

The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON XXIX : VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL RECONCILIATION (2:11-22)

Discussion on the Reconciliation of the Gentiles with Jewish Christians (2:14-18)

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. (KJV)

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. (NIV)

for he is our peace, who did make both one, and the middle wall of the enclosure did break down, the enmity in his flesh, the law of the commands in ordinances having done away, that the two he might create in himself into one new man, making peace, and might reconcile both in one body to God through the cross, having slain the enmity in it, and having come, he did proclaim good news — peace to you — the far-off and the nigh, because through him we have the access — we both — in one Spirit unto the Father. (Young’s Literal Translation)

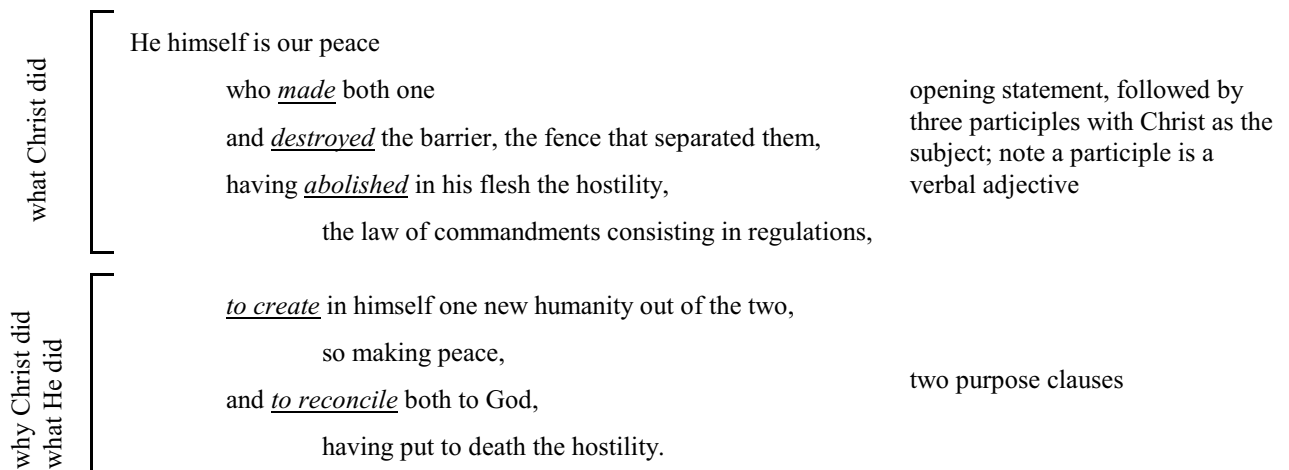
I agree with those Bible teachers who consider this section as a quote from possibly an ancient hymn or Jewish midrash (commentary). If Paul had written this today it may have looked something like this:

Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh — who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands — that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 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. ‘And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.’ For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. (NKJV)

Here is Paul’s ‘flow of thought’ for today’s sections. Note Paul states the former position of the Gentiles (vv 11,12), makes a statement of their present condition (v 13), then appears to give a quote to support his statement (vv 14-18):



OT quote	[And he came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near;	quote from Isa 57:19
sum	[For through him we both together have access in one Spirit to the Father.	summation and result of Christ's work

v14b,15a — **and the middle wall of the enclosure did break down, the enmity in his flesh, the law of the commands in ordinances having done away (YLT) and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances (NKJV)** — καὶ τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ λύσας, τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ, τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν καταργήσας [kai to mesotoichon tou phragmou lusas, tēn echthran en tē sarki autou, ton nomon tōn entolōn en dogmasin katargēsas] The next two phrases of this portion are considered by most to be parallel, the second phrase giving further explanation of what is meant in the first phrase. For that reason we will consider these verses together.

DIFFICULT VERSES — “These words of v. 15a are some of the most difficult to interpret in this tightly packed and theologically significant paragraph (vv. 14-18). They are without parallel elsewhere in the New Testament, although the heaping up of the synonymous expressions ‘law’, ‘commandments’, and ‘ordinances’ is characteristic of the style of Ephesians.” [O’Brien, 196] We will first look at each of the words themselves then consider their meaning all together.

and the middle wall (YLT); the dividing wall (NKJV) — καὶ τὸ μεσότοιχον [kai to mesotoichon] an ordinary architectural term without any necessary religious reference. “The middle-wall (late word, only here in N.T., and very rare anywhere, one in papyri, and one inscription).” [Robertson, Word Pictures] *“Walls serve different purposes; they can be used to separate one group of people from another, sometimes erected for this purpose by a third group; they can be erected by one group to protect themselves from another group with emphasis either on excluding the other group or to keep others out or to keep themselves in. Their existence can cause enmity when they exclude a group from what they regard as their legitimate position or prevent a group from being released from a position in which they are oppressed. Walls can be metaphorical or physical. It has been normal to understand the wall of v. 14 as non-material and referring to something else.”* [Best, 253]

of the enclosure (YLT); of separation, (NKJV) — τοῦ φραγμοῦ [tou phragmou] “‘Of partition’, old word, fence, from [phrassō], ‘to fence or hedge’, as in Mt 21:33.” [Robertson, Word Pictures] “He brake down the partition wall of the fence... the partition which consisted in the fence. φραγμός [phragmos] means a fence, hedge, or enclosure, not a separation.” [Abbott, 61]

did break down, (YLT); has broken down (NKJV) — λύσας, [lusas] “‘Having loosened’, first aorist active participle of [luō], see Joh 2:19.” [Robertson, Word Pictures] From the basic meaning ‘loose,’ translated with a variety of meanings; as used in this verse it has the sense of ‘bringing something to an end do away with, undo’ (1John 3:8). [Friberg Lexicon]

the enmity (YLT; NKJV) — τὴν ἔχθραν [tēn echthran] The enmity, hostility, hatred [Friberg Lexicon]

in his flesh, (YLT; NKJV) — ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ, [en tē sarki autou,] referring to the physical body of Christ, sacrificed on the Cross for sinners.

the law of the commands in ordinances (YLT); the law of commandments contained in ordinances (NKJV) — τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν [ton nomon tōn entolōn en dogmasin] or, ‘the law consisting of commandments which are expressed in regulations’

νόμος, with a basic meaning *law*, i.e. what is assigned or proper; (1) generally, any *law* in the judicial sphere (RO 7.1); (2) as rule governing one's conduct *principle, law* (RO 7.23); (3) more specifically in the NT of the Mosaic system of legislation as revealing the divine will (the Torah) *law (of Moses)* (LU 2.22); in an expanded sense, Jewish religious laws developed from the Mosaic law (*Jewish law*) (JN 18.31; AC 23.29); (4) as the collection of writings considered sacred by the Jews; (a) in a narrower sense, the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, as comprising *the law* (MT 12.5; GA 3.10b); (b) in a wider sense, the Old Testament Scriptures as a whole (MT 5.18; RO 3.19); (5) figuratively, as the Christian gospel, the new covenant, as furnishing a new principle to govern spiritual life *law* (RO 8.2a; HE 10.16) [Friberg Lexicon]

ἐντολή, (1) of the Old Testament law *commandment, precept, ordinance* (LU 23.56); (2) of official commands, *edict, decree, order* (JN 11.57); (3) of authoritative but not official directions, *order, command* (LU 15.29) [Friberg Lexicon]

δόγμα, (1) as a fixed and authoritative decision or requirement *decree, command* (LU 2.1; AC 17.7); (2) as a fixed rule or set of rules *law, ordinance* (AC 16.4) [Friberg Lexicon]

having done away (YLT); having abolished (NKJV) — καταργήσας [katargēsas] by abolishing; first aorist active participle of *katargeō*. Only used here in Ephesians but used regularly by Paul. “The word καταργέω [katargeō] is rarely used in classical literature where it has the idea of ‘being idle, inactive.’ ... ***In Paul’s writings it consistently means ‘to render inoperative, nullify, invalidate’ (cf. Rom 3:3, 31; 4:14; 6:6; 7:2, 6); hence, in this context to translate it ‘to put death’ or ‘to destroy’ is incorrect. The law was not put to death or destroyed but has been rendered inoperative or nullified for the believer.***” [Hoehner, 375f]

TO WHAT DO THESE PHRASES REFER? — Combining what we have seen of the words from the above definitions, this is what we understand Paul to be saying:

“For Jesus Christ Himself is our peace, who did make both groups of people, the Gentiles and the Jews, one new group which transcends either of the aforementioned groups, and the middle wall of the partition which consisted in the fence, He did break down, He did tear down, He did bring to an end; the enmity and hostility in His physical flesh, His physical body; the law of the commandments which consisted of decrees and ordinances He did nullify, He did invalidate, He did render inoperative.”

How other translations handle these verses:

“For he is our peace which hath made of both one and hath broken down the wall that was a stoppe betwene us and hath also put away thorow his fleshe the cause of hatred (that is to saye the lawe of commaundementes contayned in the lawe written)” (Tyndale’s NT)

“For he is our peace, which hath made of both one, and hath broken the stoppe of the partition wall, In abrogating through his flesh the hatred, that is, the Lawe of commandements which standeth in ordinances” (Geneva Bible)

“For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances” (KJV)

“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” (NKJV)

“for he is our peace, who did make both one, and the middle wall of the enclosure did break down, the enmity in his flesh, the law of the commands in ordinances having done away” (Young’s Literal Translation)

“For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in the flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances” (ASV)

“For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances” (RSV)

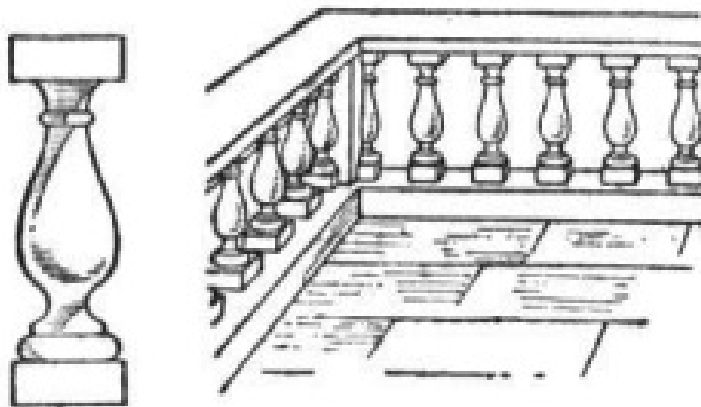
“For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances” (NASV)

“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations.” (NIV)

“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 expressed in ordinances” (ESV)

The essential sense is easy: **by His sacrificial death on the cross, Jesus Christ did make peace and bring together in Himself the Jews and the Gentiles by destroying that which had separated the two groups, the law of commandments which had created a ‘wall’ or ‘fence’ between the two groups. What is debated however are these questions:**

- **what was the ‘wall’ or ‘fence’ that Paul refers, and**
- **what does it mean that the ‘law of commandments’ has been destroyed or rendered inoperative? Is the law of God no longer applicable to the believer?**

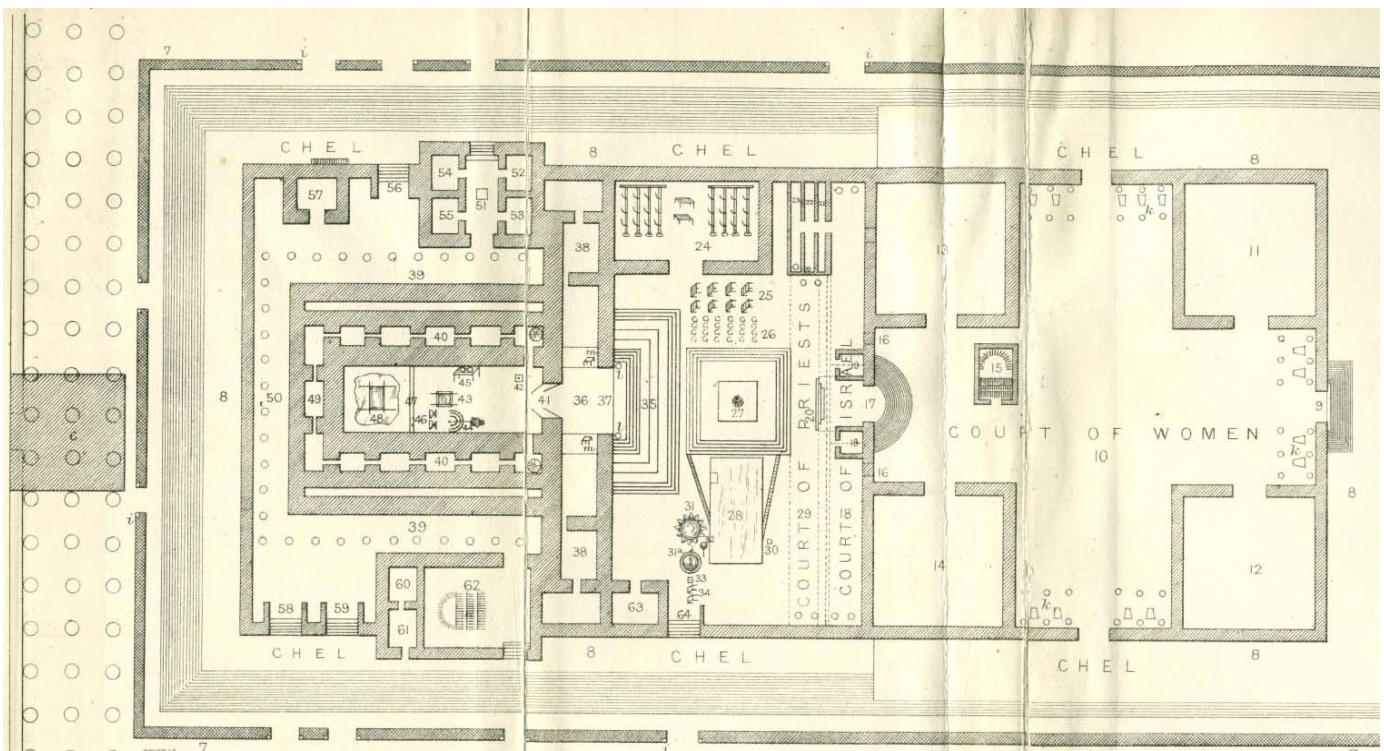
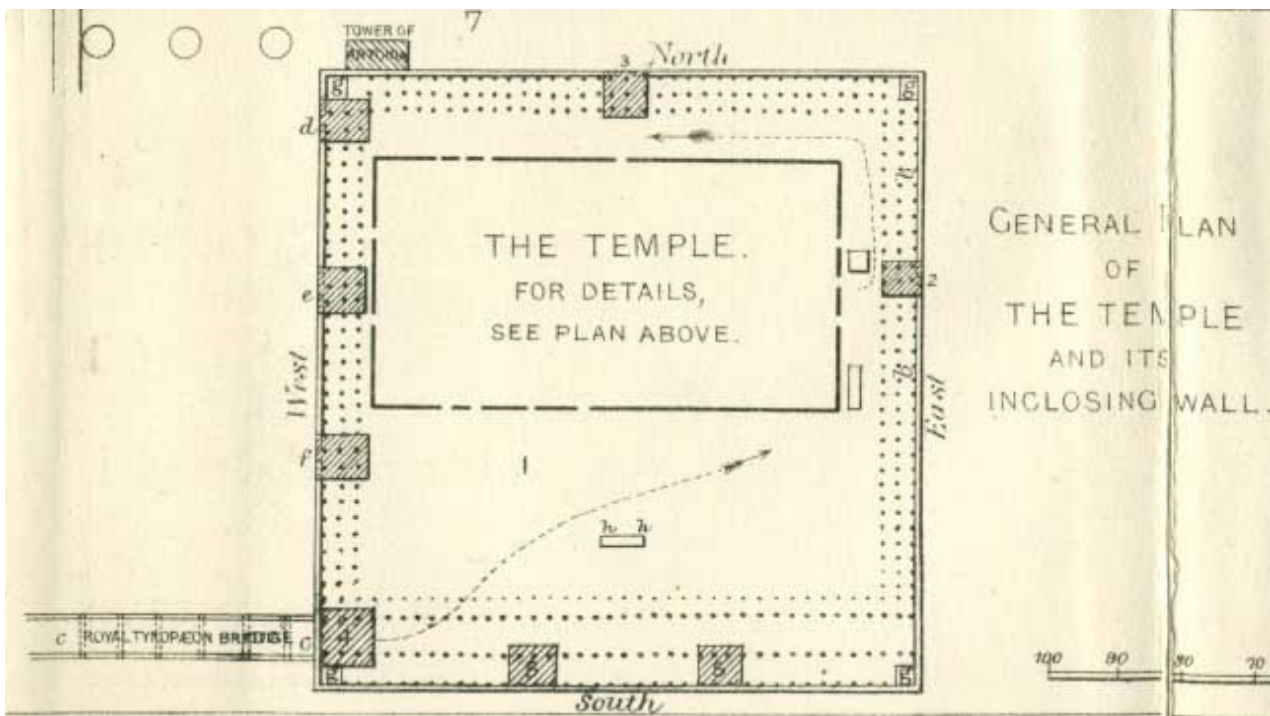


Baluster and balustrade

A balustrade is a row of repeating balusters – small posts which support the upper rail of a railing. Staircases and porches often have balustrades.

WHAT WALL DID JESUS BREAK DOWN? —

While there are several differing theories, most of the Bible teachers I consulted seem to understand Paul as using the wall in Jerusalem that prohibited temple access to the Gentiles as a metaphor for the law being destroyed by the cross (for further information on the differing theories, see appendix A). This may not be a perfect answer to the question but this seems the most likely in my thinking. *“An answer which became popular early this century suggests [Paul] had in mind the stone balustrade which separated the area in the Jerusalem temple into which Gentiles were allowed to enter from the areas into which their entrance was prohibited. This balustrade was a 1.5m-high wall carrying inscriptions threatening death to Gentiles who crossed it. They were allowed in the outer court but no further. Two stones bearing the inscription in whole or in part have been discovered; their discovery led to the popularity of this solution. The balustrade represented in Jewish eyes a distinction between themselves and Gentiles, a*



distinction which in Christian eyes had been destroyed by Christ's death. This understanding of the wall fits the present context of the Jewish-Gentile distinction and prepares for the mention of the temple at vv. 21f. Paul ... would have been aware of this wall since he had lived in Jerusalem and had been accused of bringing a Gentile, Trophimus, across it (Acts 21.29)."

[Best, 253f] There are several problems with this solution, as addressed by Thomas K. Abbott in his commentary: *"It seems probable that the figure was suggested by the partition which separated the Court of the Gentiles from the temple proper, and on which there was an inscription threatening death to any alien who passed it. That the Ephesian readers can hardly be supposed to be familiar with the arrangements of the temple, is no proof that these may not have been in the apostle's mind. But it is worth noticing that it was an Ephesian, Trophimus, that St. Paul was charged with bringing into the temple. A more serious objection seems to be, that when the Epistle was written the wall referred to was still standing. But the apostle is not speaking of the literal wall, but using it as an illustration."* [Abbott, 61]

Ernest Best does make an objection that is worth noticing: *"The destruction of the balustrade would only be relevant if the argument 2.14-18 had been about the admission of Gentiles to ordinary Jewish privileges and this is not [Paul's] argument."* [Best, 253f] This could possibly be overlooked if we remember no metaphor is perfect in every detail and if Paul's emphasis was that of the Jewish / Gentile separation, the temple wall would provide that illustration.

R E F E R E N C E .

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| <p>1. MOUNTAIN OF THE HOUSE—COURT OF GENTILES.
 <i>a, a, a</i>, ROYAL CLOISTERS. <i>b, b, b</i>, SCLOMON'S PORCH.
 2. SHUSHAN GATE.
 3. GATE TADI.
 4. KIPUNUS GATE. <i>c, c</i>, BRIDGE.
 <i>d, e, f</i>, GATES OF JOSEPHUS.
 5. GATES OF HULDAH.
 <i>g, g, g</i>, WATCH OF LEVITES.
 6. 1ST SMALL SANHEDRIN. <i>h, h</i>, SHOPS.
 7. WALL ROUND COURTS. <i>i, i, i, i</i>, SLABS OF WARNING.
 8. THE CHEL.
 9. THE EASTERN GATE.
 10. COURT OF WOMEN. <i>k, k, k</i>, TREASURE CHESTS.
 11. CHAMBER OF WOOD.
 12. CHAMBER OF NAZARITES.
 13. CHAMBER OF LEPERS.
 14. CHAMBER OF OIL.
 15. 2ND SMALL SANHEDRIN.
 16. CHAMBERS OF MUSIC.
 17. GATE OF NICANOR.
 18. COURT OF ISRAEL.
 19. CHAMBERS OF VESTMENTS AND SPICERY.
 20. PLACE OF BLESSING.
 21. CHAMBER OF SALT.
 22. HOUSE OF POURING WATER.
 23. HOUSE OF PARVA.
 24. SLAUGHTER HOUSE.
 25. TABLES OF CLEANSING.
 26. RINGS OF SLAUGHTER.
 27. ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERINGS.
 28. ASCENT TO THE ALTAR.
 29. COURT OF PRIESTS.
 30. PLACE OF ASHES.
 31. LAVER. 31^a DRAW WELL.
 32. ASH PAN.
 33. DESCENT TO THE SHAFTS.</p> | <p>34. TWO TABLES.—1 MARBLE AND 1 SILVER.
 35. STEPS TO THE PORCH.
 <i>l, l</i>, JACHIN AND BOAZ—TWO PILLARS.
 36. THE PORCH. <i>m, m</i>, TWO TABLES.
 37. DOORWAY OF PORCH.
 38. CHAMBER OF BROKEN KNIVES.
 39. EMPTY SPACE CALLED ON NORTH "CIRCUMFERENCE"
 ON SOUTH "PLACE OF DESCENT OF RAIN WATER"
 40. CHAMBERS ROUND SANCTUARY.
 41. DOOR OF SANCTUARY.
 42. SLAB OVER JEALOUSY DUST.
 43. GOLDEN ALTAR OF INCENSE.
 44. CANDLESTICK.
 45. TABLE OF SHEW BREAD.
 46. GOLDEN PEDESTALS.
 47. VAILS.
 48. HOLY OF HOLIES.
 49. CHAMBERS.
 50. SPACE BETWEEN SANCTUARY AND WALL OF COURT.
 51. CHAMBER OF MOKED.
 52. CHAMBER OF DEFILED STONES.
 53. CHAMBER OF SHEW BREAD.
 54. HOUSE OF BURNING.
 55. CHAMBER OF SHEEP.
 56. GATE OF OFFERING.
 57. HOUSE OF NITZUS.
 58. GATE OF FLAMING.
 59. GATE OF OFFERING.
 60. CHAMBER OF CAPTIVITY.
 61. CHAMBER OF WOOD.
 62. CHAMBER OF HEWN STONE.
 63. UPPER CHAMBER OF HOUSE ABTINAS.
 64. WATER GATE.</p> |
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FACSIMILE OF A GREEK INSCRIPTION ON ONE OF THE "STONES OF WARNING" IN THE PARTITION WALL OF THE TEMPLE—*Jos. Antiq.* xv. xi. 5. (See *Notes on the Temple*, 7. iii.)

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(Discovered in Jerusalem, 1873.)

A wall about ten hands high around the whole court, and in it were thirteen openings as if opposite thirteen gates. . . . Slabs (Josephus, Antiquities, xv. xi. 5) on which was engraved the prohibition against foreigners entering the temple (Acts xxi. 29). One of these "stones of warning" was discovered in Jerusalem in 1873. Its translation runs thus, "No stranger is allowed to pass within the balustrade round the temple and enclosure. If found, the offender must take the consequence, and his death will follow."

Peter O'Brien brings forth some Jewish history that shows how the Jews considered the law of separation: "The real barrier was, in fact, the Mosaic law itself with its detailed holiness code. And since it is best to understand 'having broken down the dividing wall, the fence' as paralleled by 'having abolished ... the hostility, the law...', then the most natural reference to the fence is the law. *Certainly, the 'oral' law was understood in Judaism as a 'fence' around the law (Mishnah 'Abot 1:1), but even the law itself provided a fence around Israel.... Note the oft-quoted second-century BC Epistle of Aristean, 139: 'Our lawgiver ... fenced us about with impenetrable palisades and with walls of iron to the end that we should mingle in no way with any of the other nations.'* ... It separated Jews from Gentiles both religiously and sociologically, and caused deep-seated hostility. The enmity which was caused by the Jews' separateness was often accompanied by a sense of superiority on their part." [O'Brien, 196]

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT THE 'LAW' HAS BEEN 'RENDERED INEFFECTIVE'? — In the effort to avoid antinomianism, some go to great efforts to explain what Paul means when he says the law was 'abolished, rendered ineffective':

CALVIN = CEREMONIAL LAW WAS THE ONLY LAW DESTROYED — "'And breaking down the middle wall of partition.' To understand this passage, two things must be observed. The Jews were separated, for a certain time, from the Gentiles, by the appointment of God; and ceremonial observances were the open and avowed symbols of that separation. Passing by the Gentiles, God had chosen the Jews to be a peculiar people to himself. A wide distinction was thus made, when the one class were 'fellow-citizens and of the household' (Ephesians 2:19) of the Church, and the other were foreigners. This is stated in the Song of Moses: 'When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel: for the

Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.' (Deuteronomy 32:8,9) Bounds were thus fixed by God to separate one people from the rest; and hence arose *the enmity* which is here mentioned. *A separation is thus made. The Gentiles are set aside. God is pleased to choose and sanctify the Jewish people, by freeing them from the ordinary pollution of mankind. Ceremonial observances were afterwards added, which, like walls, enclosed the inheritance of God, prevented it from being open to all or mixed with other possessions, and thus excluded the Gentiles from the kingdom of God.* 'Even the law of commandments contained in ordinances.' What had been metaphorically understood by the word *wall* is now more plainly expressed. *The ceremonies, by which the distinction was declared, have been abolished through Christ.* What were circumcision, sacrifices, washings, and abstaining from certain kinds of food, but symbols of sanctification, reminding the Jews that their lot was different from that of other nations; just as the white and the red cross distinguish the French of the present day from the inhabitants of Burgundy. Paul declares not only that the Gentiles are equally with the Jews admitted to the fellowship of grace, so that they no longer differ from each other, but that the mark of difference has been taken away; for ceremonies have been abolished. If two contending nations were brought under the dominion of one prince, he would not only desire that they should live in harmony, but would remove the badges and marks of their former enmity.... *It is evident, too, that Paul is here treating exclusively of the ceremonial law; for the moral law is not a wall of partition separating us from the Jews.*" [Calvin, Ephesians]

“IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO LIMIT THE USE OF THE WORD ‘LAW’ HERE” — Most commentators I have studied however do not back away from Paul's reference to the law while not caving in to the antinomianism camp. One of the best explanations is by Thomas Abbott:

“νόμος [nomos, ‘law’] *here is not to be limited to the ceremonial law; there is nothing in the connexion to show such a limitation, which, on the contrary, would make the statement very weak.... The moral law retains its obligation, not, however, because the Jewish law is only partially annulled, but because its obligation was independent of the law and universal (Rom ii. 14). If a Mohammedan becomes a Christian, we do not say that the Koran retains its obligations for him in its moral part, although he still acknowledges the obligation of many moral precepts contained in it. The Christian now fulfils the moral law, not because of external precepts, but because the conformity with it is the natural fruit of the Spirit. Hence the contrast between the expressions, ‘works of the law,’ ‘fruits of the Spirit.’*” [Abbott, 64f]

Andrew Lincoln agrees:

“The objective situation of hostility because of the law’s exclusiveness engendered personal and social antagonisms. The laws which forbade eating or intermarrying with Gentiles often led Jews to have a contempt for Gentiles which could regard Gentiles as less than human. In response, Gentiles would often regard Jews with great suspicion, considering them inhospitable and hateful to non-Jews, and indulge in anti-Jewish prejudice. This lively mutual animosity was one of the uglier elements in the Greco-Roman world.... “Christ neutralized these negative effects of the law by doing away with the law. A number of commentators shrink back from such a forthright assertion. Some provide the dogmatic gloss that it was only the ceremonial and not the moral law that was abolished. Others suggest that it is simply the legalistic, casuistic use of the law that is done away with. Still others hold that only one aspect of the law, the law in its divisiveness, but not the law itself, has been annulled. But these efforts to absolve the writer from an alleged antinomianism or supposed contradiction of the major Paulines will not do as an interpretation of [the law consisting of commandments which are expressed in regulations] τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν καταργήσας [ton nomon tōn entolōn en dogmasin katargēsas]. This lengthy formulation — literally, ‘the law consisting of commandments which are expressed in regulations’ — is characteristic of the style of Ephesians and, at the same time, conveys a sense of the oppressiveness of all the law’s commandments. But it is clearly the law itself and all its regulations, not just some of them, which are in view.... In his death Christ abolished the law (cf. Gal 3:13 and Rom 7:4, which associate Christ’s death with breaking the law’s condemnation and power) and terminated the old order dominated by that law, which had prevented the Gentiles from having access to salvation. How does this relate to Paul’s view of the law? The nature of Paul’s view is a highly disputed issue and the limits of space allow us only a brief and therefore oversimplified response. For Paul too the period of the law had come to an end (cf. Gal 2:19; 3:24, 25; Rom 6:14; 7:4-6; 10:4). But, just as we have had cause to observe in regard to his attitude to Israel, in Romans, in particular, he is somewhat more dialectical than this. He can say that believers have been discharged from the law in Rom 7:6, but this is different from saying that the law itself has been annulled. Indeed in Rom 3:31 he is at pains to rebut that interpretation of his teaching — ‘Do we then abolish [a form of the same word used here in Ephesians, καταργοῦμεν, katargoumen] the law by faith? By no means! We establish the law.’ It is important to understand what Paul means by this last assertion in its context. He does not mean that the law still retains its validity for the new people of God made up of Jews and Gentiles. His point is a narrower one. The law is established by faith, because, as he goes on to show in the immediately following passage (Rom 4:1-25), the law in Gen 15:6 and in its depiction of Abraham, already contains an exposition of his gospel of justification by faith. Though he establishes the law only in the sense of showing that it supports his teaching, it remains significant that Paul feels it necessary to deny the charge of completely abolishing it, and that later in Rom 7 he provides some sort of defense of the law in itself, and in Rom 13:8-10 insists that love involves the fulfilling of the law.... It is, by the way, not without significance that, having made the assertion about the law and its commandments having been abolished, the writer can later draw on one of those commandments (‘the first commandment with a promise,’ 6:2) for secondary support for his own paraenesis.” [Lincoln, 142f]

WHILE THE LAW HAS BEEN ‘NULLIFIED, RENDERED INEFFECTIVE’ BY CHRIST, GOD’S MORAL LAW NEVER ENDS — *“If in 6.2 [Paul] quotes approvingly from the Decalogue and if he himself sets down moral rules in 4.1ff, it is unlikely that he would regard law as such as abolished or destroyed; yet it can no longer be a means of salvation and used to enforce the separation of Jew and Gentile.”* [Best, 260f] “It is not the law as a revelation of the character and will of God that has been done away with in Christ. In that sense of the term the question and answer of *Rom 3:31* remain valid: *‘Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.’* The righteousness required by the law of God is realized more fully by the inward enabling of the Spirit — in Jew and Gentile alike — than was possible under the old covenant. But the law as a written code, threatening death instead of imparting life, is done away with in Christ, as Paul argues in 2 Cor 3:6-15.” [Bruce, 298]

GOOD BACKGROUND ON THE JEWISH / GENTILE DIVISION — “The reader will miss the mark at this point if he does not look back carefully to the first eleven chapters of Genesis. There are in these chapters three distinct race probations. First, in Adam, as head of all human beings. Adam fell, and all his posterity, without distinction, fell with him and in him. Second, after his fall and expulsion from the garden of Eden, the throne of grace was set up at the east of the garden, and all his descendants, without distinction, were privileged to approach the God of grace and mercy through typical sacrifices based on the promise to the race, ‘The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.’ This race probation culminated in the flood, and a third race probation commenced with Noah, as the new head of the race and under a special covenant. When this third race probation failed at the Tower of Babel, and the dispersion of the nations then followed (Gen 12) the call of Abraham, and the fourth probation, commenced through one family to become a chosen nation under national covenants. The very constitution of one nation to become God’s organized people, by isolating laws and ordinances, left out all other nations as aliens and strangers. *These segregating laws and ordinances constituted the wall of partition between the Hebrews and other nations.*” [Carroll, 113f]

APPENDIX A: Theories on the ‘Middle Wall of Separation’

There are several suggestions as to what Paul meant by the ‘wall;’ here are the theories I discovered in my studies:

- **The wall dividing the supernatural from the natural** — This theory was first postulated by F. C. Baur in 1845: the area in mind is the entire cosmos and the wall was the division between the supernatural realm and the earthly realm. This is especially popular among those who see Gnostic overtones throughout Ephesians. Support for this is in part found by the unusual use of a neuter when using the pronoun: *“who made us both [neuter] one”* Some therefore consider those *“brought together”* to be non-personal and therefore the heavenly / earthly spheres. Other support is found in Gnostic writings and Jewish apocalyptic literature. Difficulties in this position are as follows: (a) Support for this is often literature written in the centuries following the NT with nothing found written during the apostolic era; (b) In none of the literature is the same Greek word found that is used here for *“wall”*, except in much later literature which shows evidence of other Christian influences; (c) It is uncertain how much and what kind of Gnostic influences there were in Asia Minor around Ephesus; (d) Those supporting this theory offers very complex arguments to prove their point; if Paul’s intent was to illustrate the Jewish / Gentile relationship in Gnostic terms, he used a very poor illustration to *“simplify”* his discussion; (e) In no other place in Ephesians does Paul separate the heavens / earthly realm as is supposed in this Gnostic illustration; (f) The solution offered may be explained in Gnostic terms but that does little to explain Paul’s intent in this passage. [Best, 254f]
- **The balustrade within the temple in Jerusalem** — “An answer which became popular early this century suggests [Paul] had in mind the stone balustrade which separated the area in the Jerusalem temple into which Gentiles were allowed to enter from the areas into which their entrance was prohibited. This balustrade was a 1.5m-high wall carrying inscriptions threatening death to Gentiles who crossed it. They were allowed in the outer court but no further. Two stones bearing the inscription in whole or in part have been discovered; their discovery led to the popularity of this solution. The balustrade represented in Jewish eyes a distinction between themselves and Gentiles, a distinction which in Christian eyes had been destroyed by Christ’s death. This understanding of the wall fits the present context of the Jewish-Gentile distinction and prepares for the mention of the temple at vv. 21f. Paul, if the author of Ephesians, would have been aware of this wall since he had lived in Jerusalem and had been accused of bringing a Gentile, Trophimus, across it (Acts 21.29)... [This solution however] encounters *serious objections*: (a) Would readers in Asia Minor have been aware of the balustrade and its significance? The temples in Asia Minor had no similar walls. (b) Neither in Josephus nor in the inscriptions is this wall termed *μεσότοιχον* [mesotoichon, the Greek word used here for ‘wall’], (c) if Ephesians is not Pauline then by the time it was written the temple had been destroyed by the Romans and not by Christ; this would make the reference meaningless. (d) The destruction of the balustrade would only be relevant if the argument 2.14-18 had been about the admission of Gentiles to ordinary Jewish privileges and this is not [Paul’s] argument ... (e) While 2.11-22 looks forward to the building of a temple in v. 21, it is not a physical temple but a spiritual. An unimportant variation to this solution sees the middle wall as the curtain of the temple which was torn in two at the time of the death of Jesus (Mk 15.38); [Paul] however refers to a wall and not a curtain.” [Best, 253f] “It might rather be ... the wall or screen that divided the court of the Gentiles from the sanctuary proper, and of which Josephus tells us that it bore an inscription forbidding any Gentile from penetrating further. But even this is questionable, and all the more so as the wall was still standing at the time when this was written.” [Salmond, Expositor’s GK Testament, 295] “In the temple courts a partition wall divided the court of the Gentiles from the court of Israel with an inscription forbidding a Gentile from

going further (Josephus, *Ant.* VIII. 3, 2). See the uproar when Paul was accused of taking Trophimus beyond this wall (Ac 21:28).” [Robertson, Word Pictures] “Lit., ‘did unto the mid-wall of the fence, or hedge.’ The next verse makes it clear that this means the Law. In Divine intention the Law was a ‘hedge’ (Isai. v. 2) round the Old Israel, so long as their chief function was to maintain a position of seclusion.... It is possible that the phrase was immediately suggested by the demarcation between the Court of the Gentiles and the inner area of the Temple.” [Moule, 79] “It seems probable that the figure was suggested by the partition which separated the Court of the Gentiles from the temple proper, and on which there was an inscription threatening death to any alien who passed it. That the Ephesian readers can hardly be supposed to be familiar with the arrangements of the temple, is no proof that these may not have been in the apostle’s mind. But it is worth noticing that it was an Ephesian, Trophimus, that St. Paul was charged with bringing into the temple. A more serious objection seems to be, that when the Epistle was written the wall referred to was still standing. But the apostle is not speaking of the literal wall, but using it as an illustration.” [Abbott, 61]

● **The area which is divided is people and from a Jewish perspective, the Law was a wall which separated them from the Gentiles and protected them from Gentile impurities** — This may have derived from Exod 19:12, 21-24 when the law came to Moses at Sinai and the Jews were forbidden to approach the mount. This fits the context and also allows an easy transition to the law in v. 15. Unlike the temple balustrade, it is also easier to assume Gentiles in Asia Minor would have some understanding of the difference between them and the Jews due to the Jewish law. The difficulties with accepting this however are as follows: (a) key words used by Paul in this passage are never found elsewhere in reference to the law; (b) if the “wall” is the law, then v. 16 becomes difficult where this “wall” (=law) is destroyed and described as “enmity”; Paul who often quotes the Pentateuch would hardly have described the law as “enmity”; (c) while some Gentiles may have conceived of the law as a “wall” of separation, no Jewish Christian would consider the law in such a manner, rather the law to the Jew was protective; it is unlikely Paul would have written in such an anti-Jewish fashion in a passage intended to describe the unity and equality of both Jewish and Gentile believers; (d) only the Gentiles who were familiar with Judaism would have ever conceived of the law as a wall of separation and therefore Paul’s argument would not be understood by many Gentiles. [Best, 255f] Lincoln however favors this view. “If ‘having broken down the dividing wall, the fence’ is paralleled by ‘having abolished ... the hostility, the law...’, then it seems more likely that the fence is a reference to the law. The notion of the oral tradition as providing a fence for Torah was a familiar one, but Torah itself could be seen as providing a fence around Israel. In the second century B.C.E. the *Epistle of Aristeeas* declared: ‘our lawgiver ... fenced us about with impenetrable palisades and with walls of iron to the end that we should mingle in no way with any of the other nations, remaining pure in body and in spirit’ and ‘so that we should be polluted by none nor be infected with perversions by associating with worthless persons, he has fenced us about on all sides with prescribed purifications in matters of food and drink and touch and hearing and sight’. It can easily be seen that in functioning as a fence to protect Israel from the impurity of the Gentiles, the law became such a sign of Jewish particularism that it also alienated Gentiles, and became a cause of hostility.” [Lincoln, 141]

● **The “wall” was merely a metaphor for general disagreements between the Jews and the Gentiles** — “None of these solutions is completely satisfactory. Each takes the wall to represent something; in the first, a physical wall in the temple at Jerusalem, in the second a ‘spiritual’ or non-material wall between heaven and earth, and in the third a spiritual concept, the Jewish Law. It may however simply be that we have an ordinary metaphor of a separating wall and are wrong to look for recondite meanings in it. It is not unnatural for people when they disagree, or when they see others disagreeing, to speak as if there was a separating factor (‘I can’t get through to them; it’s as if there was a wall between us’). The wall could then be regarded as purely metaphorical and not indicative of some theological idea. Jews and Gentiles are distinct groups; there was much keeping them apart. Greco-Roman literature shows that Jews were despised for their peculiar ways and their high opinion of themselves as the unique people of God. Their belief that they were God’s people led them to look down on those who were not; they refused to assimilate themselves to the prevailing culture; they regarded the Romans who oppressed them as arrogant. On both sides there were inhibiting factors which led each to look down on and despise the other. In such circumstances it becomes perfectly natural for both sides, and not Jews only, to think of a wall dividing them.... [Paul describes] a real division between the Jews and Gentiles, which both would have agreed existed, but which had no specific theological significance, though if Jews had been forced to think the matter through they would have agreed that their distinction from Gentiles rested on their being a holy people who had special rules of their own. Gentiles would have viewed the separation in quite a different way.” [Best, 256f]

<p>rec-on-dite — adj: Not easily understood, abstruse; concealed; hidden</p>
