, **that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances...***

Can we see the revolutionary, paradigm-shattering truth exploding forth in this statement? Christ Himself is our peace! No longer adherence to the law. No more doctrinal statements to which we must assent. No more finding fulfillment by seeking acceptance through conformity to church rules or expectations, whatever form those may take. **Christ Himself is our peace!** And He has become our peace by breaking down the wall of separation through abolishing in His flesh the enmity—*the law*. Can we not see that it is the law itself which has now become the wall of man’s separation from God? Indeed, the law was given so that mankind would be confronted with his separation from God (Romans 7:7). But if the law is effective in confronting us with our separation from God, it is totally powerless to overcome that separation. Allegiance to the law—in *whatever form that the law takes*—can only further alienate us from God. Christ, and Him crucified, abolishes that wall of separation. Our allegiance now can be only to Christ and Him alone.

So what does this mean, in practical terms? Does it mean that we are to lead lifestyles that are disapproved of by the religious establishment, just because we have the freedom to do so? Does it mean that we suddenly refuse to engage in social outreach programs, just because we are no longer under the dictates or expectations of man-made religious systems? Does it mean that we reject all doctrine, just because our denomination would impose it upon us? The answer to all of these questions is that, while we *might* do ALL of these things, it is not “just because....” Furthermore, the answer to each and every one of these questions, and a hundred more questions that might arise in our daily walking out of our journey with Christ, is that *we freely and wholeheartedly respond with allegiance to the Anointing of Jesus Christ in us and to Him alone*. He has now broken down the dividing wall and because of this we can have communion with Him. When He left this earth, He promised His disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit to teach them (and us) all things (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit (not the law, and not clergy who would interpret the law) is now our teacher, as He (the Holy Spirit—God Himself!) abides in us and teaches us all things (1 John 2:27).

So it is that, by the abolition of the enmity between God and man—*which is the law itself*—through the work of the cross, the dividing wall has been torn down and our union with God has been made complete. This is a spiritual truth from which we cannot retreat in the face of every force of hell that is being brought to bear against the sons of God; even (and especially) through the Babylonish church system that would seek to “Judaize” the sons, in an effort to bring them in submission to the circumcision (law) rather than the cross (through obedience to the Spirit) today, so they may somehow avoid persecution and boast in their flesh. This effort by the religious systems of today to seduce the people of God to keep the traditions of men—in whatever form that may take—is no less an attempt to “bewitch” the saints in our day than was that of the Judaizers in the churches of Galatia almost two millennia ago (Galatians 6:12-13). Such efforts are an enemy of the cross.

The Law is Enmity between Members of the Body of Christ

Let us look closely at the words of Paul to the Ephesians once again:

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has

*made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, **that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances**, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. (Ephesians 2:13-16; NKJV).*

As regards the enmity between members of the body of Christ, Paul is speaking here specifically of the relationship between the recently converted Ephesian Gentiles and his own people, the Jews. There had always been great enmity between the Jews and the neighboring Gentiles, or “barbarians,” as they were called by the Jews. This enmity existed both because of the sense of elitism that the Jews carried with them toward other peoples because of their understanding of being specially called out by God from among the nations; and also, because of the great persecution the Jews experienced at the hands of these “barbarians,” especially in and around the time that Paul would have been writing. The enmity was intense. But Paul was declaring that now, in Christ Jesus, these so-called barbarians who were once so alienated from God have now been brought near to Him. This was radical enough, though his Jewish brothers and sisters may have been able to eventually come around to accepting such a thought. But Paul goes even further. He makes the claim that these barbarians are now one people with his people! They have been joined together into one new man! Oh, the thought of it must have made the Jews see red!

From our vantage point, some 2000 years later, this thought might not be so radical. It has been preached from our pulpits for hundreds of years, and we have no problem whatsoever understanding Jewish people who have been brought near by the blood of Christ as our brothers and sisters. Indeed, we celebrate their coming into the Kingdom of God as joint heirs with us. But may we suggest that we have seen only part of the radical message that Paul is bringing when we open our arms to those whom we now call “Messianic Jews” as part of the body of Christ (and vice versa of course; when Messianic Jews open their arms to Gentile Christians). Paul’s radical message cuts much more deeply than this.

Paul goes on to say that Christ has abolished in his flesh the enmity that existed between Jew and Gentile. And what was this enmity? Paul tells us: it is “the law of commandments contained in the ordinances...” The law is the enmity! Yes,

the law itself is the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile. But, dear brother and sister, this dividing wall does not create enmity merely between Jew and Gentile. We put forth to you today, that the law is the dividing wall between believers everywhere.

Have you ever wondered why there are 40,000+ Christian denominations throughout the world today? Do you suppose, as some do, that this is because each denomination has grasped a little piece of the truth and that, together, we have the whole truth? And further that this somehow pleases God? If you have ever experienced even a local church split—much less a church split that has resulted in the formation of yet another denomination—you cannot, with an easy conscience, entertain the notion that such pleases God. Denominationalism represents nothing less than the dividing of the body of Christ. It is a modern-day picture of the tearing asunder of that which God has joined together. It is the embodiment of the dividing wall between members of the body of Christ.

When we examine the cause of this splintering of the body of Christ into so many factions—if we have eyes to see—we understand that the culprit is nothing other than the law. Ask any leader of a faction within a denomination his or her grievance against the parent body and they will tell you of doctrinal error in the parent body or perhaps of moral laxness in what it condones or does not condemn. The “doctrinal errors” are many and varied. It may be over water baptism, and in whose name we baptize. It may be over speaking in tongues. Some fellowships are split over the doctrine of the manifestation of the sons of God. More recently, mainline churches have been witnessing whole congregations leaving the denominations because of their stand on homosexuality or other moral issues. At the root of all of this division is the cursed law.

Some readers are probably responding, “Does not Paul admonish Timothy and Titus to closely guard sound doctrine? He surely does! Let’s examine just what Paul says regarding sound doctrine:

knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for

kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust. (1 Timothy 1:9-11)

Paul begins this exhortation by boldly stating that the law is not made for a righteous person, “but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane...” etc. Earlier in this chapter, Paul urges Timothy not to give heed to “fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification in faith.” These, Paul says, have strayed from the commandment of love, opting instead to engage in idle talk, “desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say, nor the things they affirm” (1 Timothy 1:7). The “sound doctrine” to which Paul was referring was that which edified and increased faith (v. 4). What the teachers of the law were doing was distracting from the gospel of love and faith in Christ to focus on issues that divide. Teachers of the law—even well-intentioned teachers—are still doing the same thing throughout the Babylonish church system today. Paul’s admonition to “sound doctrine” has nothing to do with our holding to a certain set of beliefs as correct doctrine so as to insulate us against “false teaching.” This is not what Paul is saying at all! In point of fact, Paul, in Galatians, rails against those of the circumcision for causing such division. Those who practice such are those whom Paul accuses of “desiring to be teachers of the law.”

Now let us look for a moment at Paul’s exhortation to Titus regarding sound doctrine. Here, Paul is warning Titus of “those of the circumcision” coming in to discredit the Gentile believers, bringing division even to households because of their desire to make them conform to their teaching. Prefacing this exhortation, Paul declares, “To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled” (Titus 1:15). Paul goes on in Chapter 2 to teach things which are of sound doctrine—that men be sober, reverent, sound in faith, etc. Paul is speaking here of issues of *character and faith* that are nurtured by “sound doctrine” which Paul has spent his very life preaching—the doctrine of Christ and Him crucified. Nothing else! Anything added to this “doctrine” is law, and it only divides.

God is Calling Out a People

The law, in whatever form it takes, divides the body of Christ. Does this then mean that people should stay within their denominations, even when they are grieved by what they see being taught and taking place within those bodies? Let us be very clear here. The parent denomination itself was born out of a divisive spirit. Despite whatever spiritual vocabulary and rhetoric it would use to mask it, denominational bodies are themselves purveyors of the law. This is why Christ Himself, through John the Revelator speaks boldly, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4). Paul also exhorts:

And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters," says the Lord Almighty. (2 Corinthians 6:16-18).

God is calling out a people in our day. This is not a call to form another denomination, or even another local congregation, over doctrinal differences. Oh no! That would be to simply replace one old wineskin with a wineskin that is even more cracked. What God is doing NOW, is calling forth a "virgin" people, untainted with the harlotry of a system of religion that seeks to make men and women of the circumcision (bound to a set of creeds, doctrines and laws); a people freed by the Spirit of Life, living by way of the cross that obliterated the handwriting of requirements and free to embrace a radical obedience to the Law of the Spirit: to love as He loved; to be moved with compassion as He was moved with compassion; to lay down their life for their friends (and enemies) as He laid down His life.

If you have embraced this call, you are most certainly in a two-fold process. You are being set apart from the old religious systems, for there is no fellowship between law and spirit. At the same time, God is forming a deep spiritual bond and unity with others who are also responding to the law of the spirit within. This precious union with others is forged in the crucible of much tribulation as the

Lord takes you through your own wilderness in which you are purged of the self-life that would seek to justify itself through its own righteousness. (This is discussed at length in the article [“The Wilderness”](#) which can be found on this website.) As the Lord begins to connect you with others who have responded to this call, there will almost surely be a multitude of “doctrinal,” ethical, political, social, and other matters on which you disagree, but these differences do not affect the unity that you experience because you are bound together with these members of the true *ecclesia* of God by the very Spirit of God to which we have sworn allegiance.

Praise God, He ...has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity!

ⁱ We are not suggesting that there are no human agents through which God’s grace is mediated in the new order which God is establishing. The book of Revelation clearly states that God is establishing an order of “kings and priests” (Revelation 1:6; 5:10). These priests do, indeed, mediate between God and man. These, however, are men and women whom *God* raises up for this purpose, not some special clergy class that organizations groom. These are people who have been set apart and have undergone great purging and refining in the wilderness as preparation to be pure vessels of God’s mercy. For an extended discussion of God’s divine priesthood, see J. Preston Eby’s series entitled *The Royal Priesthood* available on this website through the link [“Kingdom Bible Studies.”](#)

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