

Christ Abolished The Enmity

Twice, in Ephesians two, the law is called "*enmity*." First Paul told Ephesians that Christ "*brake down the middle wall of partition (between Gentile and Jew) having abolished in his flesh the enmity ...*" Then again in vs. 16 he wrote, "*and might reconcile them both in one body unto God, through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.*" How, and in what way could Paul speak as the law as "*enmity*" when he elsewhere called the law "*holy and righteous and good*" (Rom. 7:12)?

The law was "*enmity*" between Jew and Gentile in that it was given to separate Jew from Gentile. Although Jesus showed in His parable of the good Samaritan that one's neighbor (whom he is to love as himself, Lk. 10:27) may, in some instances, be his enemy; and the law taught Israelites to show kindness to the strangers within his gates; the law also forbade Israel to intermarry with Gentiles or to enter into covenants with them (Lev. 19:10, 32; Dt. 7:2f). One of the principle reasons why Judah went into Babylonian captivity was because she made covenants with the nations around her, rather than trusting in God's care and protection (Isa. 31:1). The law expressly forbade Moabites to enter into the "*assembly*" of the Lord unto the tenth generation (Dt. 23:3). Any Gentile who proceeded further into the temple past the "court of the Gentiles" did so at his own peril. When Christ died on the cross, He removed the law which was a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ (Gal. 3:24f).

Yet, there is another real sense in which the law was enmity. Hear Paul again, "*You I say, did he make alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses; having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us; which was contrary to us, and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross*" (Col. 2:13). In this passage Paul emphasized another aspect of how the law was enmity against us. He did not deal so much with the thought that the law was enmity between Jew and Gentile as he did with the fact that the law was contrary to the Jew, as well as to the Gentile. In the Colossian letter he tells us the law was "*contrary to us.*" I am aware that some deny that the "*bond written in ordinances*" has reference to the law. "*Rather,*" it is said, "*the bond written in ordinances is the debt we owe to sin.*" Not for one moment would I deny that it was through the death of Christ, the cross, that forgiveness is possible. Both the poets and the Holy Spirit extol this great act of love. Nevertheless, true as the statement is that Christ "*nailed sin to the cross,*" that is not Paul's point in Colossians 2:14: he tells us the law was nailed to the cross.

But, if the law was "*righteous, and holy and good,*" how could it be "*enmity,*" "*contrary*" to us? Paul deals with this question at length in Romans seven. In that chapter he showed that it was through the law that one came to know sin; that he, himself had been alive apart from the law once, but "*when the commandment came, sin revived and I died*" (Rom. 7:7, 9). Paul tells us that "*the commandment, which was unto life, this I found to be unto death*" (Rom. 7:10). The law identified sin and its consequences. But because all sin, the knowledge of sin brought death to Paul. The law was contrary to the Jew because, while it could (and did identify sin), it could not make alive (Gal. 3:21). Man needed something better and in the law of Christ God has given him something better. "*The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh*" (Rom. 8:2f). Thus the law proved to be "*contrary to us*" because, while it is righteous, good and holy and identified sin and its consequences, it could not make man alive. This is why the law is said to be enmity against us and contrary to us.

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