

are totally inconsistent behavioral activities for Christians. Gossip, backbiting, criticism, bitterness, etc. expressed by an alleged Christian are pre-Christian activities. If the individual is a believer (only God knows), he is giving by his behavior a self-inflicted wound. It is against the new man. Paul made this clear when he wrote, "And whether one member suffer, all members suffer with it; or one member is honored, all members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12:26).

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

"The Broken Wall of Hostility"

Ephesians 2:13-15

Introduction

1. Hostility is antagonism manifested in action. Enmity is the feeling of hatred. Animosity is active enmity and attended by bitterness. Quite obviously, none of these is consistent with Christian behavior. Regretfully, they are often found among the saints. This is a direct denial of the truth of the Word.

2. Among moderns, there is a great deal said about personal hostility. Scripture speaks also about national hostility. It was originally between Jews and Gentiles. This is easily traceable in the Bible (Jonah 4; Matt. 10:1-6; Phil. 3:2). As a matter of direct interest, Paul has just pointed out the problem (vv. 11, 12).

3. With the issue of personal and national hostility as a real item, what has God done about it? Is there a solution? Thank God there is. Read your Bible and find it. Note:

1. JEWS AND GENTILES "made nigh" v. 13.

a. Dramatically

The "but now" (v. 13) is a dispensational one. God has changed the situation between Jews and Gentiles. A new order of things has been instituted. It is really based upon an earlier soteriological "but now" (v. 4). The two are complimentary. Glory to God.

b. Positionally

Here is a technical New Testament phrase: "in Christ." By being personally incorporated into His person, the Jews and Gentiles are made a part of Himself. This does away with divergents in the Christian community or humanity. Obviously, this is a positional truth (John 14:20; Rom. 6:1-10; 2 Cor. 5:17).

c. Experientially

The verb "made nigh" does not mean that the

Gentile is changed into a Jew. Rather, the position of the Gentile is changed (cf. vv. 11, 12). Once they were at a distance. Now all of that is changed. Gentiles are now enjoying, in Christ, nearness to God and incorporation into the people of God. What a glorious change.

d. Mediately

The only way by which this dramatic change could take place is "through blood." This is the scarlet thread which marks the path of God's purpose throughout all of Scripture. The negative side of the blood is the removal of guilt and sin (Heb. 9:22). The positive side is here: Gentiles are now blood-bought, blood related to all Jewish believers in Christ.

2. JEWS AND GENTILES "made one" vv. 14, 15.

NOTE: The Greek word for "one" is neuter. It conveys the thought that Christ made two antagonistic groups (Jews and Gentiles) a unity. There is no change of race, no amalgamation of blood, but now they are one in privilege and position before God. This is fantastic. How is this done?

a. By a broken wall

This is a figurative description of a barrier between the Jews and Gentiles. It is an illusion to the wall of the temple which separated Jews from Gentiles. Signs were imprinted on the wall forbidding Gentiles to pass into the Jewish area under pain of death. Paul got into trouble about this (Acts 21:28). In his case, the charges were trumped up. In the Greek, the word "enmity" (v. 15) is in apposition to "middle wall of partition." God has, therefore, "loosened" (so Greek) the hostility between Jews and Gentiles. It is done forever.

b. By abolished commandments

The law was a hinderance to the unity of Jew and Gentile. It was given to the Jews, never to the Gentiles. It was designed, among other reasons, to keep Israel from the surrounding paganism. In time, however, it became a source of Jewish pride and exclusiveness in

relation to the Gentile world. Now the verb "abolished" modifies "broken down" and tells the means by which the wall was destroyed. Actually, this verb does not mean "annihilate" the law, but render it ineffective and thus to nullify its claims (Rom. 6:6; Heb. 2:14). The whole Mosaic legal system is meant here. It has all been abrogated--all 613 laws of the Pentateuch (Genesis - Deuteronomy). It is described as the elaborated code (law) which was composed of minute regulations and prescriptions (commandments) and expressed by a variety of edicts (ordinances). All are rendered inoperative by God's work in Christ.

c. By a physical death

"In His flesh" can mean nothing less than the Cross. Paul shows elsewhere that Christ did in fact blot out the law (Col. 2:14). It served as an instrument of condemnation. Indeed, it was a legal note of indebtedness for which we were liable, but Christ met the demands we were unable to satisfy. He did it all by His death. Hence, the law, whether it served as a wall dividing race from race or as an instrument of condemnation, Christ has nullified by His cross (Col. 1:22).

Conclusion The two items "made nigh" and "made one" have one glorious end in view: "one new man." The "one" of v. 14 is the one of unity. Here is an advance: one new man. Not just the races brought together. Not a Gentile becoming a Jew or vice versa. BUT, the creation out of the two of something entirely new--a new humanity, a new people of God. This is strongly supported by the verb "make" which in the original is "create." But how is this possible? There is but one answer: "in Himself." He takes the Jew in one hand and the Gentile in the other and brings the two together "in Himself." This means that Jews or any Gentiles who continue as unbelievers must also continue in the old enmity with one another. It is only as united to Christ that the Jew and Gentile are at harmony one with another.

SPECIAL NOTE: Admittedly there are and will be differences of opinion among the saints. To resolve this, God has given careful instructions as to the order in the household of faith (1 Tim. 3:15). On the basis of this study, it is patent that animosity, hostility, and enmity