

“God’s New Man—The Church” (Part Two)

Ephesians 2:13-17

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Introduction:

1. One of the great dreams of humankind is to establish a society in which all people enjoy peace. Many are the visions and ideas of our race to fulfill this quest for peace. People wise and powerful have tried to make a better world from which war and violence are extinct. All meet certain failure.

[1] They fail because there is no peace in the heart of man, either with God or with other humans (Js 4:1-2; Rm 3:17).

[2] They fail because they live under the wrath of God (Rm 1:28-32). Having rejected the God of peace, God gave them over to ways filled with violence and misery.

Question: Is there any hope for humanity? Yes, there is! God has established a way of peace in his Son, Jesus Christ, and is building a new society, the church, in which his peace rules.

2. Let’s quickly remember the situation before Christ came. Before the Lord Jesus came, the old covenant governed every approach to God. The old covenant was a time when humanity was divided on fleshly distinctions (Israel and the Gentiles). It was a time of utter misery for the Gentiles and a time of imperfection for God’s people Israel. However, in such a situation, God acted in Christ to establish peace. Let us think about what the Lord has done!

Exposition:

I. The Lord produced a change from old covenant to new covenant (2:13-15a).

A. The change occurred though the saving work of Christ.

1. The means of change was the shed blood of Christ. It brought us near.
Yes, there is power in the blood!

2. We enter into the benefits of this change through union with Christ—through faith in his blood (Rm 3:24-25).

3. The wonder of this change is that we are now near to God. Since the blood of Christ cleanses the conscience (Heb 10:12-14,19-22), this nearness to God is possible. Those far away have been brought near.

a. The New Testament Scriptures teach that there is a clear, definite and distinct difference between a Christian and a non-Christian. From this perspective we can say that a follower of Christ and a stranger from Christ cannot really worship together. They might be in the same room and doing the same outward actions, but one is near to God and the other is far away.

b. This “far away-ness” explains why some try to worship, but fail when they attempt to worship God in Spirit and in truth (Jn 4:24). A person near to God in Christ has a spiritual sense that God is with him, but those far away require some material stimulants to produce an atmosphere that “God is here”.

Action Step: Listen to what people talk about regarding worship. Do they talk about Christ and the gospel, knowing God in Christ, and worshipping by the Spirit of God? Or do they get hung up on things of an external nature?

B. The change involved the abolition of the law covenant.

Quote: “At first sight this is a surprising, not to say startling statement.” [Stott]

1. What is not meant by the abolishing of the law?

a. The apostle is not saying that the Old Testament Scriptures, as a part of the canonical Scriptures, are done away with. Every part of the Holy Scriptures endures forever (Mt 5:17; 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Lk 16:16; Jn 1:45; Ac 13:15; Rm 3:21).

b. The apostle is not saying that the Christian is free from obeying any law or commandments (1 Cor 9:21; Rm 13:8-10; Heb 8:10; 10:16; 1 Jn 2:3).

2. What is meant by the abolishing of the law? The apostle is saying that the law, meaning the law or old covenant, has been fulfilled and therefore set aside or abolished (Rm 7:6; 2 Cor 3:4-16; Gal 3:19-25; Col 2:14; Heb 7:18; 8:6-13; 9:1,10; 10:1-10; Rm 6:14). The Lord Jesus Christ satisfied the demands of the law covenant...

a. By obeying it perfectly.

b. By satisfying its righteous demands for justice on behalf of his chosen people.

c. By setting forth a better covenant in its place. Remember that within the law, Christ’s prophetic work was prophesied. All must listen to Christ, and he speaks of a new and better covenant.

Apply: Why must we understand this truth? It touches everything we do in worship and service! How do we worship? We worship on the basis of Christ's finished sacrifice. How do we pray? We pray as new covenant adult sons. Whom do we receive into the church? We only welcome those who profess to be followers of Christ. How do we minister? We minister as ministers of a new covenant. What is the standard for our way of life? Our standard is the law of Christ, not the commandments and regulations of the law or other manmade rules and regulations.

II. The purpose (2:15b-17).

A. To create a new humanity.

1. Christ ended the fleshly distinctions of the old covenant. In the new covenant there are neither Jews nor Gentiles. All are members of the body of Christ, the church. Christ took **two** and made them **one** (2:15). This explains a statement like Gal 3:26-28.

Point: It is very wrong to speak of either a Gentile Christian or a Jewish Christian. Neither one exists now or ever will again. In the church there are only Christians. Every true and wise follower of Christ begins to explain what he or she is by saying, "I am in Christ."

2. Christ established the basis of unity for God's new covenant people—our peace with God (Rm 5:1). God's peace is to rule the church (Col 3:15).

Apply: Turn and look at your fellow saints. Consider the blessing each one has—peace with God. Now, since God is at peace with him or her, don't you think that you should be?

B. To reconcile this new humanity to God.

1. Alienation from God is ended and friendship with God put firmly in its place. God determines never to treat us as foreigners again. One of the happiest moments in the Gospels occurs when Jesus calls the disciples his friends (Jn 15:12-17).

Apply: By the way, how is your friendship with God progressing? Are you getting to know your faithful Friend better? How is your relationship with the friends of your Friend?

2. An attitude of peace and friendship lies at the roots of the church because of the spiritual reality of peace and friendship with God. This is one of the great blessings of the gospel in Christ.

Apply: Everything we do must be to keep this peace (4:1-6).

Apply: This is one of our building blocks for being "a spiritual shelter of truth and love".

Apply: Strive to introduce someone to this peace and friendship this week.